Media profile: Quotation ranking

Look beyond one’s own nose

Results of the 2005 Media Tenor quotation ranking

The four print media outlets with the broadest circulation scored highest in the 2005 Media Tenor quotation ranking: Der Spiegel, Bild, Bild am Sonntag and Focus were in a class of their own when it came to their significance as a source of information for journalists of other media. They were quoted 5,895 times in 39 media outlets analyzed by Media Tenor, which corresponds to a 13.2% share of all the 44,655 quotations analyzed (graph 1). Once again, Der Spiegel was by far the most important agenda setter with 5% of all quotations in the German media.

The recipe: relevance instead of reach

The ranking also shows that the attention of fellow-journalists for a certain topic does not only depend on how often an article is printed or how many viewers or listeners a news program has. While, according to the most recent circulation analyses, the tabloid Bild-Zeitung reaches 11.8 million people, the number is only about 450,000 for the most frequently quoted subscription paper Berliner Zeitung (graph 2). The Berlin Tagespiegel, which was analyzed for the first time this year, only has about 290,000 readers. Yet it came in 10th with 745 quotations, thus overtaking media heavyweights such as Stern, FAZ or Zeit. The recipe of the editorial team: “We try to only hand out information to news agencies and colleagues when it is relevant”, says the deputy chief editor Ursula Weidenfeld in a Media Tenor interview. Yet it will be a challenge to live up to such standards and still play a role within the journalists’ community. It is true that the quick scoop always generates quotes, even when it is based on poor fact-checking and later turns out to be an outright falsehood or at least doubtful. But in the worst case scenario, it also damages the image, as the New York Times has had to learn repeatedly in the past.

The trend: Internationalization

The New York Times was quoted more frequently in 2005 than in the previous year, however, it wasn’t enough for the first position among the international media outlets that were most frequently quoted by German print, television and radio journalists (graph 3). In 2005, the Wall Street Journal came in first. The financial paper (US and European edition) only comes in second to the FAZ by a narrow margin, thus marking a trend: Within the past two years, the importance of foreign, in particular English-language, media has increased significantly in Germany (graph 4). While the financial press and the New York Times earned this attention steadily throughout the year, the Arabic-speaking television station Al Jazeera only took center stage in exceptional situations. In December 2005 alone, when the kid...
napping of the German citizen Susanne Osthoff in Iraq dominated the news, it was quoted more frequently than in the eleven months previous to it. Other foreign news sources from German neighbors such as the Neue Zürcher Zeitung from Switzerland, the Standard or Presse from Austria or Le Monde from France only rarely made it above the awareness threshold of German journalists.

Monday is Spiegel-Day
The day on which an exclusive story is revealed to other editorial rooms is of particular importance. Monday is the day that journalists use most often to quote their colleagues (graph 5). On Sundays, newsrooms are staffed more sparsely, researching original stories is more difficult on weekends and the stock markets are closed: There are many reasons for this phenomenon. In particular, weekly magazines that send off advance copies prior to their publication date hit this convenient news gap. The winner of the overall ranking, the weekly Spiegel, averaged 25 quotations on its Monday publication date during the fourth quarter of 2005. The weekly Focus, too, is particularly present in other media on its publication date.

The Spiegel online edition, however, loses its top position in the online media ranking to its competitor Netzeitung. All in all, Internet news sources have continued to play only a minor role for day-to-day reporting in 2005.

As a general rule it was the print media that set the agenda. Half of the 20 most frequently quoted media are daily newspapers. The Berliner Zeitung won back its top position as most frequently quoted subscription newspaper (graph 2). In the Media Tenor quotation ranking of the previous year, it had to cede this position to the Welt, which, in the current rating, fell back behind the Handelsblatt on fifth position. Still, the Welt was
able to hang on to the upper half of the ranking. Only 8 newspapers made it above the level of 500 mentions. The Frankfurter Rundschau has dropped into the lower half of the top-20, thereby playing a role as a source for other journalists that is similar to the Rheinische Post or Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung.

In radio and television the German public broadcasting stations dominated the discussion in 2005. However, ARD and ZDF traded their top positions compared to the previous year – the ARD was quoted more frequently in 2005 than the ZDF. As to radio, the two Deutschlandradio programs held their ground in the top position.

WSJ increasingly important
The Handelsblatt has been able to strengthen its position as most frequently quoted business medium in 2005 (graph 8). The FTD increased the quotation numbers only by small amounts and was defeated by the WSJ – despite the fact that Media Tenor augmented the set analyzed from 37 to 39 media outlets. The trend towards internationalization of news sources is particularly obvious within the financial press: The share of the international media to the quotations increased, and four English-language business media are now found under the top-10. The Economist has recently been introduced into the set analyzed and was even quoted more frequently than the German business magazine Capital. The WirtschaftsWoche stood its ground on the fifth position, and it might surprise with an increase in next year’s quotation ranking: Since March 6th it does not appear on Thursdays, any more, but on the more strongly quoted Monday.

Open questions:
Will the WirtschaftsWoche be quoted more often after changing its publication day from Thursday to Monday? Will the trend towards the internationalization of news sources continue? When will online media finally have a noteworthy influence on the news business? Will blogs play a role in the future?