A Comparative Corpus-based Discursive News Values Analysis of Liz Truss' and Rishi Sunak's representation in the British Press

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Abstract

Although the number of women in relevant political roles on the international stage is growing, politics still seems a public sphere dominated by men (Liu, 2019). The gender gap in politics is visible and women represent a minority in this field. The representation of female politicians in and out of the media has always been influenced by gender stereotypes. Media can play a significant role in the reiteration of these stereotypes backgrounding other important aspects such as politicians' political agenda (Zamfirache, 2010).

This paper focuses on journalistic discourse concerning Truss' and Sunak's representation in the British press. The main aim of the analysis is to investigate if these politicians are represented similarly or differently through the employment of specific gender stereotypes. Moreover, the analysis aims to understand if their representation as gendered social actors is intertwined with particular news values. The data were collected on LexisNexis and include all the articles mentioning Truss and Sunak in headlines and lead paragraphs in British national newspapers during five specific days (their candidacy and election, and Truss' resignation). We followed Bednarek's and Caple's (2017) Discursive News Values Analysis approach in combination with qualitative (Machin & Mayr, 2023) and quantitative (Partington, Duguid & Taylor, 2013) tools aiming to identify which news values were used and paying particular attention to the gendered representation. Specifically, the quantitative approach (Partington, Duguid and Taylor, 2013) will be carried out through the software Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff *et al*., 2014) that has proven to be a very useful digital resource in the field of linguistics over the years, especially in combination with qualitative approaches allowing a more complete interpretation of data (Tognini-Bonelli, 2010: 17–18; Baker & McEnery, 2015: 2).

The preliminary results of the analysis highlight that, from a general perspective, the selected timespans influence the presence of certain news values. Another significant general trend is for tabloids to convey news values especially through images. Whereas, from a more specific perspective, some news values seem to be connected to specific gender stereotypes (e.g., the news value of personalisation is connected to Truss' role as mother and wife) by both broadsheets and tabloids.

Keywords: CADS, DNVA, gender, Truss, Sunak

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