The importance of stakeholders involvement and media framing in global policy debates about NCDs?

Dr Shona Hilton, Deputy Director

MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, UK
100+ researchers/fieldworkers, 26 PhD students, 20+ support staff, international, multi-disciplinary teams
MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit

Informing Healthy Public Policy

My team (+ 8 PhD students)

Shona Hilton

Amy Nimegeer  Gillian Fergie  Theresa Ikegwuonu  Chris Patterson  Christina Buckton
Informing healthy public policy depends on understanding...

- how new policies and interventions are publicly debated
- who is influencing the policy agenda
- how research evidence can be translated into policy
Emerging health threats and policy responses

Non Communicable Diseases

Communicable Diseases

Antimicrobial Resistance

The One Health concept recognizes the interrelationship between animal, human and environmental health.
A depressing quote or two...

NCDs are largely commercially-driven. Every day, corporations make decisions about what products to make, how and where to sell them, and these decisions have a far greater impact on public health than the decisions of health officials and doctors...

Never before in human history has the gap between the scientific and economic potential for better health for all and the reality of avoidable premature death been greater...

Freudenberg, 2016
• For the first time in history, death, disease and disability rates for Non communicable diseases (NCDs) have overtaken the rates for communicable infectious disease

   In 2012, NCDs accounted for 68% of global deaths
   (WHO, 2012)

• NCDs have been identified as one of the main global public health challenges of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century

• NCDs are a problem that demands structural, macro-level solutions
Decades of mounting evidence on the tobacco industry highlighted its detrimental effect on health and brought about the introduction of upstream policies – targeting pricing, marketing and availability
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The alcohol industry has also seen a raft of macro level policies – largely targeting: pricing, marketing and availability.
Now it’s the turn of the ultra processed food and soft drink industries, with ‘sugar’ a current target
One unhealthy commodities industry?
The media plays a huge role in shaping public opinion by framing the...
- health problem
- drivers of the problem
- potential policy solutions
Good evidence that people look to the media for timely information about health

Hilton et al. 2011
The media can be a powerful ally, rallying public support for policies

The harms of second-hand smoking in cars carrying children
(Hilton et al. 2014)

The need for new alcohol policies to tackle alcohol-related harms
(Minimum Unit Pricing)
(Hilton et al. 2014)
In turn, public support for particular policy options hugely influences the political and policy agenda.
Policy making: What we know?

1- Policy making is not linear, it is messy
Policy making: What we know?

2- It is influenced by a range of stakeholders and types of evidence

3- Some corporate stakeholders interests run counter to public health interests
Kingdon’s Streams Model: relating policy making to the media

**Framing of policy problems** so that they come to the attention of policy makers and the public
Framing policy solutions so that ideas swirl around in public discourses until a few begin to gain traction- these policy solutions need to be politically and technically feasible to survive.
Political influences when problems and proposed policy solutions couple and enter the political stream at the same time as the issue rises on the political agenda - a window of opportunity opens.
Why media representations of corporations matter for public health policy: a scoping review

Heide Weishaar, Lori Dorfman, Nicholas Freudenberg, Benjamin Hawkins, Katherine Smith, Oliver Razum and Shona Hilton

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Abstract

Background

Media representations play a crucial role in informing public and policy opinions about the causes of, and solutions to, ill-health. This paper reviews studies analysing media coverage of non-communicable disease (NCD) debates, focusing on how the industries marketing commodities that increase NCD risk are represented.
Is there evidence of ‘different’ industries using similar framing strategies to influence media and political debates on NCD policy?
Method: scoping review

Selected -tobacco, alcohol, processed food/soft drinks industries associated with rapid rise in NCDs

Searched databases: Web of Science, Medline, Embase and Google Scholar:

Variation of search terms related to tobacco, alcohol, processed foods/ soft drinks

Inclusion criteria:
- Study published in a peer-reviewed journal
- Used media analysis (CA, NA, DA)
- Published in English
- No time or geographical limitations were set
Sample and data extraction

Final sample of 61 media studies

Systematically extracted the following data into framework:

- NCD-related product
- Location of study
- Period of investigation
- Type of media analysed- newspapers, TV etc
- Methodological approach
- Research aims/questions
- Key findings/ conclusions/recommendations
Findings: increase in media research on these industries over time

Statistically significant increase in publication over time
(Poisson regression coefficient 0.113, p<0.000)

MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow.
Findings

- The limited research that has been undertaken is dominated by a focus on tobacco (n=40), processed food/soft drinks (n=12), alcohol (n=9)

- No single media study cross-compared industries

- Coverage tends to be dominated by two contrasting frames
Market justice frames
Primarily promoted by corporate stakeholders: promoting individual level drivers and solutions

- focus on the value to society of an unfettered marketplace
- frame NCDs in terms of unhealthy lifestyle choices, individual responsibility, consumer choice
- frame public health policy solutions to NCDs typically as disproportionate, unwarranted, infeasible or nanny-statist
- promote education

Social Justice frames
Primarily promoted by public health stakeholders: promoting population-level drivers needing macro level policy solutions

- focus on the social and political determinants of health
- emphasis the detrimental impacts and amorality of corporate influence on NCDs
- emphasis the need for regulation and population-based interventions
- highlight the vulnerability of sub-populations- such as children

Beauchamp (1976)
Conclusions

There was evidence of ‘different’ industries using similar language /framing strategies to influence media and political debates:

- ‘Direct lobbying of the public’ via the media to frame the problem and its drivers
- ‘Credibility engineering’ via the media to present alternative solutions (Corporate Social Responsibility)

Comparative research across industries is particularly lacking, this is needed to better understand the extent to which ‘different’ industries are using similar tactics

More sophisticated methodological approaches to examining the relationship between media, industry and policymakers
Study 2.

UK soda taxation stakeholders’ framing: nanny-statism or progressive public policy? A news media analysis

Hilton S¹, Buckton CH¹, Katikireddi SV¹, Lloyd-Williams F², Patterson C¹, Hyseni L², Elliott-Green A², Capewell S²

¹MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow, UK
²Department of Public Health & Policy, University of Liverpool, UK

Under Review
Background

Excessive sugar consumption – particularly among children and adolescents in the UK is a major public health concern

Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSBs) are a major source of sugar intake in young people and more deprived groups

Linked to growing rates of type-2 diabetes and other NCDs
In March 2016, the UK Government announced a Soft Drinks Industry Levy to be implemented in April 2018.

Sugar tax rates from April 2018

18p per litre for drinks that contain between five and eight grams of sugar per 100ml
24p per litre for drinks exceeding eight grams per 100ml
Drinks containing less than five grams of sugar per 100ml may be exempt
Research question

How have key stakeholders used the media to frame evidence to decision-makers and the public in support or opposition to SSB taxation?
Method: Media Analysis

- Database searched: Nexis
- Newspapers: 11 UK national papers
- Timeframe: April 2015 to Nov 2016. Period before and after SSB tax announced
- Inclusion criteria: SSB taxation, Must cite stakeholder(s)
- Analysis: Thematic & constant comparative analysis
### Newspaper sample and stakeholder sample

A wide range of stakeholders (n=287), organisations (n=97) and individuals (n=190)

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Findings: Key events and distribution of arguments in support or opposition to SSB taxation

Arguments n=1,720

- Publication of WHO guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children
- Parliamentary debate: Petition to introduce a tax on sugary drinks
- Publication of PHE report: Sugar Reduction: The Evidence for Action
- BMJ publication of early findings on effectiveness of sugar tax in Mexico
- Publication of UK Government strategy: Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action
- Budget announcement of planned Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) in UK
- Publication of SACN report: Carbohydrates and Health
- End of UK Government consultation on SDIL
Findings: Stakeholder level of media engagement in, and opposition/support towards SSB taxation debate

Opposed

Industry representatives, producers & retailers

Think tanks & analysts

Supportive

PH organisations, experts & professional bodies

NGOs, charities & campaigners

Academics & evidence producers

Frequent

Infrequent
Market justice frames
Primarily promoted by corporate stakeholders: promoting individual level drivers and solutions

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Beauchamp (1976)
Key arguments in support or opposition to SSB taxation

**Policy**
- Health
- Behaviour
- Economic
- Industry
- Political

**Support:**
- It will be an effective population health policy - as part of a package of policy measures
- It is feasible to implement

**Opposition:**
- It is unfair
- It is regressive
- Other approaches more effective: reformulation, portion control, advertising controls, education etc.
Key arguments in support or opposition to SSB taxation

**Support:**
- Will raise revenue to fund health improvement and education
- Healthier workforce will benefit economy
- Will reduce financial burden on NHS

**Opposition:**
- Industry will reformulate; no increase in tax revenue
- Will lead to industry failure, job losses and reduced innovation
- Will cause inflation and a decline in economic output
Key arguments in support or opposition to SSB taxation

**Support:**
- Industry can reformulate so can mitigate losses
- Sends a clear message to industry that they need to take some responsibility

**Opposition:**
- Industry is reformulating anyway in response to consumer demand
- This industry doing more than other industries
- Taxation is anti-competitive
Key arguments in support or opposition to SSB taxation

**Support:**
- The public support SSB taxation
- It is politically palatable
- UK can be a public health policy leader like Mexico
- Sugar is the new tobacco, and needs to be regulated

**Opposition:**
- SSB tax would not be popular with public
- It is nanny statist
- Un-conservative
Conclusions

- There was evidence of the SSB industry using similar framing strategies to the tobacco and alcohol industries.

- Public health advocates have been vocal in using social justice frames- future research should examine public perceptions of such frames.

- More sophisticated methodological approaches to examining the framing strategies across industries and networks influencing those frames.
Conclusions

Using discourse network analysis to studying media discourses on emerging health threats, their drivers and policy solutions, offers a more nuanced understanding of how the media was used to influence policy.

This is important for understanding:

- agenda setting
- how corporations directly to lobby the public to influence policy
- how public health advocates can optimally counter the claims made by corporations and target ‘windows of opportunity’
Subtle?
Less subtle?