How is Islamic State represented and framed on BBC News Online in comparison to Al Jazeera Online?

METHODOLOGY & SOURCES

The chosen research methods will offer an in-depth analysis of how these two news outlets, BBC News online and Al Jazeera Online cover Islamic State and their actions around the world. Entman (1991) explained how having two comparative case studies helped the magnification of biases, framing, or other judgements journalists use when constructing a narrative (cited in Schaefer, et al., 2003: 94).

The first step would be content analysis to gather quantitative data. Content analysis as a scientific tool will offer new insights, increases a researchers understanding of a certain particular phenomena or informs practical action (Krippendorff 2004). By using the two websites I can tally what words, headlines and names that are frequently used when reporting acts of terrorism. This form of analysis provides a systematic approach (Weaver 2007), however, this method alone doesn't provide meaning and doesn't offer a contextual analysis which would provide an examination of tone/inference (Perkins and Holland 2008: 279).

To balance I this will then take the quantitative data I have collated and analyse the words further. Through discourse analysis I will magnify the language used and in what tone. I will look at how the news outlet is using certain words to create the framing of an event, this will help me work out the angle they are creating. This follows the principles of Van Gorp (2007) who suggested that the strong abstract nature of frames means a qualitative approach should be matched with a quantitative method.

Strenghts & Weaknesses

+ An area of study and topic which is relevant now and focuses how online publications cover events.
+ Covers two websites that differ geographically and culturally.
+ The methods of research allow in depth and thorough analysis.
+ Due to the vast coverage there will be plenty of case studies to analyse.
+ It’s an ever changing subject and the coverage style can change over time.
- Articles online may have been edited from their original publication.
- Scholarly work will not be as detailed or thorough due to how recent some attacks have been.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acts of terror across the globe apply a lot of pressure to news organisations to get the news out first and get it accurate. The public rely on these media organisations to break down these events into manageable and smaller bite sized pieces because they don’t have the time to understand complex issues and all the background (Lippmann, 1922). Therefore, they have to choose what’s left in and out of a story, this concept of choosing and packaging current issues is known as framing. (Entman, 1993).

Altheide (2006), Hoffman (2006) and Paletz and Boiney (1992) propose that journalists and news outlets play the main role in framing and creating media discourse on terrorists.

Shoemaker and Reese (1995) indicate a certain partisanship when it comes to reporting world events and these are influenced by many factors such as organisational factors, personal factors, political factors and even geographical factors. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) conducted research that showed the five most common frames were; responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality frames, respectively. They also found the biggest differences were between sensationalists vs serious types of news outlets, the two I'm studying are considered serious outlets.

‘Us and them’ is also a factor when reporting because the journalist needs to categories a terrorist act and then label it as ‘our war/terrorism’ or ‘their war/terrorism’, they also need to distinguish what an incident is, whether it be a bomb, explosion or a violent clash. (Nossek 2004).