

https://dspace.org/

Sourcing of HIV/AIDS treatment news: A case study of selected South African print media

Muchendu, Carole

2008-03-06T09:36:54Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/4555

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Masters Research Report

Carole Muchendu

Student No: 0419802E

Supervisor:
Prof. Tawana Kupe

Title:
Sourcing of HIV/AIDS Treatment News: a case study of selected South African Print Media.

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies.

Abstract

The basis of this study is to establish whether news on HIV/AIDS treatment issues is dominated by non-expert and activist sources as opposed to state or government and expert sources. It also seeks to determine if there is a growing use of the alternative or non-official sources in the reporting of this issue in the selected South African Press (*The Star* and *The Sowetan*). In reference to the concept of 'primary definition' by Hall (1978) and his colleagues, official sources have automatically been assumed to be the dominant sources as regards usage by journalists or reporters and have as a result been expected to be the definers of news agendas. However, this concept has been criticised by Schlesinger (1990), who argues that non-official/activist sources may have more power to define media topics than has been implied in the past. This study therefore has examined whether such a trend may be shifting to pave way for the increased use of alternative sources as well.

The findings of this report have proved that while official sources continue to be used in dominance as sources, there is undoubtedly a large use of non-official sources as key sources as well. This is a challenge to Hall's (1978) concept that in its rigid nature fails to accommodate such a notion. It is however in concurrence with Schlesinger's (1990) views that recognise the fact that non-official/alternative sources cannot be underestimated in terms of their power to define news agendas. Further, in an attempt to explain why and how these non-official sources have succeeded in achieving media attention, the study has also examined some media strategies that have been put in place by various source organisations. It has also proposes a more nuance model of the 'theory of dominance' that gives a provision for the ability of sources to be dynamic because of various factors.

Declaration

I declare that this research is my own unaided work.

It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate School of Humanities (Journalism and Media Studies Department) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Carole Muchendu

(Name of candidate)

29th March, 2005

---------- day of ----------

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made this work possible. It is because of our collective effort that a final report is available. My gratitude especially goes to God, my family and my friends who gave me the support I constantly needed. I am also ever grateful to my supervisor Prof. Tawana Kupe who gave me the time and the academic advice I so required. For the general support I received from those who assisted with the editing and the repeated reading I cannot express my appreciation. I will forever be indebted to you. I cannot name you all, but I wish you countless blessings.

Thank You.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the memory of my loving brother Ken. I know that you would have been especially proud of me. Happy 29th Birthday!

Thuthukani, this is for you too.

Acronyms

PLHA – People Living with HIV/AIDS

ARV – Antiretroviral

DoH – Department of Health

TAC – Treatment Action Campaign

ALP – AIDS Law Project

NAPWA – National Association for People living with HIV/AIDS

THT – Terrence Higgins Trust (of Britain)

HEA – Health Education Authority

GSK – GlaxoSmithKline

SAMA - South African Medical Association

Contents

Chapter 1Introduction……. .1
1.1 Rationale…….3

Chapter 2 Literature review and Theoretical framework
2.1 The role of sources in the construction of news…….8

2.2 Official sources (‘accredited’ sources).....10

2.3 Non-official (‘alternative’) sources.....12

2.4 The dominance of official/elite sources 13

2.5 Source strategies for managing the flow of information……16

2.6 Conclusion……..23

Chapter 3 Research methods

3.1 Mapping the South African press situation
in the coverage of HIV/AIDS issues…….24

3.2 Methods…….25

3.2.1 The Quantitative Content Analysis……...27

3.2.2 Qualitative analysis……..28

3.2.3 The semi-structured interview……..29

3.3 Problems of the research process…….. 32

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Quantitative and qualitative analysis……34

4.2 The semi-structured interview……..41

4.3 The source through the eyes of the ‘beholder’…….41

4.4 The use of official sources……44

4.5 The use of non-official sources…….46

4.6 Source organisations and their tactics……...47

4.7 Conclusion…….49

Chapter 5 Analysis
5.1 A lack of diversity of sources……50

5.2 Value a source brings to a story……....55

5.2.1 Source Contexts……....56

5.3 Source strategies to get media access……....57

5.3.1 TAC an ‘expert’ non-official source?.....64

5.4 A possible growing use of non-official sources (non-expert and activist sources)
in the South African press? ……....65

5.5 'The source' in a South African context?.....68
5.6 Conclusion……..…..…71

Chapter 6 – Conclusion……73

Bibliography……..79

List of Tables

Table 1a (Table showing range of official sources versus non-official sources in The Star)…34

Table 1b (Table showing three most frequent source categories from both official and non-official sources, vs the no. of sources by each source category in The Star)……..35

Table 1c (Table showing key sources from the non-official sources (AIDS activists and opposition parties) and the no. of times they are used as sources)…….35

Table 2a (Table showing range of official sources vs non-official sources in The Sowetan)...36

Table 2b (Table showing three most frequent source categories from both official and non-official sources, vs the no. of sources by each source category in The Sowetan)…….36

Table 2c (Table showing key sources from the non-official sources (AIDS activists and opposition parties) and the no. of times they are used as sources)…….37

Table 3a (Table showing ten articles with the sources used and their source contexts)……38

Table 3b (Table showing summary of results in table 3a)…….39

Table 4a (Table showing eight articles with the sources used and their source contexts)……39

Table 4b (Table showing summary of results in table 4a)……39

Table 5 (Table showing PLHAs used as sources in The Star)……..40

Table 6 (Table showing PLHAs used as sources in The Sowetan)……...40