**News Quality Perceptions Across Political Parties**

This project leverages a **dictionary-based approach** to quantify how respondents perceive both **high-quality** and **low-quality news characteristics**. Using dictionaries of keywords (see below), we systematically analyze mentions of these characteristics in respondents’ descriptions of news, allowing us to explore how different political groups evaluate news quality.

**Dictionary for High-Quality News Characteristics**

The following dictionary was used to capture mentions of key high-quality news characteristics: **accuracy, objectivity, clarity, thoroughness, transparency, and source credibility.**

# Define the dictionary for high-quality news characteristics

high\_quality\_news\_dict <- list(

accuracy = c("accurate", "factual", "correct", "true", "reliable", "verifiable", "precise"),

objectivity = c("objective", "impartial", "neutral", "unbiased", "balanced", "fair", "non-partisan"),

clarity = c("clear", "concise", "understandable", "straightforward", "coherent", "simple", "readable"),

thoroughness = c("thorough", "detailed", "comprehensive", "in-depth", "complete", "exhaustive"),

transparency = c("transparent", "open", "accountable", "honest", "disclosure", "candid"),

source\_credibility = c("credible", "reliable sources", "verified", "sourced", "referenced", "cited", "attributed")

)

**Dictionary for Low-Quality News Characteristics**

Similarly, a dictionary was created for identifying **low-quality news characteristics**, capturing negative aspects like **bias**, **sensationalism**, **misinformation, opinionated, ads.**

# Define the dictionary for low-quality news characteristics

low\_quality\_news\_dict <- list(

sensationalism = c("sensational", "exaggerated", "overhyped", "shock", "clickbait"),

bias = c("biased", "partisan", "one-sided", "unfair", "slanted"),

misinformation = c("misinformation", "false", "inaccurate", "unverified", "rumor"),

opinionated = c("opinion", "subjective", "personal", "unbalanced", "opinionated"),

ads = c("ads", "advertisement", "commercials", "sponsored", "promo")

)

**Analysis of News Quality by Characteristics**

**High-Quality News Characteristics (Figure 1)**: The dictionary-based analysis shows that **objectivity (29.5%)** and **accuracy (17.9%)** are the most frequently mentioned characteristics of high-quality journalism. This aligns with academic literature on media trust, which emphasizes that the public perceives **neutrality** and **fact-based reporting** as core components of good journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014). Characteristics such as **clarity (6.8%)**, **source credibility (8.9%)**, **transparency (4.0%)**, and **thoroughness (2.3%)** are mentioned less frequently, but remain important components of journalistic quality.

These findings are consistent with studies that indicate the public places greater emphasis on **neutrality and fact-checking** when assessing news quality, while other attributes like **clarity** and **transparency** are often taken for granted (Bennett, 2016). The lower emphasis on transparency and thoroughness may also reflect a broader public assumption that these characteristics should be inherent to objective, accurate reporting.

**Low-Quality News Characteristics (Figure 2)**: When it comes to low-quality news, the most frequently mentioned characteristics are **opinionated content (19.5%)** and **bias (17.5%)**. This suggests that people associate poor journalism with **overly subjective reporting** and **unbalanced coverage**, findings that align with broader concerns about the rise of **partisan media** (Stroud, 2011). **Sensationalism (7.5%)** and **misinformation (3.8%)** also contribute to the public's negative assessment of journalism but are mentioned less frequently, reflecting the public's frustration with exaggerated or inaccurate reporting.

The presence of **ads (3.1%)** is seen as less directly linked to journalistic quality, though concerns about the **commercialization of news** are discussed in media studies as a broader issue affecting the industry (McNair, 2009).

**High-Quality News by Political Party (Figure 3)**: There are striking political differences in how high-quality journalism is perceived. **Democrats (50.2%)** are significantly more likely than **Republicans (15.4%)** or **Independents (28.9%)** to emphasize high-quality news characteristics. This aligns with research showing that **Democrats have greater trust in mainstream media**, viewing traditional journalistic standards like **objectivity** and **accuracy** as being upheld by the outlets they consume (Pew Research Center, 2020).

In contrast, **Republicans** are more likely to view mainstream media as biased, which could explain their lower emphasis on these high-quality characteristics. This sentiment is well-documented in studies showing that **Republicans tend to distrust mainstream outlets** and often turn to **ideologically aligned media** (Ladd, 2011). As a result, they may be less likely to mention traditional markers of journalistic quality because they believe these standards are not being met by the media they encounter.

**Low-Quality News by Political Party (Figure 4)**: In contrast to high-quality news perceptions, there is **less variation across political parties** in how respondents describe low-quality journalism. **Democrats (46%)**, **Independents (41.8%)**, **Others (43.7%)**, and **Republicans (38.6%)** all mention low-quality news characteristics at similar rates, suggesting that there is **bipartisan agreement on what constitutes poor journalism**. Bias, opinionated content, and sensationalism are widely recognized as indicators of low-quality news, regardless of political affiliation.

This finding is supported by research showing that while media trust is **polarized**, there is **broad agreement** across the political spectrum on what constitutes bad journalism (Iyengar & Hahn, 2009). Both Democrats and Republicans express frustration with **biased or subjective reporting**, highlighting that while their perceptions of **high-quality journalism** diverge, their understanding of **low-quality journalism** is more consistent.

**Conclusion**

This project illustrates the **polarized perceptions of high-quality journalism** across political parties, with **Democrats emphasizing traditional journalistic standards** like objectivity and accuracy, while **Republicans are more skeptical** of these qualities. However, there is **bipartisan agreement** on the negative traits associated with low-quality news, particularly **bias and opinionated content**.

The use of a **dictionary-based approach** provides a transparent and systematic way to measure how frequently these characteristics are mentioned by respondents, allowing us to quantify public opinion on news quality across the political spectrum. These findings have significant implications for both news producers and consumers, highlighting the challenges of maintaining journalistic integrity in a **polarized media environment**.

**References**

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