

Towards the Easy Analysis of Mass Media Audience Reaction on Social Networks via Discursive Category Tools

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Abstract. The Mass Media involves information and communication products targeted to a wide audience. Today such communications products are also available on Internet where people can react to a given information by posting critics, congratulations, opinions or whatever they want via social networks. Such reactions are considered valuable information for instance to government and companies. However, this information is hard to automatically process as people commonly use ironies, stereotypes, metaphors expressed in informal writing plenty of chat abbreviations, emoticons, and slang words. In this paper, we illustrate how tools based on discursive categories can be used to analyze such reactions and thus to process and understand the information behind them.

Keywords: Social networks · Discourse category tools · Mass media

1 Introduction

The Mass Media involves information and communication products targeted to a wide audience such as television, radio, and newspapers. Today such communications products are also available on Internet where people can react to a given information by posting critics, congratulations, opinions or whatever they want via social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Such reactions are considered valuable information for instance to government and companies that intend to receive useful feedback from people in regard to a given event, product, or concern. However, this information is hard to automatically process as people commonly use ironies, stereotypes, metaphors expressed in informal writing plenty of chat abbreviations, emoticons, and slang words. In this paper, we illustrate how tools based on discursive categories can be used to process such reactions and thus to understand the information behind them.

The discursive categories are words or sentences previously defined by the researcher that will allow an exhaustive analysis of the media. We employ two classic discursive categories, namely visibility and invisibility [4]. The visibility focuses on the form in which a given information is presented to the audience, while invisibility observes the form in which the information is hidden to the audience. We present interesting results where the use of these discursive categories allows us to easily process the social network information in order to provide clear feedback.

2 Results and Discussion

In this work we want to know what are the reactions of the public against the texts produced by the Mass Media in order to get the keys to understanding the behavior of people. This focuses on finding different ways of thinking and different ways to decode the messages from the audience. The importance of this research lies mainly in that as Bourdieu [1] argues, all audience studies are focused on marketing and commercial issues and there is no concern to understand the reaction to the messages. Analyzing the reactions of the audience with respect to a new, is to study the emissions that are actually built by the speakers. Garreton [2] points out the importance of analyzing the discourses generated by society, denoted them as “an important clue” to categorize the views of this society. From our standpoint, the language is not considered only a mean to express and reflect our beliefs and opinions, but also an element that participates in the construction of social reality.

In this work, we study the reactions of the public against an article published on December 16, 2013 in the Chilean newspaper called “La Tercera”. The topic is related to the presidential candidate Michelle Bachelet. In this regard, we note what topics the readers make visible and invisible through their comments on each of the analyzed news. In total, we analyze 10 news about the Chilean candidate and the 55 posted comments that contained these publications. We observed that public opinion is manifested by speeches full of stigmatization which heavily impacts on the division of Chilean society, producing a polarization of political discourses. This results in a invisibility of social problems that really affect the country and a visibility of the topics that are irrelevant for country development. We identified that the comments analyzed in the “La Tercera” newspaper are built around the following topics:

1. Visibility of physical characteristics of Michelle Bachelet. On several occasions the public was limited to mention that from March 2014 the country would be governed by a fat woman, therefore the physical characteristics of the president are visible, trivializing the most important fact, which is the election of a new president. We emphasize that all comments highlighting the aesthetic characteristics of the president are posted by her opponents.
2. Visibility of low intellectual capacity of Michelle Bachelet. The comments that referred to the limited capabilities of Bachelet to govern the country are repeatedly posted. It is constantly stated that a person who does not

handle the four arithmetic operations cannot govern a nation. As in previous thematics, these comments are posted by Bachelet's opponents. However, unlike in previous cases, Bachelet's supporters counter-argued that she has already demonstrated the intellectual capacity to assume the presidency.

3. Visibility of low morale of the political sector of Michelle Bachelet. Unlike previous topics, this axis does not refer specifically to Bachelet, but to people forming his political sector. Public opinion tends to comment on these news that leftist politicians are thieves and they steal again as they did in the previous government.

In summary, we see that comments make visible the topics having no direct connection with the published news, and only tend to criticize or defend, as appropriate, to politicians of a certain political sector. Therefore, we note that there is an allusion to the passions as part of the political argument. In addition, and as argued by Chantal Mouffe [3], it is evident that all comments on the social network are built from the antagonism us/they. Depending on the political sector that the public tends to defend, they are characterized themselves as workers, honest and intellectually superior, while the opposite side is characterized as unemployed, corrupted and with low intellectual capacity. People attempt to highlight positive features from their political side and deliver negative characteristics to their opposite party. In relation to the topics that the public make invisible when expressing their opinion, we find that people rarely tend to discuss aspects of the news published, therefore, the allocated space is freely used by readers to comment and mainly to insult the protagonist of the news. There is no critical arguments, but only comments with irrelevant content. Therefore we observe an absence of a real social criticism on the arguments of each comment, where people is limited to criticize or laud from an emotional standpoint.

3 Conclusions

In this paper, we have illustrated how the discursive categories visibility/invisibility can be used to process the people reactions on internet through posted comments with respect to a given information. In particular, we have taken a set of news with their corresponding comments related to the Chilean presidential elections. After applying the above categories, we could show that, at least in the news from our corpus, the public does not react, on most occasions in relation to the topics discussed in texts, but rather tends to comment situations or issues unrelated to the information provided. For instance in this case study, Michelle Bachelet is grossly disqualified by people from the opposite political side making repeated references to their body and intellectual capacity. This is worrying as the next President of the Republic is analyzed only by its aesthetic characteristics, without highlighting any approach or criticizing his previous or current government program. We believe this situation is manifested mainly because Michelle Bachelet is a woman, because if someone of the opposite

sex had the same aesthetic characteristics, public opinion will not be focused on that.

As future work we expect to analyze new social phenomena using these same categories as well as to automatize this process to easily explore analogous social behaviors on social networks.

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