

The world according to (Thomson) Reuters

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his paper addresses a lingering gap in television news studies: analysis of global news agency output, focusing on Reuters. Paterson (2011) described the work of the agencies as “almost entirely unresearched” (p. 9). His survey of the literature suggested that even the best of the more recent work should be treated with “caution” (p. 42), since it depended on small samples, “one or two selected days” (p. 42). In contrast, this paper covers a seven-week period in 2011, indicating the study’s value despite limitations that are addressed in the introduction and the methodological section.

Analysis of agency output is relevant because it is the basis of much foreign television news (Boyd-Barrett, 1980, 1997, 1998a; Palmer, 2008; Paterson, 1996a, 1996b, 2007, 2011; Rantanen, 1997; Read, 1992 et al.). The two dominant agencies are The Associated Press and Reuters. Since Boyd-Barrett’s (1980) *The International News Agencies*, several researchers have focused on these agencies, which Paterson (2011) noted employ a “small set of journalists who decide for the world’s broadcasters what ‘the’ images of the day are to be” (p. 9).

This paper analyzed seven days of Reuters material, representing seven weeks of output. The sampling process is outlined in the methodological section. Here, I want to note that the absence of Associated Press Television (APTN) material does

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not prevent tentative extrapolation of my findings to APTN, since no evidence has emerged to contradict 1995 findings that there was “*no difference between what each chose as the stories of the day and the time allotted to those stories*” (Paterson, 2011: 27).

The sample analyzed is not the audiovisual feed provided by Reuters. Rather, it is drawn from the scripts and shotlists that Reuters provided clients to explain the audiovisuals (for an example, see Appendix 1). For methodological reasons, the sample does not represent all the output during the period analyzed. It focuses on the ‘big picture’, represented by the core feeds that constitute Reuters’ basic subscriber package, which bundles the World, America, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Life! and Sports feeds,² amounting to just over 70% of Reuters’ total output. The 30% of material not analyzed was a range of supplementary feeds – *Africa Daily*, *Africa Journal*, *Arabic Reports*, *CCTV News*, *Central & East Europe News*, *Financial Video*, *Germany News*, *Hollywood TV*, *Global Innovations*, *Middle East Report*, *Reuters Reports*, *Showbiz*, *Subcontinent*, *Subcontinent Extra* – which subscribers could choose from to add to their core package.

I explain in the methodological section why only the core service was analyzed. If future analysis finds this paper deficient in underestimating what Reuters made globally available, I believe it will not be the ‘big picture’ that requires adjustment, but the margins, where non-core news addressed a small but locally or topically significant demand. This paper therefore should be treated as a starting point for further investigation of agency content, even as it stands alone as analysis of a representative sample of Reuters core output, the set of feeds that met most client’s global and regional agency-sourced news needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of the agencies within the global news system has not drawn much academic attention. Paterson (2011: 9-10) summarized three decades of research in three paragraphs. The list included two analytic texts: Boyd-Barrett’s (1980) study of the ‘big four’ news agencies – Agence France Presse (AFP), the AP, Reuters and United Press International (UPI); and former Reuters journalist Jonathan Fenby’s (1986) discussion of agency accountability, political pressure, and the pressure the argument for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) put on the ‘big four’. Also included was Read’s (1992) semi-official company history; an analysis (Mooney & Simpson, 2003) of company policy and decision making by two former Reuters jour-

nalists; and a summary of research that addressed production: Baker (2004; 2009 (insider accounts)), Clare (1997 (M.A. Thesis)), Claypole (1995 (insider account)), Mahoney (1975 (insider account)), Preston (1999 (Ph.D. Dissertation)), and Venter (2005 M.A. Thesis) et al.

Paterson also referenced the work of Maria Esperidião, whose Ph.D. Dissertation (Esperidião, 2011a) presented findings that have begun to appear in English-language scholarship (see, e.g., Esperidião, 2011b). Her work demonstrated how the global news ‘ecosystem’ functioned, and highlighted how the political and economic interests of the agencies’ major clients determined the “*vast majority of the news transmitted by these companies*” (Esperidião, 2011a: 9). She concluded that the basic findings of the UNESCO-sponsored McBride Report (1980) still held 30 years after the NWICO debate triggered academic interest in the global news agencies. Esperidião found in the international news ecosystem a continued structural asymmetry, which, in line with earlier studies (Boyd-Barrett, 1980, 1997, 1998b, 2010; Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998; Clare, 1997; Cottle, 2009; Fenby, 1986; Galtung, 1971; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Galtung & Vincent, 1992; Nordenstreng, 1999; Paterson, 1996a, 1996b, 2007, 2011; Rantanen, 1997; Read, 1992; Tunstall, 1981; Wu, 2000; 2007 et al.) has been shown to reflect the history and relative power of different players within the system and historically has privileged the interests of the United States and Western Europe. Significantly, Esperidião (2011b) found that coverage of Asia was improving.

In terms of agency production studies, Esperidião’s (2011a; 2011b) work was the first major update on Paterson’s (1996b) Ph.D. Dissertation. Understandably, in his summary of the literature Paterson downplayed his own contribution to the field, which is substantial (see, e.g., Paterson 1996a; 1996b; 2007; 2010; 2011; 2004 (with Annabelle Sreberny)). More importantly, like Boyd-Barrett, Paterson has emphasized the political economy of news production and the manner in which agency coverage cannot be divorced from the agency-client relationship. Esperidião (2011a; 2011b) re-emphasized this important point, which is key to understanding why particular types of stories from and about particular regions are privileged in news making, and why the changing global political economy will change some elements of news (e.g. places of interest), while others (e.g. topics, types of actors) stay much the same.

The original impetus for investigation of the role of the agencies in the global news ecosystem came from recognition of the imbalance in global

news flow that was highlighted in the MacBride report and call for a NWICO, based on theories of structural dependency and media imperialism. Critics of that report and the associated global news study, *Foreign News in the Media : International reporting in 29 Countries* (Sreberny-Mohammadi, Nordenstreng, Stevenson and Ugboajah, 1985), pointed out that the evidence did not support the assumption of a one-way flow and center-periphery model for global news, key elements of the NWICO argument. Gerald Long, Reuters managing director at the time, called the MacBride report a “monster” that reflected a “hatred of free information” (Anonymous, 1980). Long was incensed by the report’s call for the international news agencies to conform to the laws and norms of countries in which they were reporting. He saw this as a fundamental blow to freedom of the press (Anonymous, 1980).

Long noted that the UNESCO report was based on the assumption that the agencies had vast power and influence which they abused through interfering in national interests (Anonymous, 1980). When this assumption was tested in the *Foreign News in the Media* report (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985), the theses of media and cultural imperialism were not supported (Stevenson, 1984). Report co-editor Gordon Stevenson called the assumption of Western media and news agency power a “pseudo debate” resulting from theoretical failure (Stevenson, 1984). The Marxian frame that underpinned dependency theory had assumed what it was meant to prove, and when the theory was tested it failed.

What did emerge from the UNESCO study was the importance of regionalism for news (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1984; Stevenson, 1984). In terms of foreign news, countries favored news from their neighbors. Much of that regionalism was sourced locally. However, the study indicated that agencies remained the second biggest source of international news, after domestic sources (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1984). Stevenson (1984) interpreted this as evidence of the agencies’ ability “to provide timely, straightforward accounts of major events of news value around the world” (p. 136). However, as Nordenstreng (1984) noted in his criticism of Stevenson’s account, the general dilemma of positivism is that it can only report what is empirically evident. In undermining the one-way flow thesis and center-periphery model, evidence of regionalism subjected the Marxian theory on which dependency theory was based to a rigorous test. But failure to prove dependency as it was understood at the time did not mean that the concept of an imbalance in power within the global media ecosystem was wrong, only that the theory in its then current form did not explain the data.

An alternative to rejecting the political economic approach to news flow in general would have been to take the lessons of the MacBride and UNESCO reports as a salient reminder that theoretical development can only proceed apace with the empirical evidence on which it is based. As a result of the UNESCO report and its sibling study, undertaken a decade later (Sreberny & Stevenson, 1995a), political economists have acknowledged the demand for a more sophisticated modeling of the global news scene. Recent work oriented in that direction has not diminished in any way the importance of the agencies to the global news ecosystem (Boyd-Barrett, 1998b, 2010; Esperidião, 2011b; Paterson, 2007, 2011).

In particular, what has begun to emerge is a sophisticated picture of complicated agency-client inter-dependency, shifting hierarchies of relative power, models of multi-way flow, complex inter-relationships between local, national and global levels of news production, and recognition of circular production systems that reflexively both respond to and shape global events and narratives (Esperidião, 2011a, 2011b; Paterson, 2010, 2011). The key concepts in this new modeling are ‘ecology’ and ‘evolution’ (Esperidião, 2011b). Cottle (2009) has written about ‘news ecology’ with reference to “complex and differentiated forms of the flow of news in today’s local to global news environments” (p. 186, cited in Esperidião, 2011b: 108). Gillmor (2010) has referred to “journalism’s evolving ecosystem” (p. 51) and evolution of the “journalistic ecosystem” (ibid.) to account for the emerging news environment.

Among other things, what analysts such as Paterson and Esperidião have shown with respect to the evolving global news ecology is that, as the anchor of the global news ecosystem the agencies remain relatively steadfast in their core mission, constantly adapting to changing news environments while providing a service that in certain respects has remained remarkably consistent over time. The global newscape may be developing as a multiverse, but the centrality of the agencies to its formation, maintenance and development remains relatively unchanged.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the paper is to provide a ‘big picture’ of Reuters television content. The first methodological issue was to decide what to include and exclude from the sample to be analyzed. From discussions with Reuters’ personnel, the supplementary feeds, with exceptions discussed below, were ancillary to most clients’ overall needs. Different clients received very much the same service, relying on the

core feeds for most of their agency-sourced news. Asked, for example, whether a typical broadcast client in Latin America would take anything other than the core product, the answer was “*It’s unlikely. Quite frankly, they don’t need it.*” Moreover, clients who did take supplementary feeds would not take more than the minimum of the available packages to meet their needs. Therefore, although the core feeds were some 70% of Reuters’ total output (see Appendix 2), that 70% constituted a much higher percentage, up to 100%, of material any particular subscriber received from Reuters. In addition, any news that originally was planned for or broadcast on a supplementary feed could be picked up and included in the core feeds, if Reuters’ editors thought it was newsworthy beyond the niche or region the story originally served.

Critics might object that my findings reflect only a partial representation of what any particular client could receive from Reuters. This is true, but the paper does provide a ‘big picture,’ without over-estimating the importance of the supplementary feeds, even as Reuters continues to diversify its client base. Two alternatives to the method used were possible, but one provided a less accurate picture, and the other was logistically impossible. Because the supplementary feeds made up 30% of Reuters’ total output, but less than 30% of what any individual subscriber received from Reuters, had this paper used Reuters’ total output as the basis from which to generate the picture presented below, the ‘big picture’ would have been less accurate than the less than completely accurate method adopted. The alternative – to build a database of each subscriber’s usage, and from that generate the picture of what Reuters made available to clients – would have been completely accurate within the range of sampling error. However, this approach was ruled out as unfeasible, since it required access to every client’s subscription list. Therefore, this paper adopted an approach that provides the best possible picture, given the methodological constraints of doing the research.

With respect to the role of the supplementary feeds, although the literature has identified regionalization of agency services as a tendency, that trend was not new. Reuters global editorial structure is a regional structure, reflected in the presence in the core feeds of America, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Evidence of localization or regionalization in Reuters output reflects not a fragmentation of the service, but the comprehensive character of the core service. Increasing localization of output is evident less in a broader range of news than in language-specific scripts (Arabic, English, French, German) and voiced packages in a range of languages (Arabic, English) that rework existing materials.

The methodological assumption on which this paper was based is that although it draws on an artificially restricted subset of all news made available to clients, that subset provides a comprehensive insight into the pool from which most agency-sourced is drawn. Nevertheless, certain exceptions to this general observation are evident. In recent years, both AP and Reuters have moved to provide more third-party material that bypasses agency editors. In early 2011, Reuters added *CCTV News*, produced by China Central Television, and *Hollywood TV*, a tabloid television service, to its stable of third-party content, which previously was restricted to the occasional Video News Release (VNR) and its two services covering South Asia: *Subcontinent* and *Subcontinent Extra*, produced by New Delhi-based Asian News International (ANI), with which Reuters has a long relationship. Whether to include ‘*Subcon*’ and ‘*Subcon Extra*’ in this analysis proved a difficult decision. ‘*Subcon*’ was excluded because Reuters included in its core Asia or World feeds any material produced by ANI which Reuters considered globally newsworthy. Conversely, ‘*Subcon Extra*’ was a hyper-local feed of stories of little interest outside South Asia.

Both *Hollywood TV* and *CCTV News* were made available to all clients. Although Reuters originally began distributing *CCTV News* to satisfy its “*clients’ increasing appetite for news from China*” (Reuters, 2011), a test sampling of *CCTV News* content indicated that *CCTV* was producing a global rather than China-specific package, a problem brought to my attention by Reuters’ personnel, who, however, noted that clients found *CCTV News* a “*useful source of stories about China.*” Nevertheless, as with *Subcon* and *Subcon Extra* on the South Asia story, Reuters would include on its Asia or World feeds any China-related material from *CCTV* which Reuters’ editors considered globally newsworthy, prompting me to drop *CCTV News* from the analysis. According to Reuters, *Hollywood TV* met a “*crucial role for entertainment programming needs*” (Romenesko, 2011). It was therefore not included in this analysis, given the focus of the paper on news not “entertainment programming.”

Once the decision what to include in the sample was made, the second methodological issue was to develop an efficient, reliable and representative sample of Reuters television core content. Riffe et al. (1996) showed that a constructed sample provided a better result than simple random sampling for efficiently generating statistically representative samples of newspaper and television news content. Riffe, Aust & Lacy (1993) determined that two constructed weeks was enough to represent one year of a newspaper’s coverage, or one constructed week enough for six months of content.

However, for a constructed week to represent six months of content the sample must be drawn from the entire period it represents (see Riffe et al., 1993: 134 for an explanation). Due to time constraints, this paper constructed the week in consecutive weeks, sampling every eighth day for seven weeks. The method was a variation of that used in the UNESCO report (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). This paper dropped the consecutive week in that study to avoid skewing the picture towards 'hot' topics, even though in the UNESCO sample the two weeks showed "little significant difference" (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985: 13). The sample was drawn in 2011, on June 23, July 1, July 9, July 17, July 25, August 2 and August 10.

The sample was generated from Reuters online scripting system, Videopoint, which was available at <http://videopoint.reuters.com>. The feeds sampled were America, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Life!, Sports and World. The feeds matched what a Reuters manager indicated to me would be what the "average client" who subscribed to Reuters basic comprehensive news package would receive on any given day.

Whether the script and shotlist can be an adequate substitute for the audio-visuals of the story is an obvious question. Walma van der Molen (2001), for example, suggested coding schema for television content analysis should recognize the imprecision of text picture correspondence in television news. However her argument applied to reception not production studies. For the agency client relationship to work, news producers must assume that the scripts and shotlists of an agency feed are an accurate representation of the audiovisual feed. Of the reasons given for client reworking of agency material when it occurs, client distrust of the supplier's description of its product has not been identified. The opposite is the case, with client trust the norm and widespread reproduction in retail news of the wholesale story (Boyd-Barrett, 2010; Clausen, 2003; Paterson, 2007, 2011).

As already noted, most clients got most of their agency-sourced news from the core feeds. Apart from the supplementary feeds noted above, Reuters produced online news, which was drawn from existing material, and generated live feeds, highlights of which were packaged on core feeds. The online and live news were therefore ignored to prevent story duplication.

The data in the core scripts and shotlists were re-configured for analysis using Excel. Duplicate stories were removed to ensure that each story was only represented once in the sample, leaving 691 stories

over seven days. Given that the 691 stories potentially represented seven times that many unique stories (4,837), the standard formula (Figure 1) for generating a representative random sample indicated that a sub-sample of 356 stories drawn from the 691-story sample would reliably represent seven weeks of content at the 95% confidence level with a confidence interval of 0.05.

Figure 1: Formula for calculating minimum sample size for a specific confidence level

$$n = \left(\frac{\frac{P(1-P)}{A^2}}{\frac{Z^2}{N} + \frac{P(1-P)}{N}} \right)$$

| |
|---|
| n = sample size required |
| N = population (4,837) |
| P = estimated variance (0.5 for 50-50) |
| A = Confidence interval (0.05 for 5%) |
| Z = Confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence) |

Source: Adapted from Watson (2001)

The unit of analysis was the script, including the shotlist. The coding scheme was adapted from that used in the UNESCO study (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985) and the related Global News-Flow study (Sreberny and Stevenson, 1995a). The variables coded and their definitions are shown in Table 1. The variables chosen included those typical of content analysis designed to evaluate whether certain topics, countries and people dominated the news; what types of news predominated; and whether the news tended to particular foci. The question of story source was also investigated, given that the agenda-setting function of wholesalers for retailers is not one way. As Boyd-Barrett (1980), Esperidião (2011b) and Paterson (2011) have shown, the wholesalers rely in part on retailers for material, and retailers pressure wholesalers to generate some stories over and against others.

Inter-coder reliability was blind tested by the author and a second coder trained by the author on a randomly chosen five percent (18 scripts) drawn from the 356-script sub-sample. Holsti's Coefficient and Scott's Pi were reported (Table 1). Only one variable, 'Initiator', failed Scott's Pi and was excluded from analysis. Type 2 (Disruptive / Non-disruptive) was borderline. It had a Scott's Pi of 0.64, indicating at best "marginal reliability" (Reinard, 2006: 129). Riffe (2005: 154), e.g., suggested that a Scott's Pi of 0.68 was the minimum threshold for tentative analysis. The remaining variables scored an acceptable level of inter-coder reliability, assumed as at least 0.75 (based on Wimmer & Dominick 2006: 169).

Table 1: Variables coded & definition; agreement tested by Holsti's coefficient and Scott's Pi

| Variable | Definition | Choices | Agreed | Disagreed | Holsti | Scott's Pi |
|-------------|---|---------|--------|-----------|--------|------------|
| Duration | Length of story (mm:ss) | 1 | 18 | 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Source | Source material used in story | 1+ | 43 | 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Sound | Mute / Natural / Language(s) | 3+ | 51 | 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Focus | Domestic / International | 2 | 17 | 1 | 0.94 | 0.88 |
| Topic | Two main story topics | 18 | 30 | 6 | 0.83 | 0.80 |
| Type 1 | Event / process | 3 | 18 | 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Type 2 | Disruptive / quotidian | 3 | 15 | 3 | 0.83 | 0.64 |
| Type 3 | Breaking / diaried | 3 | 18 | 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Initiator | Who / what initiated the story | 7 | 12 | 6 | 0.67 | 0.57 |
| Place | Country / place where story happened | 208 | 19* | 0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Location | Countries / places mentioned in stories | 208 | 41 | 3 | 0.93 | 0.93 |
| Role | Role of person speaking | 25 | 26 | 3 | 0.90 | 0.87 |
| Nationality | Nationality of person speaking | 208 | 27 | 2 | 0.93 | 0.92 |
| Gender | Gender of person speaking | 4 | 26 | 3 | 0.90 | 0.76 |

* One story tested was a composite of two stories, which both coders picked up in the test.

Coding issues were resolved as follows:

A story was defined as 'international' if it dealt with more than one country or international entity (e.g. Taiwan), involved an international institution or a country, or an international or transnational institution such as an international NGO or transnational corporation. Any story not meeting the definition of international was coded domestic.

Stories were assigned a maximum of two topic codes. The decision to double-code topic followed recognition in the UNESCO study that few stories are only about one event, process, person or issue (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985: 15). For example, economic policy stories were obviously about politics and economics. A rainstorm that flooded a harvest region destroying a year's livelihood could primarily be a weather story, a disaster story or an economics or human interest story depending on how it was framed. However, rather than follow the UNESCO study and code for a main topic and sub-topics (ibid.: 61), coder testing for this paper revealed that distinguishing between the main and subsidiary topics frustrated inter-coder reliability. Treating both topics as of equal value removed ambiguity from the decision-making process. A maximum of two topics per story was decided on, since

coder testing indicated that two topics was efficient for inter-coder reliability and left both coders with a subjective sense that the stories had been adequately described.

Place was defined as the site where the story happened, as defined by 'Location' in the script. Location as a coding category was any country or site (at sea, in space, etc.) mentioned in a story. It included multiple-country locations such as the European Union and non-country locations such as the United Nations. Location was an alternative to Place to situate a news story, since Location accounted for multiple-site stories. Data presentation for Place and Location was restricted to places that constituted at least one percent of stories (see p. 3 for Krippendorff's (2004: 122) note about sampling for least likely units).

Type was a coding category based on that used in the Global News-Flow study (1995a) to account for the manner in which topic coding did not distinguish between forms of news: Type 1 (event / process); Type 2 (disruptive / quotidian); Type 3 (breaking / diaried). As noted above, Type 2 (disruptiveness) presented particular problems for the coders. The 1995 study used a broad definition for generating agreement. A story was 'disruptive' if

it focused on “war, natural disasters, accidents, demonstrations and protest (even when peaceful and legal), crime, violence, and similar kinds of activities and behavior” (Sreberny & Stevenson, 1995b). Test coding that definition produced a nicely symmetrical picture of the news (Table 7), in which the proportion of disruptive and breaking events dovetailed. However, the category definition, as I understood it, collapsed the manifest and latent content of a story (see below), conflating, e.g., meetings and discussions about disruptive events with the events themselves. This paper therefore redefined the category to code as ‘quotidian’ any story that in itself was not disruptive (news conferences, leaders’ meetings, etc.) but was *about* a disruptive event (Table 8), resulting in marginal inter-coder reliability. Nevertheless, for reasons explained in the discussion, this variable was included.

Looking to necessary caveats associated with this study, Berelson (1952) noted that content analysis is appropriate for “*the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication*” (cited in Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999: 115, emphasis added). Therefore, no attempt was made to read beyond the manifest content to find latent, unintended or contextualized meanings. Qualitative analysis was foreclosed and with it any engagement with the ideological function of news content; the function of content within hegemonic knowledge systems; the agenda-setting function of news; issues of ownership and control, censorship and self-censorship, etc. and their impact on news. The loss of nuance associated with qualitative or combined qualitative and quantitative methods limited the analysis to what Deacon et al. (1999) called the ‘big picture,’ a schematic map, however faulty, of Reuters core output.

Finally, Krippenndorff (2004: 122) cautioned against under-estimating least likely units. To avoid this, this paper conservatively reported sparsely represented attributes of a variable. Where a variable had relatively open-ended attributes (e.g. Language, Place, Location) either the dominant attributes were reported, or a composite or OTHER category was reported for attributes representing less than one percent of a variable.

Data⁶

Count, Duration, Focus

On average, for its core feeds Reuters produced ninety-nine unique stories each day. Average story length was two minutes thirty seconds. Eighty-one percent of the stories had an international focus; nineteen percent had a domestic focus.

Story sources and restrictions

In its simplest terms, source was whose camera recorded the story. Sources ranged from North Korea’s KCNA news agency to up-picked material from Hamas. On average, 1.24 sources were used per story. Table 2 shows the proportion of content that was sourced from Reuters. Table 3 shows the top sources of the news.

Table 2: Proportion of Reuters and other content in the news

| Proportion of Reuters content | % Content |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Reuters total | 68 |
| Reuters only | 54 |
| Reuters and at least one other source | 13 |
| No Reuters | 32 |

Table 3: Sources of Reuters output

| Source | % Source of story |
|--|-------------------|
| Reuters | 55 |
| Pool (video shared by participating organizations or institutions) | 7 |
| Handout (video provided free by 3rd parties) | 6 |
| NBC (USA) | 3 |
| ITN (UK) | 3 |
| IMG (Sport) | 2 |
| OTHER | 24 |

Seventy-one percent of core material had no restrictions. The most common restriction was geographic (23% of material). The second most common restriction (4% of material) was on sports, which Reuters regularly sourced from third parties, such as IMG (a source on 2% of stories). Various other ad hoc restrictions affected the other 2% of material.

Topic

Table 4: Topics (one percent threshold)

| | TOPIC | % |
|----|-----------------------|------|
| 1 | Politics / Government | 25.1 |
| 2 | Crime / Courts | 13.1 |
| 3 | Human Interest | 12.5 |
| 4 | Economics | 10.1 |
| 5 | Conflict | 8.6 |
| 6 | Sport | 8.3 |
| 7 | Protest | 6.7 |
| 8 | Accident / Disaster | 2.9 |
| 9 | Rights | 2.6 |
| 10 | Culture | 2.4 |
| 11 | Women | 1.5 |
| 12 | Aid / Development | 1.1 |
| 13 | Religion | 1.1 |
| 14 | COMPOSITE* | 4.0 |

* Ecology / Environment; Education; Health; Media; Science / Technology / Weather

Place

Table 5: Place where story happened (one percent threshold)

| | PLACE | % |
|--|--------------|------|
| | USA | 12.9 |
| | UK | 9.8 |
| | France | 5.1 |
| | China | 4.2 |
| | Libya | 3.7 |
| | Germany | 3.4 |
| | Norway | 3.1 |
| | Argentina | 2.8 |
| | Mexico | 2.5 |
| | Italy | 2.2 |
| | South Africa | 2.2 |
| | Turkey | 2.2 |
| | Greece | 2.0 |
| | Russia | 2.0 |
| | Syria | 2.0 |
| | Afghanistan | 1.4 |
| | India | 1.4 |
| | Monaco | 1.4 |
| | Palestine | 1.4 |
| | Poland | 1.4 |
| | South Sudan | 1.4 |
| | Belgium | 1.1 |
| | Cuba | 1.1 |
| | Netherlands | 1.1 |
| | Pakistan | 1.1 |
| | UN | 1.1 |
| | Yemen | 1.1 |
| | OTHER | 24.7 |

Location

Table 6: Locations mentioned in story (one percent threshold)

| | LOCATION | % |
|--|--------------|------|
| | USA | 12.5 |
| | UK | 6.5 |
| | France | 4.5 |
| | Germany | 3.5 |
| | China | 3.3 |
| | Spain | 2.8 |
| | UN | 2.6 |
| | EU | 2.5 |
| | Libya | 2.3 |
| | Italy | 1.9 |
| | Afghanistan | 1.8 |
| | South Africa | 1.8 |
| | Norway | 1.7 |
| | Australia | 1.6 |
| | Turkey | 1.5 |
| | Argentina | 1.5 |
| | Greece | 1.5 |
| | NATO | 1.5 |
| | Syria | 1.5 |
| | Brazil | 1.3 |
| | Israel | 1.3 |
| | Russia | 1.3 |
| | Mexico | 1.2 |
| | Pakistan | 1.2 |
| | Palestine | 1.2 |
| | India | 1.1 |
| | Japan | 1.0 |

Type

Table 7: Type of story (Type 2 coded for manifest and latent content)

| | | % | | % |
|--------|---------------|----|-----------|----|
| Type 1 | Event | 96 | Process | 4 |
| Type 2 | Disruptive | 53 | Quotidian | 47 |
| Type 3 | Breaking News | 53 | Diaried | 47 |

Table 8 : Type of story (Type 2 coded for manifest content)

| | | % | | % |
|--------|---------------|----|-----------|----|
| Type 1 | Event | 96 | Process | 4 |
| Type 2 | Disruptive | 33 | Quotidian | 67 |
| Type 3 | Breaking News | 53 | Diaried | 47 |

Sound, language

Most stories were distributed with natural sound, without a voiced track. Less than one percent of the material lacked natural sound and was delivered mute. In almost every case a mute story was either a photograph, or sourced from a third party and had no natural sound component in the original, e.g. police surveillance video. Whenever a person speaking was part of the original story, his or her voice was included in the story, with translation of the audio into English in the script. The scripts and shotlists were delivered in English. Sound bites were provided in 39 languages of which the dominant ones are shown in Table 9.

Table 9 : Language (one percent threshold)

| LANGUAGE | % |
|----------|------|
| English | 42.9 |
| Spanish | 13.5 |
| Arabic | 7.9 |
| French | 6.2 |
| Chinese* | 3.2 |
| German | 2.6 |
| Korean | 2.4 |
| Turkish | 2.1 |
| Italian | 1.8 |
| Russian | 1.8 |

| | |
|------------------|------|
| Albanian | 1.5 |
| Bahasa Malaysia | 1.2 |
| Bahasa Indonesia | 1.2 |
| Bengali | 1.2 |
| OTHER | 10.6 |

* *Mandarin and Cantonese*

Who speaks : Role, nationality, gender

Seventy-nine percent of those who spoke in stories were men, almost four times more than women. The roles of speakers are shown in Table 10. Table 11 shows the dominant nationalities of speakers.

Table 10 : Role of person who spoke (one percent threshold)

| ROLE | % |
|---|------|
| Ordinary person | 26.5 |
| Ruling party politician / Government | 22.3 |
| Sports person | 11.0 |
| Protester | 7.2 |
| International Organization representative | 4.1 |
| Unionist / Worker / Employee | 3.8 |
| Industry / Business leader | 3.6 |
| Judiciary / Lawyer | 3.4 |
| Legal political opposition | 2.7 |
| Military | 2.7 |
| Culture figure | 2.7 |
| Police / Security | 2.2 |
| NGO representative | 1.7 |
| Scientist / Academic | 1.5 |
| Media worker | 1.4 |
| Religious figure | 1.4 |
| COMPOSITE* | 1.7 |

* *Alleged criminal / criminal; Aristocracy / Royalty; (anti-government) Militant; Victim of war*

Table 11: Nationalities of speakers (one percent threshold)

| NATIONALITY | % |
|-----------------|------|
| USA | 13.5 |
| UK | 9.4 |
| Unknown* | 7.2 |
| International** | 5.1 |
| France | 3.9 |
| China*** | 3.6 |
| Mexico | 3.4 |
| Germany | 2.6 |
| Norway | 2.1 |
| Argentina | 1.9 |
| Afghanistan | 1.7 |
| Italy | 1.7 |
| Libya | 1.7 |
| India | 1.5 |
| Cuba | 1.4 |
| Israel | 1.4 |
| Russia | 1.4 |
| South Africa | 1.4 |
| South Korea | 1.4 |
| Spain | 1.4 |
| Yemen | 1.4 |
| Brazil | 1.2 |
| Greece | 1.2 |
| Monaco | 1.2 |
| Philippines | 1.2 |
| Turkey | 1.2 |
| Venezuela | 1.2 |
| Bolivia | 1.0 |
| Chile | 1.0 |
| Japan | 1.0 |
| North Korea | 1.0 |
| Pakistan | 1.0 |
| Uruguay | 1.0 |
| OTHER | 17.6 |

* The coders were not able to determine the nationality of a speaker.

** This category included all representatives of international and/or transnational institutions.

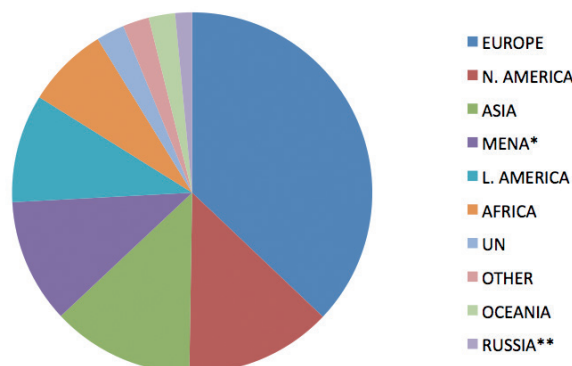
*** China, including Hong Kong, excluding Taiwan

Discussion

Consistent with Paterson's (2011) findings, Reuters world was a 'man's world,' dominated by the English language, the United States and Europe. Largely through the rise of China, Asia was present, but hardly in keeping with the 'Asian century' thesis that has resonated in recent years, or to the extent that growing political and business attention to the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) would suggest. Whereas the USA, and Europe's four biggest economies (Germany, France, Italy, UK) generated 28.5% of the news, the BRICS accounted for 8.6%. Apart from a few 'hot spots' such as Libya (war), Afghanistan (war), and Mexico (violence), Africa (7.3%), Asia (12.8%) and Latin America (9.7%) played a relatively minor role in the news. Regional distribution of news (Figure 2), confirmed the findings of earlier studies that a few countries and areas dominate the news. Europe and North America generated 50% of Reuters core output.

Paterson (2011: 26) noted that one of the "most consistent aspects of television news agency narratives" has been a "focus on the United States and the U.K." This paper's finding on Place (Table 5), Location (Table 6) and the Nationality of speakers (Table 11) confirmed the continued validity of that observation. The proportion of U.S. coverage (12.5%, Location) was consistent with the 1995 News-Flow study (12%, see Paterson, 2011: 27), although it was lower than Paterson (2011: 28,30) reported for follow-up studies from APTN data from 2000 (U.S. 37%) and 2004 (U.S. 23%). Paterson's 2004 23% figure was consistent with Clare's (1997, cited in Paterson, 2011, p. 27). In 2010, Esperidião reported 30% U.S. coverage (Paterson, 2011: 30). Relating the literature to the findings here, what was clear with respect to geographic coverage was that the United States still remained the dominant focus of Reuters coverage. Fluctuations could be explained in part, as Paterson (2011: 28,31) noted, by the intensity of irregular events such as the breakup of Yugoslavia (1995), or the Haiti earthquake in January 2010. However, the broader data set of this study might also be relevant to explaining why the proportion of U.S. coverage was consistent with the findings of the two week dataset in the 1995 News-Flow study, but lower than in the shorter-term studies.

Figure 2: Output by region



* Middle East and North Africa

** Russia did not fit well in Europe or Asia.

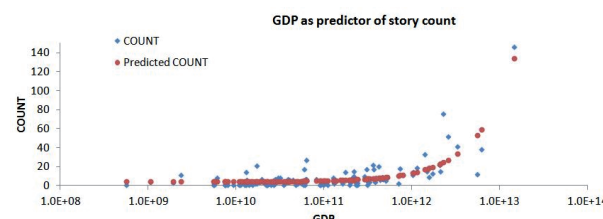
Against continued U.S. dominance, more striking was the virtual absence of much of the planet, a finding also consistent with earlier studies (Clare, 1997; Paterson, 2011). Only 24 locations breached the one percent threshold for inclusion in the statistics. Although 141 countries and entities were in the news at least once, 173 countries and entities were not in the news often enough to individually constitute one percent of locations.

In asking what makes a location newsworthy, through regression analysis of the 1995 News-Flow study, Wu (2000: 110) found “moderate” (p. 125) support for the hypothesis that the presence of an international news agency in a country would predict whether that country was subsequently in the foreign news of another country. His finding supported the gate keeper theory that was one of the primary concerns informing the NWICO debate.

Wu’s (2000) hypothesis that trade volume would predict foreign news was “overwhelmingly supported” (p. 124). Assuming from Wu’s findings the possibility of a high degree of correlation between agency interest and economic issues, this paper ran a regression on GDP (unadjusted, World Bank figures) as the independent variable, testing story count by location as the dependent variable. The results (Figure 3) suggested that GDP was a relatively reliable predictor of agency interest, explaining 73% of the news: $P = 0.00$, $F = 0.00$, Adjusted Rsquared = 0.73 (see Appendix 3 for the test results). Possible explanations for the 27% of stories by location not explained by GDP require further investigation. They could include the traditional foci in the literature, such as the role of Reuters as an historically British institution and the location of APTN in London, which go some way to explaining the consistent

measurement of Britain as the second or third paramount focus of agency news after the USA (Paterson, 2011: 26,30).

Figure 3: Regression plot. GDP as predictor of story count by location



With respect to Topic, consistent with previous studies, so-called ‘hard news’ dominated, with politics, crime, economics and conflict four of the top five topics. The prevalence of human interest stories so high in Reuters output (Table 4) may have been the result of double-coding Topic, rather than a softening of Reuters editorial focus. Most soft topics such as religion, aid and development, women, culture, and rights were of little interest to Reuters. Of least interest were soft topics such as ecology and the environment, education, health, science and technology, and the weather. These findings were consistent with the literature, although the proportions of non-representation may be changing. For example, Paterson (2011: 28) noted in 1995 that women were the main actor in 13% of agency coverage. In the equivalent category in this study (women who speak) that figure had risen by 50% to 21%. To test the degree to which women and men spoke on different topics, news hardness (politics, economics, conflict) was used (Clare, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1985). Topics 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, (Table 4) were defined as hard, the rest as soft. The results (Figure 4) indicated that news hardness was not gender-biased.

Given the distribution of topics (Table 4), who spoke appeared to be an anomaly, since ‘ordinary people’ provided most sound bites (Table 10). However, on closer inspection (Figure 5), the overwhelming majority of ordinary people spoke on soft topics. ‘Serious’ roles dominated hard topics. Sixty-seven percent of news was hard, 33% soft. This seemed counter intuitively high, but was perhaps in line with the literature’s recognition of the increasing ‘tabloidization’ of television news (Paterson, 2011: 28). Moreover, this proportion would have been even higher had *Hollywood TV* been included in the sample (see Appendix 2).

Figure 4: Percentage hardness of news by gender of speaker

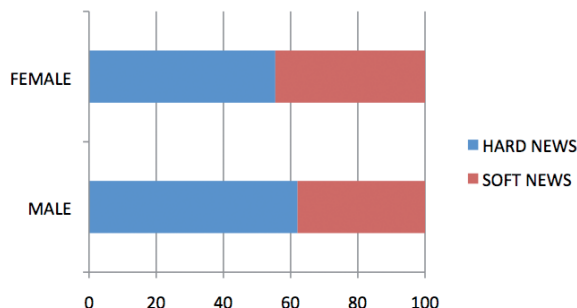


Figure 5: Percentage speaker by role and hardness of topic

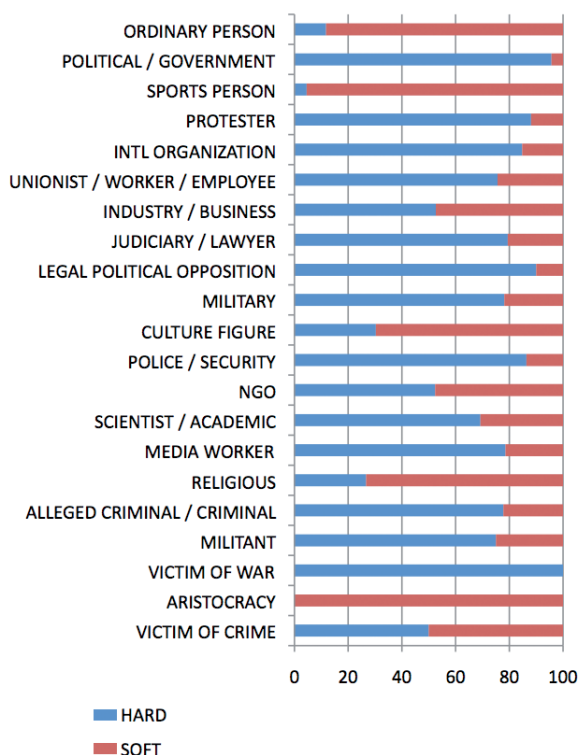


Event-oriented news (Type 1, 96%, Table 7) dominated process-oriented news (4%). Diaried events (Type 3, 47%) confirmed the continued salience of Galtung's and Ruge's (1965) classic observation of the prevalence of 'olds' in the news. With respect to disruptiveness (Type 2, Table 7), Campbell (1996) drew attention to the possibility that disruption has been an over-estimated foreign news value. Coding for manifest and latent content (the 'meaning' of the story), this study found 53% of news to be disruptive. Coding for manifest content only (what the story said as opposed to what it meant), that figure fell to 33%. Campbell (1996) suggested that confirmation that most international news is not disruptive would be important. However, caution must be exercised in interpreting the more conservative (33%) of the two figures presented here, since inter-coder reliability was marginal at best for the variable.

With regard to language, English dominated the news (42.9% of sound bites, Table 9). In distant second, third and fourth places were Spanish, Arabic and French. Chinese was fifth, 50% less prevalent than French. Reuters was and remains an Anglophone company, despite its image as a global news agency.

The history of Reuters as an Anglophone company was also evident in its sourcing of stories. Reuters produced 55% of its own output (Table 3). In its core output, it relied in part or wholly on third-party sources for 45% of material. Not only were a U.S. (NBC) and British (ITN) company its biggest suppliers at 3% each respectively of output, but somewhat ironically, given Reuters' geographic focus on the United States and Britain, the agency was largely absent from the places that dominated its coverage. Using Place (Table 5) as a measure Figure 6 shows the proportion of Reuters and 'other' sources on the U.S. and U.K. stories respectively.

Figure 6: USA and UK stories by percentage source



CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper reconfirmed the degree to which one of the world's two paramount sources of agency-based foreign news provided its clients with a relatively restricted range of material. The world is changing, but either it has not changed as much as proponents of diversification in news sourcing would argue, or Reuters has not kept pace with that change judging from the content of its core output. The 'big picture' from Reuters was an Anglophone U.S. and U.K.-centric world. Whereas the centrality of the

USA to news was understandable, the continued focus on Britain was not. This paper does not suggest a return to the acrimony that accompanied the NWICO debate. But even global economic powers such as Brazil were largely absent from Reuters core output, while the continued marginalization of Africa, given its one-billion population, and increasing function as a resource base for e.g. China, was also troubling.

In seeking an explanation for Reuters coverage, this paper determined that GDP reliably predicted much of Reuters news. However, this does not excuse Reuters from a broader responsibility to the global public, beyond serving its clients according to a 'user pays principle' and hierarchy of national wealth. As Paterson (2011) noted, defining news as client interest "*sits uneasily with the reality*" that the news agencies "*significantly determine the nature of international public affairs discourse*" (p. 29). Nordenstreng (1984: 138-139) notably argued against detractors of the original NWICO debate who were quick to use the findings of the UNESCO report as an excuse to dismiss the debate. He noted that news media "*are far from apolitical by nature ... instead of remaining neutral, [they] should actively contribute to peace, international understanding, and other related universal values*". Media that track power defined as money (GDP), and serve power so-defined, fall short of serving the broader public interest. This paper has shown that Reuters does exactly that.

Nevertheless, Reuters has made many changes to its coverage in recent years, all of them outside the scope of this paper. The rationale for including only the core services in the analysis rested on an assumption that this provided the best fit 'big picture' of the pool of news from which most clients drew most of their agency-sourced news. As a result, the role of the third-party services from CCTV (*CCTV News*) and ANI (*Subcon* and *Subcon Extra*) was not measured in this analysis. Given that combined these services provided 17.6 percent of Reuters' total output (Appendix 2), only access to client subscription lists would confirm whether that assumption, based on conversations with Reuters' personnel, was justified. Therefore caution must be exercised in overemphasizing the degree to which Reuters lacks a South Asia and China focus. Certainly the case could be made, based on this research, that Reuters should include *Subcon* in its core feeds. Given the hyper-localization of *Subcon Extra*, the case for elevating that feed is less compelling. Given that all clients receive *CCTV News*, this paper most likely underreported the availability of news from China. Nevertheless, if the BRICS countries are taken as a whole to represent the changing character of the developing world, then the relative marginalization of Russia and Bra-

zil, even accounting for Reuters' total output, is problematic. The continued irrelevance to the news of Africa cannot be accounted for at all by looking at Reuters' total output, even including *Africa Daily* and *Africa Journal*.

As already noted, inclusion of the full Reuters service would have provided a less accurate 'big picture' than did the focus on the core feeds. Analysis of the supplementary feeds still would not have accounted for their marginalization in the first place. Reuters core feeds were a good indicator of the company's editorial priorities and provided an accurate enough 'big picture' of the news to suggest that Reuters' foci exclude, except in exceptional circumstances, much of the planet and its people from the news.

Further research trajectories indicated by this paper's findings could include investigation of the agenda-setting function of the agencies in light of Wu's (2000) confirmation that the presence of a news agency is a moderate predictor of foreign news, and my finding that GDP was relatively reliable as a predictor of story count by location in Reuters output. Esperidião's (2011a) and Paterson's (2011) modeling of a complex political economy of the agency-client relationship should not be interpreted as proof that the agencies are responding only to client interest. As an old institution with deep roots in the news ecosystem, Reuters not only responds to, but shapes the news and global discourse. On that count alone, the continued narrowness of the findings of this paper were troubling. As Reuters expands its client base into new areas of news such as content-specific channels focusing on e.g. business, or entertainment, access to Reuters' client lists would indicate how much impact this new business was having on its existing business model, which is predicated on providing as comprehensive a service as is possible, given the political, economic, historical, institutional and cultural constraints that narrow its output, which is then 'sliced and diced' as needed for different clients.

Finally, the data presented here are half the solution to a puzzle that neither Reuters nor AP want solved. That is, exactly how redundant is one of the two agencies? Research has suggested that little distinguishes the two. Comparing the data presented here to the same data points from APTN would end any further speculation on this question.

NOTES

¹ I have chosen to use Reuters throughout, rather than Thomson-Reuters, to highlight that Reuters continues to assert its own identity within the larger company, following its sale to Thomson in 2008. See, e.g., the Reuters website at <http://reuters.com>.

² Calculated from Reuters' total output from October 30, 2012 to November 29, 2012. For the complete set of feeds and its comparison to the core feeds analyzed see Appendix 2, which was calculated using the output from the sample analyzed and the figures for total output from October 30 to November 29, 2012. The comparison assumed that output from late 2012 was similar to output from early 2011.

³ A Spanish-language package of voiced materials has been added since the research for this paper.

⁴ The scripting system has since migrated to Reuters Mediaexpress at <https://go.mediaexpress.reuters.com>. For a screenshot of Videopoint, see Appendix 4.

⁵ The codebook, its procedures and instructions, including those for testing inter-coder reliability, is available from the author.

⁶ The data was reported as percentages to the nearest whole figure, to avoid the appearance of unproblematic accuracy.

⁷ Excluding North Africa, which was included with the Middle East to create MENA, which is an editorial category that includes the predominantly Arab-Islamic world in that region.

⁸ <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD> Accessed October 12, 2011. The data was 2010 figures. Where data was unavailable for 2010, I used the most recent available year. For Taiwan, I used CIA World Factbook data <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> Accessed May 29, 2012.

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ABSTRACT | RÉSUMÉ | RESUMO

En • This paper analyzes seven weeks of Reuters television content from mid-2011. The paper situates academic interest in the global news agencies in the argument for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). It reviews the literature on research of news agency production and identifies the latest modeling of an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the agency-client relationship. The paper describes the ‘big picture’ of the world that Reuters makes available to most clients. It then analyzes that picture in terms of the extant literature and history of Reuters content to determine the degree of change, if any, that is evident in Reuters output today, compared to the past. The paper finds that Reuters continues to focus on the United States and Western Europe. It continues to focus on hard news topics, such as politics, economics, crime and conflict as its core news. It remains a largely Anglophone service and most of its voices of authority are male. Significantly, the paper finds that GDP is a reliable predictor of story count by geographic focus in Reuters output.

Keywords: content analysis, GDP, news agency, NWICO, Reuters

Fr • Cet article analyse sept semaines de contenu Reuters destiné à la télévision, depuis le milieu de l’année 2011. Il s’intéresse à la place des agences de presse internationales dans l’argumentaire d’un Nouvel Ordre Mondial de l’Information et de la Communication (NOMIC). Il propose un état de l’art de la recherche portant sur la production des agences de presse, et révèle l’appréhension de plus en plus sophistiquée de la relation agence-client. L’article décrit l’approche du monde que Reuters propose à ses clients. Il l’analyse ensuite au prisme de la littérature portant sur Reuters, ainsi que son histoire, pour en déterminer le degré de changement, s’il y en a, entre le contenu de Reuters produit hier, et ce qui est émis aujourd’hui. Nous avons trouvé que Reuters continue de se focaliser sur les États-Unis et l’Europe de l’Ouest. Le cœur de sa production porte également toujours sur les sujets d’actualité chaude liés à la politique, à l’économie, au crime et au conflit. Reuters est toujours un service largement anglophone, et les décideurs sont en grande partie des hommes. Enfin, l’article montre que le PIB est un indice fiable pour mesurer la quantité d’informations que produit Reuters sur une zone géographique.

Mots-clés : analyse de contenu, PIB, agence de presse, NOMIC, Reuters

Pt • Este artigo analisa sete semanas do conteúdo da Reuters produzido a partir de meados de 2011 e direcionado à televisão. O estudo se interessa pelo papel das agências de notícia internacionais em meio ao debate sobre uma Nova Ordem Mundial para a Informação e a Comunicação (NOMIC). Propõe uma revisão do estado da arte das pesquisas sobre a produção das agências de notícias e revela uma apreensão cada vez mais sofisticada sobre a relação agência-cliente. O artigo descreve a visão de mundo que a Reuters propõe a seus clientes. Busca, em seguida, sob o prisma da literatura sobre a Reuters bem como sua história, determinar o grau de modificação, se ela existe, entre o conteúdo da Reuters produzido no dia anterior, e que é veiculado no noticiário do dia. Os resultados mostram que a Reuters continua a se focalizar nos Estados Unidos e na Europa Ocidental. O âmbito da sua produção também se centra sempre nas notícias sobre política, economia, crime e conflito. A Reuters ainda é um serviço amplamente anglófono e as autoridades que falam são, em grande parte, homens. Finalmente, o artigo mostra que o PIB é um indicador fiável para medir a quantidade de informações produzidas pela Reuters sobre uma zona geográfica.

Palavras-chave: análise de conteúdo, PIB, agência de notícias, NOMIC, Reuters

