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Using Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis as a Methodology in Marketing

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Abstract

Discourse analysis has typically been associated with linguistics. Authors such as Elliott (1996) however, call for its application into the marketing discipline, as he considers it is time for marketing to adopt new methodologies, particularly from other disciplines. In spite of the fact that discourse analysis on its own does not necessarily set out to be critical, Maingueneau (2006 p. 230) makes a simple but clear distinction between ‘weak’ which entails a “simple description of structures of texts and talks” (discourse analysis) and ‘strong’ involving analysing the connection between discourse and social structures (critical discourse analysis). A forthcoming study of media’s portrayal of the gaming industry will adopt critical discourse analysis using a Foucauldian approach.

Introduction

Although the current focus of critical discourse analysis (CDA) had its genesis in ‘critical linguistics’ (and McHoul and Grace (2003) state that discourse was traditionally in the domain of structural linguistics), it has evolved to the stage where it has been adapted to, and applied by, many other disciplines including the social sciences (van Dijk 2003, van Leweuwen 2006). Such is its usefulness as an analytical framework, that Elliott (1996) saliently argues for its application in marketing, a discipline which, in its “postmodern turn” (p. 65), seeks to incorporate new methodologies from the “interpretive social sciences” (ibid). In spite of its infancy as a methodology in marketing, scholars such as Hackley (see for example his 2003 textbook and a number of journal articles – 1998; 2000; 2001; 2003; 2007 and with Szmigin et al. 2007) have adopted critical analysis in their research for a number of years. According to Hackley (2003) critical discourse analysis assumes social constructionist ontology in that it accepts the role of language and social interaction in the production of power relations. Traditionally, content analysis has been widely used in the marketing discipline to look for themes or schema when researching textual outputs in media such as newspapers and magazines. Much like one of the recognised shortfalls of quantitative research however, this approach fails to delve into a deeper level, such as exploring the use of language in its construction of the object and the use of power in, and as an output of, this construction. Furthermore the management discipline, in particular marketing, is viewed by critical theorists as being ideological, with its theories and practices taken as a given, rather than being critically analysed as to their veracity. As a result, this ideology places limits on the intellectual development of a scope of representative theories in the marketing discipline (Hackley 2003).

Critical discourse analysis therefore is considered to be most appropriate as a methodology in marketing when looking for meaning behind the words, or discourses. The two main CDA approaches presented by Willig (2003) are from psychology and from Foucault. The latter approach was considered to be the most appropriate for the purposes of a soon-to-be-commenced study, due to its focus on power, discourse and the subject. Foucault also incorporates social, historical and political influences. The study will be examining the

Australian media industry's portrayal of the gaming industry, with particular focus on electronic gaming machines (EGMs), also known colloquially as 'pokies' in Australia. Gambling has been part of the social fabric since the first settlers arrived in Australia, hence the importance of historical influences. Since then media, societal and regulatory attitudes have been ambivalent. Therefore, by using a Foucauldian approach, the importance of historical, political and societal influences and the discourses that result in the development of power relations and/or the sustaining of same, can be incorporated.

The Literature

Much of critical discourse analysis is based on critical social theory (Maingueneau 2006; O'Regan 2006; van Leeuwen 2006). Discourse studies moved from the earlier structuralist approach to the poststructuralist and postmodern approaches in the 1970s based on Nietzsche and Heidegger, resulting in a relativist view of linguistics (Windschuttle 2005). Accordingly, Windschuttle (2005) is critical not only of Heideggerian theorists, but also of Nietzschean theorists such as Foucault. The relativist view confines the independence of the human subject to being no more than an illusion (ibid). Windschuttle (2005) accuses Foucault and other Nietzscheans of looking at humans as being merely tools of language and culture. Other authors however, find Foucault a valid approach with which to study discourse. For example, Luke (1995) finds value in Foucault's incorporation of both broad and localised societal formations. Furthermore, McHoul and Grace (2003) would argue that Foucault takes a middle ground approach in that "'ideas' are neither mere effects of 'real structures' nor the 'baseline' from which reality is constructed." (p. 2). Certainly, CDA is seen as the most appropriate methodology at the sociopolitical level. The 'critical' component of CDA is comprised of societal power constructs and its ensuing call for social responsibility (Cotter 2003). Power relationships are invariably linked with a Foucauldian approach, although Foucault himself considered power to emanate throughout all levels of society rather than solely from the top down. In a two-way interaction, "discourse both shapes and is shaped by society" (Teo 2000, p. 12).

Foucault was mainly concerned with the interaction of three variables, namely discourse, power and the subject (McHoul and Grace 2003). Accordingly, the *discourse* of media's presentation of EGMs will be analysed. *Power* relations are particularly important, as the struggles between those interest groups wanting EGMs to be pulled back or, in the extreme, banned, and those agitating for an increase in numbers and accessibility, are in constant play. Indeed, Eisenhower viewed society in terms of the balance of power relations between citizens, businesses and the government (see for example, Bella et al. 1992). The relationship between these three groups is particularly pertinent when it comes to gaming, as the former two lobby the latter in trying to influence gaming policies. The third element in the Foucauldian ontology is *the subject*. This of course is central to much of the controversy concerning EGMs, as many citizens and much of the media view EGMs (the object) as being 'evil' devices and the gambler (the subject) as being the hapless victim. Accordingly, critical discourse analysis using a Foucauldian approach will be used in the study. A brief description of its application is discussed.

The Data

An initial sorting and content analysis will occur as a base from which to conduct Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. A software program such as Leximancer and/or NVivo will be utilised. X number of newspaper articles will be obtained from four major Australian

newspapers from 1997 to December 2007 using the search terms: ("electronic gaming machines" OR "pokies" OR "poker machines") AND (NSW or "new south wales") AND (pub* OR club* OR venue* OR operator*) AND (responsibilit* OR duty OR counselling OR consultat*) AND (Communit* OR political OR social OR society OR problem*). This time period was chosen because: in 1997 NSW pubs were allowed to operate EGMs within their venues for the first time; the first formal legislation concerning harm minimisation in relation to gambling was introduced in 1999; the first and most comprehensive official report into gambling ever conducted was released in 1999 by the Australian Productivity Commission, and; the NSW Gaming Machine Act was introduced in 2001. Since that time period, there has been a regular diet of gambling-related stories emanating from the newspapers. The chosen newspapers are considered to be major publications and the most widely circulated, two of them nationally (The Australian and the Australian Financial Review) and two of them regionally, i.e. NSW (Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald). John Fairfax Holdings Ltd. owns the Sydney Morning Herald and the Australian Financial Review, with The Australian and Daily Telegraph being owned by NewsCorp (Murdoch). Table 1 provides daily circulation figures for each of these broadsheets over the 1997- 2007 time period.

Table 1: Daily Circulation Figures June 1997 - June 2007

	1997 As at 30 June	1998 As at 30 June	1999 As at 30 June	2000 As at 30 June	2001 As at 30 June	2002 As at 30 June	2003 As at 30 June	2004 As at 30 June	2005 As at 30 June	2006 As at 30 June	2007 As at 30 June
The Australian	120,433	121,000	131,500	132,595	132,145	130,497	132,461	133,791	133,841	131,538	133,000
The Australian Financial Review (AFR)	88,463	91,000	92,000	97,556	92,500	89,274	85,864	85,746	85,373	86,182	88,264
Daily Telegraph	440,354	439,600	432,000	414,365	410,896	406,220	407,518	403,139	397,915	396,497	392,000
Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)	237,700	269,000	264,000	259,757	252,149	257,500	226,031	216,857	210,085	212,078	212,700

Table compiled from various sources: 30 June 1997 Figures: Audit Bureau of Circulations figures as reported in *The Australian*, 8 August 1997, p24; 30 June 1998- 30 June 2007 Figures: Publisher – Australian Press Council Annual Reports, no. 22-31, 1998-2007. Please also note that all figures are daily averages.

The media articles will then be sorted into a table (Table 2) according to whether their portrayal of the gaming industry is negative, neutral or positive.

The media are expected to present both sides of an argument. For example, during the months leading up to an election, equal 'voice' is ostensibly given to both major parties. Indeed, the second principle of the Hutchins Commission for Freedom of the Press states: "The media should serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism" (University of Iowa). This intimates that journalists should take a balanced view when presenting an issue. From Table 2 it will be able to be seen whether the balanced view occurs. The result may then be able to be explained by looking at sources. Table 3 will list the sources in the media articles according to whether they were gaming industry spokespeople, anti-gambling campaigners, politicians or other regulatory representatives, welfare agencies (whether government or NGOs) or solely presented as the journalist's own views. The sources called upon by the media in their

stories will then be examined to see if this had any influence on the presenting of the discourse as being positive, negative or neutral. Once these initial ‘content analyses’ have taken place, ‘critical discourse analysis’ will then be adopted.

Critical Discourse Analysis of the NSW Media using a Foucauldian Approach

A six-step process will be adopted, based on Willig’s (2003) framework for CDA using a Foucauldian perspective. The inclusion of power, social, political and historical factors when examining the discourse, the object and the subject can thereby be utilised. As a result, Hunt’s (1994) urging to incorporate objectivity in qualitative research will be satisfied.

Stage 1:

Discursive Object

As this is framed by the research question, (How do the NSW media portray the various stakeholders in the gaming industry?) the gaming industry is the discursive object. The various ways in which the discursive object is constructed in the textual discourse is then analysed. For example, are gaming operators constructed in terms of their product (i.e. gaming machines/pokies/slots/EGMs), or in terms of the problem gamblers they are accused of creating, or is it in relation to the revenue they provide to the state coffers and the government’s resulting addiction to EGM tax?

Stage 2:

Discourses

This step requires an examination of the differences between constructions. What might initially appear to be the same discursive object can actually be constructed in quite different ways. This second stage of analysis seeks to identify the various discursive constructions of the object as identified in Stage 1, within broader discourses. For example theories with a pro-/ anti- focus on gambling, social harm, problem gambling, economic factors, entrapment theory, the literature on social panic and social contract theory will be examined. Historical and societal factors will also be pertinent; for example, many of the early settlers arrived in Australia with quite strong pro-gambling attitudes (which included betting on things such as which rain drop would reach the bottom of the window first and the coin game of Two-Up). By the end of the 1890s however, there were two quite different, important cultural/religious influences pertaining to gambling (Inglis 1985). One was the largely intolerant attitude towards gambling of any type displayed by many Protestants, with the other being the acceptance, if not openly supportive attitude, shown by the majority of Roman Catholics.

Stage 3:

Action Orientation

This involves a closer analysis of the discursive contexts within which the different constructions of the object are being placed. “What is gained from constructing the object in this particular way at this particular point within the text?” (Willig 2003, p. 174). For example, is it to show the ‘evils’ of gaming machines? “What is its function and how does it relate to other constructions produced in the surrounding text?” (ibid).

Willig (2003) uses *biomedical discourse* (attributing responsibility to the medical profession for the diagnosis and treatment of her husband’s prostate cancer) as an example; *romantic discourse* (a response to a question of her own role in her husband’s recovery after surgery which may have served to emphasize that she is, in fact, contributing significantly to his

recovery by offering her love and support); and *psychological discourse* (when the wife explains why she thinks her husband developed the cancer).

In applying Willig's example to the forthcoming study: *Gambling discourse* – attributing responsibility for the problem of 'addicted' gamblers to the gambling operators and/or government. *Romantic discourse* - see if there are any parallels in the media – perhaps they highlight their own (journalistic and/or editorial) role as 'helping the problem gamblers', or highlighting their 'plight', or perhaps talking about another organisation such as an NGO or church group. *Psychological discourse* - it could be used to disclaim responsibility for the problem by stating that they 'told somebody they shouldn't do it', or perhaps the media might say they have been warning people for a long time about the dangers of EGMS, or problem gamblers.

Stage 4:

Positioning (or Subjects)

A closer look is taken at the *subject positions* that the discourse offers. "[D]iscourses construct subjects in addition to objects, and, as a result, make positions available within networks of meaning that speakers can take up (as well as place others within)" (Willig 2003, p. 174). Perhaps this could refer to the media writer placing EGM operators and/or the government in a position within the subject of focus, e.g. as the 'irresponsible providers of a harmful product/evil device' or as adding to problem gambling as relates to the problem gambling theory/literature. A subject position, as the term implies, is strongly related to subjectivity (see Stage 6).

Stage 5

Practice

What is the relationship between discourse and practice? A "systematic exploration of the ways in which discursive constructions and the subject positions contained within them open up and/or close down opportunities for action", is required (Willig, 2003 p. 175). "By constructing particular versions of the world, and by positioning subjects within them in particular ways, discourses limit what can be said and done" (ibid). This stage "of the analysis of discourse maps the possibilities for action contained within the discursive constructions identified in the text" (ibid). The media will be examined to see if they construct their discourse in such a way that precludes the opportunity for possible solutions to the legal provision of EGMS in a socially responsible way and indeed, if their discourse is framed in such a way so as to preclude the likelihood of EGM operators being given legitimacy.

Stage 6

Subjectivity

The relationship between discourse and subjectivity is explored. Discourses are concerned with certain ways of seeing, and being in, the world. Social and psychological realities are constructed. This stage will not be included however, as interviewing the media is outside the scope of the intended study.

Conclusion

CDA using a Foucauldian approach offers many potential opportunities and benefits as a methodology in the marketing discipline, particularly when objectivity is incorporated.

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