

# Framing as a concept: a literature review on its development, and application with the example of content analysis

Haotian Wu

## Abstract

Despite its broad application in media communication and public management, Framing has been characterized as theoretically and empirically vague and has led to operational problems from the uncertainty of theoretical concepts. In this paper, I compare the definitions of the development process of framing chronically. I conclude with practical and precise instances to illuminate the benefit of comprehending the media mentioned above effects fully. And the goal here is to identify and make explicit explanations of the framing effect and to suggest a universal understanding of it and the benefits of comprehending it more thoroughly.

**Keywords** : framing theory, audience autonomy, journalist objectivity, content analysis.

## 1. Introduction

According to Entman and Robert. M, for journalists, Framing is their occupation to discover some parts of the problem in reality and make it more outstanding in people's minds to enable their audience to understand the definitions given by a certain medium, to make a worldly interpretation estimation, and to suggest a possible solution” (Entman 1993) . From his statement we can discern that Framing is the concept around “promoting” to achieve the goal of intensifying the image of a particular event and accompany the selected fact with subjective interpretation, evaluation, and recommendations. Particularly, he underscored the subsequent narratives. Dietram A. Scheufele & David Tewksbury claim that the word Framing is for the reporters to pass on the information to their audience group to connect to their subconscious mindset. (Tewksbury 2007) in his construction, we could easily detect the nuance between the above statements since the latter emphasizes the “underlying schemas” .in other words, Scheufele's perspective is more on the side of the information received and suggests potentially critical components to presumed impacts on information processing.

Under Entman's construct, a successful media text is supposed to contain the four aspects of frames, that is, define problems to determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits. Identify the issue, which entails locating the factors responsible for it, and provide solutions, including therapies for the issues at hand and explaining why they are effective. (Entman 1993)

And a case to the point is the “cold war frame” in

the United States that dominates the press coverage of foreign affairs. The cold war frame underlined some foreign events as problems (e.g., civil wars). The frame identified the source (nationalist insurgents), offered moral judgments (rampant aggression), and recommended approaches (U.S. support for the other side)

Following Scheufele's interpretation. As he explained, this is not an indication that the report's authors can fabricate their narratives and manipulate the audience's minds. Rather they can try to retell the fact easily, which means that it's more comprehensible for the minds of the mass audience(Gans 1979). Another way to put it is to use the different modes of presentation, the Framing, to make it understandable to the public concerning their schemas.

The above definitions on the frame itself of the previous writers diversified on the perspective of the subject matters, the information producer, on the one hand, and the information receiver, on the other hand. However, there are numerous studies on the conceptions of Framing. Numerous studies have combined Framing with other definitions, such as agenda-setting or priming (Iyengar 1987). McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997) argued that Framing is connected with agenda setting and a temporal extension of agenda setting itself. Interestingly, some studies also proposed other connections between agenda setting, priming, and Framing. Dietram A &David suggested that priming is an extension of agenda setting, but Framing is distinctively different. (D. A. Tewksbury 2007) They concluded their findings based on different information processing models, such as the memory-based accessibility model for agenda-setting and priming and

the connection-based applicability model for Framing. Perhaps, due to the discrepancies of terminological conceptions, other research illustrating framing effects is useless to the field. (Scheufele 1999) and in the next secession, I will introduce the benefits of clarifying the understanding of frames.

## 2. Benefits of clarifying Framing as a concept

Comprehending frames can shed light on various empirical and normative debates, primarily because the framing concept draws our focus toward the intricacies of how a communicated text wields its influence. The present discourse delves into the instance of mass communication, positing that a shared comprehension could establish Framing as a research paradigm. In this context, a research paradigm is conceptualized as a comprehensive theoretical framework that underpins the majority of scholarly investigations into the functioning and consequences of a given system of ideas and behaviors. The application of the framing paradigm has the potential to yield comparable advantages in various fields of study, such as political science, social psychology, cultural studies, and sociology, among others. These may include the examination of public opinion and voting behavior, cognitive processes, and investigations into class, gender, and race. Theoretical debates in the field of mass communication could benefit from a shared and clear comprehension of the concept of frames, as illustrated in the following examples.

### 2.1 Audience autonomy

In understanding the abstract definition of Framing, it is necessary to have a basic knowledge of the dominant meaning, which closely correlates with the multiple meaning that may arise from the process of deciphering messages by the audience. (Fiske 1987). Considering the viewpoint of Framing, people are willing to pay the most intensive amount of attention and perhaps a thoughtful consideration to the part of the text that has been granted the dominant meaning. As readers of the media texts, if they assume certain meanings inherited in the communication text as a predominant one, this usually is equivalent to the idea that the meaning is profoundly and thoroughly congruent with the text itself and the subconsciousness or mindset of the audience.

Using a framing paradigm serves as a warning to researchers against the extraction of transient elements from a message. Subsequently, it demonstrates how they could potentially be construed in a manner that contradicts the dominant meaning. When the text frame employs multiple methods that reinforce the notion that

the water in the bottle already fills up halfway, research from social science indicates that only a small portion of the audience will interpret it as being only filled up halfway. However, there is a gap for us to narrow; that is, if intellectuals are going to proclaim that the multiple meanings deciphered by the audience exert an influence in the process of counter-framing, the researchers, therefore, may have to prove that the multiple-meaning deciphering process is another way to counteracting the impact of their initial dominant meaning and this side process is not a consequence of other factors other than the text and dominate meaning itself but influence from the conditions of the environment. Such as a concentrated group secession where one member dominates the whole discourse or an interview protocol that is extremely suggestive to other members of the discourse who are being dominated (Budd 1990)

People can, of course, source their facts and ponder on the connections between texts and the mode of presentations. But Zaller (1992), Kahneman, and Tversky (1984) suggested that people's cognition mechanisms are not that actively accurate and open regarding political issues and public governance. Therefore they are highly prone to the impact of the framing processes; in other words, how the journalists build up their narrative exercises a gigantic influence on how people understand the issue and which part of the issue they will pay special attention to, and on which they are not. (Zaller 1992)

### 2.2 Journalistic objectivity

Reporters may adhere to the guidelines for “objective” reporting while using a dominating framing that inhibits the majority of viewers from giving a scenario an impartial assessment. However, due to the lack of common understanding of Framing, the craftiest media manipulators may impose their dominant frames on the news (R. M. Entman 1993). If educated properly, people may realize the existence of scattered opposing facts and challenge the dominant frame. Therefore, it requires journalists to construct news that is equally salient and accessible to the common mass.

Nonetheless, this is also in the history of the American Press when it comes to the debate about journalistic objectivity. After the world war, people were fully aware that news was never equivalent to facts since there were so many fabricated “facts” during the war to serve the purpose of propaganda and to inflate the people's confidence in the faith in “ultimate victory.” So, what is the proper way to rebuild the ethics already being challenged? And what is the convincing way to acquire sufficient and reliable knowledge? The New York Times editorial editor Walter Lippman suggested a plausible

solution: to mark detachment and avoidance of personal distortion as a top priority as news ethics when it comes to practices; in other words, the narrative is to report equally on both sides and to respect each frame equally. (Boudana 2011)

Under this construct, for instance, it is of no use for an unreliable source of media to state that “Stalin is dead” because the audience is already aware of the conceptional difference between news and truth and can also derive from another more reliable source of information about the other fragmented frames on the related issue. Therefore it's likely that they will interpret the piece of news as, say, “Helsing says that Stalin is passed away, “and subsequently, the newspaper may be obliged to assume the responsibility to claim that “Stalin is alive rather than dead.”

### **2.3 Content analysis**

On the issue of how to understand the media text, the priority should be placed on how to make a rational sense of frames; in the process of analyzing the text, the analysis is supposed to be guided by a framing theory to avoid errors like confusing all the positive or negative words or phrases equally important .it's a common misunderstanding to just simply add up all the judgments in the text to produce a comprehensive report. However, the key is to discover and utilize the relation between the dominant meaning clusters and the subconscious mindset of the audience. Content analysis without a framing paradigm may often yield results that are inaccurate representations of the media information that the majority of audience members are absorbing. (M. 1993)

### **2.4 Public opinion and normative democratic society**

According to Zaller's (1992) analysis, Framing is a crucial element in the democratic process as it is wielded by political elites to shape the discourse around issues. The frames utilized can ascertain the definition of “public opinion,” which may differ according to Zaller's perspective. Empirical data from surveys and voting outcomes may reveal a distinct public opinion. His hypothesis and those of Kahneman and Tversky appear to cast serious doubt on democracy itself. If elites can determine the major manifestations of “true” public opinion available to the government (via polling or voting) by shaping frames, what is true public opinion? In light of the susceptibility of empirical evidence to framing effects, how can democratic representatives respond appropriately to public opinion while maintaining sincerity?

Assuming that there are three distinct approaches to presenting a particular matter, it is observed that one

of these methods elicits a 40% level of endorsement, while the remaining two generate 50% and 60% levels of approval, respectively. The notion that a 60 percent approval rate constitutes the most democratic course of action cannot be considered axiomatic due to the cyclical majority predicament, as posited by Riker (Riker 1986). This predicament renders majority rule unfeasible when dealing with multiple intricate options. Equally significant is the endeavor to ascertain the opinion that is most closely in line with the authentic sentiments of the public among the variously presented perspectives, which seems unattainable as it necessitates a consensus among competing elites and citizens regarding the most precise, equitable, comprehensive, and other such attributes of a frame. The implementation of a framing paradigm has the potential to shed light on if not completely resolve, fundamental enigmas in the realm of normative democratic theory.

Defining Framing has a key impact on the precision and clarity of a research problem. By defining Framing clearly, researchers can accurately understand and define the research problem, avoiding ambiguity and subjectivity. A well-defined Framing method helps the researcher identify the key elements, scope, and purpose of the problem, thereby ensuring that the problem statement is unambiguous.

When looking at the impact of social media on adolescent mental health, one well-defined Framing might focus on social media use about self-esteem. In contrast, another Framing might focus on social media use for depression. By defining Framing clearly, researchers can define the focus of the research, provide a specific research goal, and avoid ambiguity and inconsistency in the definition of the problem.

Moreover, Defining Framing helps researchers make informed decisions about choosing and performing research. Different Framing methods and tools may be required for different framing methods. By defining Framing clearly, researchers can choose the method that best suits the research problem and ensure that the research is consistent and reliable.

When studying public attitudes toward climate change, one well-defined Framing might choose a quantitative survey method, while another Framing might choose a qualitative interview method. Defining Framing will help a researcher determine the type of data to be collected, sample size, survey tool, and data analysis method to ensure the reliability and repeatability of the research.

Furthermore, A clear definition of Framing is essential for the interpretation and interpretation of research results. Framing can affect the understanding and inference of the result. By defining Framing clearly, researchers can link

the result to the research question and purpose, providing deep insight and understanding.

When looking at the impact of healthcare policy on patient satisfaction, one well-defined Framing might focus on the relationship between the reduction of healthcare costs and patient satisfaction. In contrast, another Framing might focus on the relationship between the quality of healthcare services and patient satisfaction. Defining Framing will help researchers avoid subjective bias and wrong interpretation and ensure the result is accurate and reliable.

In addition, Defining Framing can improve the effectiveness and efficiency of academic communication and help researchers better communicate and collaborate with peers and academia. Framing provides a common language and understanding framework that allows for smooth communication.

When presenting research at a conference, a well-defined Framing term will help researchers articulate the research question, purpose, and important finding so that the audience can better understand the significance and contribution of the research. Defining Framing clearly also helps researchers write papers and reports to ensure that information is clearly communicated and that Framing is used effectively.

Notably, Defining Framing has important benefits in the field of communications. By accurately defining and interpreting the Framing of a problem, a researcher can improve the accuracy and clarity of the research problem, choose the right research method and tool, interpret and interpret the research result, and effectively convey and communicate it in academic communication. A detailed discussion of these aspects will help researchers maintain an objective and specific academic level in communication.

Another benefit of defining Framing is gaining insight and understanding of the object of study. Framing provides a specific perspective and interpretation framework that enables researchers to focus on a specific aspect of the problem and get a more comprehensive and in-depth insight from it.

Framing can be thought of as encoding and decoding the real world. Different Framing methods give different meanings and understandings to the subject of the study. By defining Framing clearly, researchers can choose and apply the appropriate framework to accurately interpret and understand all aspects of the research object.

In summary, another benefit of clearly defining Framing is gaining insight and understanding of the research object. By choosing an appropriate Framing perspective and explanatory framework, researchers can focus on specific problem aspects to obtain more comprehensive, in-depth, and rich research insights. This deep understanding

can help advance academic research and provide more valuable guidance for practice and decision-making in related fields.

### 3. Conclusion

The notion of Framing holds significant importance in numerous fields of study that employ it, the current endeavor, limited by spatial constraints, presents a preliminary contribution on frames rather than a conclusive statement. This article only highlights the potential for the field of communication to establish a fundamental body of knowledge through its diverse range of approaches, which could subsequently be applied to research paradigms that contribute to broader social theory.

### Reference

- [1] BoudanaSandrine. 2011. "A definition of journalistic objectivity as a performance." *Media, Culture & Society*, 4: 385-395.
- [2] BuddEntman, R. M., & Steinman, C.M.,. 1990. "The affirmative character of U.S. cultural studies." *Critical Studies in MassCommunication*, 169-180.
- [3] EntmanM., & Rojecki, AR. 1993. "Freezing out the public: Elite and media framing of the U.S. anti-nuclear movement." *political communication*, 151-167.
- [4] EntmanM.Robert. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication*, 12月1日 : 51-58.
- [5] FiskeJ. 1987. *Television culture*. New York: Routledge.
- [6] GansH. 1979. *Deciding what's news*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- [7] Iyengar& Kinder, D. R.S.,. 1987. *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [8] M.Robert. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication*, 12月1日 : 54-57.
- [9] RikerH.W. 1986. *The art ofpolitical manzpulation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- [10] ScheufeleDietram A.by. 1999. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication*.
- [11] TewksburyA. Scheufele & DavidDietram. 2007."Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication*.
- [12] TewksburyA. Scheufele& DavidDietram. 2007. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." *Journal of Communication*, 9-17.
- [13] ZallerRJ. 1992. *the nature and origins of mass opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.