

Quantitative Communication Research: Theories and Methods

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Course description

The purpose of this module is to introduce the students into the main theories and methods of mass communication research, as well as into tools that will enable them to conduct investigations and perform statistical analyses in the field of communication. The course is mainly focused on the statement of appropriate research questions for quantitative research, the definition of variables, the application of the appropriate statistical methods and the interpretation of the results. A second objective of the course is to introduce students to the statistical software SPSS.

ECTS Credits

4 ECTS

Specific competences

Students should achieve the following competences:

Know the main theories and authors of mass communication research.

Address key questions about media and communication.

Know what are the main quantitative methods for communication research.

Design quantitative research and integrate it into the appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks.

Clearly state research questions

Define the variables of the research.

Use of the main methods for collecting and processing data.

Correctly perform the statistical methods learnt, taking into account the research questions and the characteristics of the variables.

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Extract results and interpret them correctly.

Discuss the application of the methods and consider their limitations.

Use of SPSS to obtain the results required.

Learning outcomes

- Recognize, understand and apply communication research theories and methods.
- Identify the fundamental and differential components of media industries (agents, assets, organization) from an evolutionary perspective, and apply the knowledge acquired in media planning from the exploratory phase to the evaluation phase.
- Plan and carry out communication strategies that are adapted to the specific characteristics of different socio-political and cultural realities, combining global communication skills with local intercultural sensitivity.
- Understand the nature, functioning and management of the modern Corporation, as well as its impact on the economy and society, and analyse and recognize the macro-environment of an industry, the micro-environment of a company or institution, its mission, objectives, positioning and strategies.
- Recognize, understand and apply the main concepts, theories and methodologies related to place branding.
- Understand the new forms of transmedia narrative and develop transmedia strategies in different areas (fiction, non-fiction, branding).
- Recognize, understand and apply the main concepts, theories and methodologies of analysis related to social media and digital communication.

Content

1. Introduction to positivist theories of research in communication.

From the paradigm of mass media society to Mass Communication Research

Introduction to media effects theories

A. Powerful effects: hypodermic needle, spiral of silence, agenda-setting

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B. Limited effects: two-step flow of communication, cognitive dissonance.

C. Other effects: third person effect, hostile media, priming.

2. Introduction to quantitative mass media research

3. Planning an investigation: main phases and concepts.

4. Basics of quantitative research in communication.

5. Methods for quantitative research

Content analysis.

Survey

Experimental methods

6. Strategies in the process of data collection and processing.

7. Definition of variables and use of SPSS statistical software

8. Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Testing for differences

A. Chi squared

B. ANOVA

C. T-test

Testing for relationships

A. Correlation

B. Regression

9. Interpretation and writing of conclusions

Method of presentation

The teaching methodology of this module will be:

—About 90 minutes lectures in classroom per session. Presentation of the main theoretical concepts and contents.

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- Debates to discuss published researches on mass communication research
- Workshops and activities to put in practice topics on statistics and SPSS.
- Individual tutoring.
- Presentations

Course assessment

- Individual works on statistics applied to mass communication research (4 x 10% of the final grade)
 - Literature review on a selected topic on mass communication effects
 - Research Questions
 - Literature review on methodology
 - Proposals for the statistical analysis
- Group research on mass communication effects (45% of the final grade)
- Attendance and participation in class (15% of the final grade).

Course schedule

Week Content

1	<p>Introduction to positivist theories of research in communication.</p> <p>Limited effects theories Reading: Lazarsfeld's Personal Influence</p>
2	<p>Introduction to Mass Media Effects: agenda setting, framing, priming, hostile media effect, third-person effect.</p> <p>Reading: Save me, save them! Trash Talk Shows and the Third-Person Effect</p> <p>Readings: Potter, W. James (2012). Media Effects. Thousand Oaks : SAGE</p>
3	

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	Planning a research. Theoretical framework and research questions in mass communication research. Definition of variables and research questions.
	Social Sciences Scales
4	Methods for mass communication research:
	Content analysis
	Survey
	Experimental methods (framing/priming)
	Discussion on Framing and Decision Making (the Asian Disease)
	The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981)
	The Psychology of Preferences (Kahneman & Tversky, 1981)
5	Experimental session: testing for differences
6	Variables and SPSS: Testing for differences and relationships
	Fundamentals of SPSS
7	Testing for differences
	A. Chi squared
	B. ANOVA
	C. T-test
8	Testing for relationships
	A. Correlation
	B. Regression
9	Statistical models
10	Presentation of the research

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Required reading

Allen, M., Titsworth, S., & Hunt S. K. (2009). *Quantitative Research in Communication*. London: Sage.

Berger, A. A. (2000). *Media and Communication Research Methods: An Introduction to Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

Guerrero-Solé, Frederic; Besalú, Reinald; López-González, Hibai (2014). Save me, save them! Trash Talk Shows and the Third-Person Effect. *Communications, The European Journal of Communication Research*, 39 (2), 193-214.

Igartua, J.-J., & Cheng, L. (2009). Moderating effect of group cue while processing news on immigration: Is the framing effect a heuristic process? *Journal of Communication*, 59, 726–749. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01454.x>

Potter, W. James (2012). *Media Effects*. Thousand Oaks : SAGE

Wagner, W. E. (2011). *Using IBM SPSS Statistics for Social Statistics and Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Recommended reading

Denham, B. E. (2002), *Advanced Categorical Statistics: Issues and Applications in Communication Research*. *Journal of Communication*, 52: 162–176. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02537.x

Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal Influence*. New York, 792. <http://doi.org/10.2307/2088435>

Kühberger, A. (1998). The Influence of Framing on Risky Decisions: A Meta-Analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 75, 23–55. <http://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.1998.2781>

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1983). Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: Application to advertising. *Advertising and Consumer Psychology*, 1, 3–23.

Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9–20. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00326.x>