Constructing a Great Media Narrative

Black Label Logic | 25 August, 2016 | by Black Label Logic

The media has been called the fourth power, because of the role it holds as the source of information for a majority of people. A potential fifth column is the internet, social media, public opinion or others, however the distinctions between the various powers are slowly being eradicated. It is fairly obvious from a political perspective that having the media on your side will benefit you greatly. From the paid media, it is also obvious that the more "*customer oriented*" they become, the higher their traffic and thus their earnings. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the media to write articles that "fit" within the perceptions of the public that they can gain insight from through careful analysis of social media. Alternatively, create such perceptions within a large part of the market in order to create loyal users. If you post a story in 3 parts, the people who love the first story, will want to read the second and third. A more niche publication that targets a specific audience may want to continue to publish stories within a specific narrative to drive traffic as much as possible.

From the perspective of a politician, focusing on issues that already draw the interest of the public, or to be able to utilize media and social media in order to bring forth issues that would benefit that politician or work against his opponents. Thus, the media and politics can be argued to be a symbiotic relationship, where cooperation and collusion can be highly beneficial to both parties.

This has been the case in many events in world history, most notably the use of media employed by the German Nazi Government both prior to, and after they were elected. Media narratives are a form of highly effective influence drawing on multiple innate human tendencies such as credibility bias, and thus can be weaponized with deadly effects.

A narrative is defined as:

> 1.   *something that is narrated:story, account*
> 2.   *the art or practice of narration*
> 3.   *the representation in art of an event or story; also: an example of such a representation [1]*

Thus, a narrative is a story or an account. Media is defined by the same source, Merriam-Webster dictionary as:

> 1.   *a medium of cultivation, conveyance, or expression; especially:medium 2b*
> 2.   *a singular or plural in construction:mass media b plural: members of the mass media [2]*

Therefore, a media narrative is a story or account by a medium of cultivation, conveyance or expression. A mass media narrative is such a story or account that unlike the straight presentation of factual information, includes an element of subjective interpretation by one or more journalists. To give an example, that a white male went on a shooting spree, is a statement of fact. That he did so as a result of white male privilege and entitlement is an interpretation. The value of narratives is to take advantage of story bias is human beings, and influence one or more people in the direction that you want them to think.

By uniting disparate facts and with interpretations, one seeks to make the facts merge with the

interpretation and thus conflate interpretation and fact. In order to construct the strongest possible media narrative, I've outlined some points that every good media narrative needs to take into account.

Avoid abstracts and go into details

If the situation is such that it has a 1 in a million chance of occurring, ignore it. Avoid doing comparisons to the situation at hand and other similar situations, focus on the details preferably in gruesome detail. Ideally, you want to do a minute by minute narration of the horrors, preferably with pictures of what took place in order to create the strongest possible emotional reaction in your viewer. By utilizing statics, you risk that your viewer's critical thinking ability comes into the picture, and you want to avoid them noticing how you are presenting [anecdotal evidence](#) and [cherry picking](#). Likewise, much like a psychopath isolates their victim to avoid outside references, ensure that your narrative is presented in a manner where distractions or outside discussions are unlikely. You do not want anything to mess up the suspension of disbelief you need to create for your reader.

By going into the details, you prevent your viewer from distancing him or herself from the narrative you are creating and viewing it as a part of a bigger picture. This is not what you want, you want to make sure that the emotional impact of your narrative hits at maximum effect and therefore anything that makes the target use their critical thinking ability such as statistics is dangerous, unless you can make them incite fear or revulsion. An example would be a harrowing gruesome assault followed by a statistic such as "*This will happen to 1/2 people in the course of their life*"

Use the victim – perpetrator dichotomy

In order to create as powerful a narrative as possible, take a lesson from old western movies. You want a clear dichotomy between the involved parties, ideally one is pure evil, the other is pure good. You do not want to create a situation where there is any doubt or nuance in this regard. If you want to truly appeal to people's emotions, you need to present "*Cake or Death*" perspectives, unrealistic false dichotomies, that your audience for some reason feel compelled to accept. Balanced discourse is not the goal here, creating a good narrative is, and every narrative needs a protagonist and an antagonist.

From fiction, also pay attention to the pacing of a narrative. Information has to be prioritized for maximum impact, therefore it is of great importance to build towards an emotional crescendo. Make the reader care about the victim first, then introduce the acts of violence or otherwise. Introducing the acts before the consumer of information has had time to develop empathy with the victim, creates a situation wherein the narrative has less emotional effect, and the consumer is more likely to ask critical questions.

Personalize the Victim

A major goal is to engage in personalisation of the victim(s), the reader has to feel as if this could be their friend, lover, or family member. This increases their emotional investment and makes them more likely to react out of fear for the well-being of a loved one, rather than as objective, dispassionate readers. In order to drive support and empathy for the victim, it is important to paint her in such a way to appear like the girl next door, who through the vicissitudes of faith, found herself in the way of the horrible [insert perpetrator]. The reason for writing "her" is that women make the most effective victims, followed by families with small children. Do not pick a man as victim unless additional conditions exist that would drive an emotional reaction. Common threads here is race, religion or sexuality.

Ignore and exclude the behavior of your victim(s), it doesn't matter what they were doing before being victimized, unless it helps draw them in an even better light. For instance, if your victim is also a nurse, who works two jobs, who is also a single mother and volunteers to help the homeless, publicize it, ideally with pictures of her at work, with her family and helping out at the shelter. If it turns out that the person you cast as victim has a history of killing husbands, ignore it, even if she is Belle Gunness or Nannie Doss, suppress all information of such activities. You have to remember, your goal is not the truth.

If it turns out that the college kid who got shot and whom you cast as your victim was actually a criminal with a long rap sheet who got shot while attempting to murder 8 other people, make sure to avoid mentioning this fact as much as possible, unless you can cast your victim as a "*flawed protagonist*" someone with a bad past who was turning their life around until the event.

Cast the wrongdoer as an example of a greater problem

The approach towards the person(s) you have cast as bad guy, are the opposite of those for the person you have cast as the good person. Unlike the victim, it is of critical importance to depersonalize the offender. This is an interesting dichotomy in that the person cast as perpetrator must at once be fully responsible for their actions, but also a symptom of something that appears larger than your narrative. For instance, institutional racism, institutionalized sexism, *"lad culture"* or "*typical frat boy*". Yes everyone is an individual, but your perpetrator was created by a larger picture of [*insert personal perspective*]. The perpetrator is a means to an end, and it is of high importance to link the actions of the bad guy, regardless of how many non-sequiturs it requires.

In the case of the bad guy, there is a need to ensure that all information about a sordid past be made very public. It doesn't matter if they spent time in jail when they were in their early 20s, got out 30 years ago and have been law-abiding, good citizens since then. Use phrases such as "*ex-convict*", and never state outright what they were convicted for, unless it strengthens your case. If they hit some ice on their way home one night after volunteering at the nursing home, and got put away for destruction of property when they went off the road and hit a mailbox, paint them as if they are Ted Bundy.

Make it meme worthy

In order to increase the reach of your narrative, you want to construct it in a manner where it can be condensed into one sentence or less. Examples of this include "*Don't tell women how to dress, teach men not to rape*" and *"77 cents on the dollar".* If you in addition come up with things such as the wage gap clock, that illustrate your narrative visually, the odds of it going viral and thus winning through a form of argumentum ad populum, increases drastically. If your meme and slogan are snappy, people will repeat them without thinking. Saying "*1 in 4 college women will be raped*" is more accurate that going into the details of the study. Avoid the trap of context, such as "*If 1/4 women in college got raped, that is worse than war torn Congo*" as this causes people to think, and question your position.

What you are attempting to accomplish is to persuade a large group of the population to accept your narrative, therefore the more people are exposed to it, the more likely you are to build a large following that buy into it. Once a critical mass believes you, they will work as agents for your ideas and disseminate them to even more people. This is the core of what it means to go viral, and this builds a situation wherein more people accept your position and interpretation because so many other people do.

Take a dogmatic position

Do not fall into the trap of adding nuance to your narrative, this confuses people and makes them think you are less truthful. From the former point on making it meme worthy, you need to be able to present your narrative in crystal clear terms without hesitation and caveats. Hammer on your points, and slogans, do not take a middle ground such as "*There may be an earning gap between men and women but different studies point to different causal chains that require more study*" or "*According to recent research, mobile is drastically increasing market share in the e-commerce world, but desktop is still a large source of traffic*" is ineffective compared to *"Mobile is the future!"*

By adding nuance and a well reasoned position over dogmatism, you engage people's system 2 responses, meaning that they are more likely to think critically and seek out evidence. This is not what you want. You want them to accept your [ethos and pathos as proof of your logos](), because this means your logos can be shit. However, as you are not concerned with a search for truth, it doesn't matter, what matters is swaying the population to your way of thinking.

If you enter into a debate on the issue, glass over the protests, and outright ignore them as not worthy. By discussing your opponents points, you are lending credibility to them. Instead play them off as lies, and ideally flip your opponent in the debate into an embodiment of the very issue you are seeking to fight. "*Of course you would think that, you are a CIS-white man*", "*Oh, you are against feminism, why do you hate all women*", these examples and others have the function of forcing your opponent on the defensive, where they will be focused on proving and arguing that just because someone is against the methods used by the proletariat does not make them a member of the bourgeois, and just because they are wearing classes does not make them an intellectual.

Check Your Sources

I put this last because this is the least important aspect, but the reason why you need to vet and ensure that your information is accurate is for the same reason a defense attorney needs to know the truth from his or her client. They do not give a shit if the client is guilty or not, they tend to not be bothered by morality on a professional level, but they do not want to be blindsided during the trial because you failed to tell them something that would harm the narrative they are creating to get you acquitted.

On the same note, you need to act preemptively to know and ideally bury anything that can contradict your narrative. If the story on which you base your narrative turns out to have plot holes, or inconsistencies, before you publish, you can take steps to bury them, improve on the original story and thus, ensuring that you are not blindsided later on. Being blindsided can cause you to react in a manner that reflects poorly on your ethos and pathos and maintaining those are central to your ability to build and sustain narratives.

In Summary

When a person attends research methodology classes in reputable academia such as in STEM fields, they are trained to seek out facts as free of human interpretation as possible. In order to do this, the scientific method is employed in order to limit the influence the researcher has on the results. One is trained to document every single aspect of an experiment, throughout long methodology chapters, and to perform additional experiments in order to confirm results. Hypotheses and research questions are vetted to remove both conscious and unconscious bias. The hypothesis testing is strictly monitored and so on.

Finally, when the research report is written up, before it can be published it is peer reviewed, meaning that other scientists go through the research write-up with the goals of finding flaws, poor language, or other questionable aspects.

This is done in order to make sure that the research holds a certain quality, and that the findings are in fact accurate. In publishing your media narrative it is necessary to rid yourself of any hang-ups you have about your professional ethics, intellectual integrity, professional integrity or morality in general. Understand that you are not acting as a journalist, or as an activist, you are acting as a propagandist. Your role is not to be accurate, truthful, or anything of the sort it is to push story as if it is true, regardless of it is fictional.

The only thing that matters when creating a media narrative is the end goal of influencing public perceptions in a predictable direction.

A note:

I recently launched a Patreon page where I will be posting additional content every month for those who support me and I will do a Google Hangout for the highest tier Patrons (limited to 10 people).

I've also had some requests for consults, which I've declined up until now, but due to demand I've chosen to open up for doing some consults on request. For details please check out my Consulting and Patreon Page

As always you can buy my book Gendernomics at Amazon.com as both paperback and Kindle

Sources:

[1] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/narrative

[2] http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/media

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