

# Journalistic genre (Culture Coverage)

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**KEYWORDS**

*cultural coverage, cultural journalism, genre, news, reviews*

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**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLE**

This variable describes the basic journalistic genres typically used in specialized cultural coverage. The fundamental distinction goes between fact-based objective-seeking genres, such as news and news feature, and opinionated articles based on subjective accounts, such as columns, essays, comments and reviews. In journalism, it is important to separate opinions from facts, and this is why subjective views are differentiated from ways of representation that are based on the strategic ritual of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972), i.e., presenting facts by referring to sources or simply describing them instead of exposing the journalists' own opinions and feelings. Reviews present a specialist genre of their own, connected to the institution of criticism (Hohendahl, 1982). Reviewing – the evaluation of new cultural products on the market – underlies the assumption that only selected experts are allowed to write reviews (Chong, 2020). Newspapers are also constantly developing their means of presentation, which results in an increased number of different newspaper-specific and hybrid formats, both in print and online (see, e.g., Santos Silva, 2019). Being not only medium-specific, genres may also vary from one journalistic culture to another, which makes a nuanced cross-cultural comparison difficult and motivates a limited use of values.

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**FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

Journalistic genres constitute the epistemological ground on which cultural journalists and reviewers cover culture. Scholars have been interested in the shifts in cultural coverage that have occurred between descriptive, interpretative, and evaluative content (Widholm et al., 2019). Descriptive content is often regarded in professional terms as non-ambitious in culture, while the meaning-making subjective elements are preferred and conceived of as an indication of quality (proactive professional engagement rather than marketing of cultural events). In cultural coverage, it is yet often difficult to separate facts from evaluative accounts, as the description of products, phenomena, persons, and events often require that they are put into an evaluative frame.

The selection of a genre is related to the production structures, as many reviews are written by freelancers outside the newsroom. The number and share of reviews are typically regarded as an indication of journalistic acknowledgement for expert knowledge, and also the volume of outsourced production, as a great majority of reviews are written by freelancer-based experts. A decreasing number of reviews is thus typically interpreted as a crisis of criticism (Elkins, 2003; Jaakkola, 2015).

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**REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Journalistic genres are often studied in conjunction to the artistic genres (see variable “[Forms of culture](#)”). Some studies are only interested in tracing the number and volume of reviews.



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**SAMPLE OPERATIONALIZATION**

The two basic journalistic genres are news and reviews. News coverage can be further broken down to news feature (phenomenon-led coverage also called reportage) and person-led feature (typically referred to as person portraits). Further, there are two typical opinionated genres, essays and columns, and many kinship genres such as analysis, (news) comment and preview, that can be separately identified or merged into one variable showing personal voicing of the author.

**EXAMPLE STUDY**

Jaakkola (2015)

**INFORMATION ABOUT JAAKKOLA, 2015**

**Author:** Maarit Jaakkola

**Research question/research interest:** Representation of the share of journalistic genres applied in covering culture on culture pages of daily newspapers across time, to expose the production

structure

**Object of analysis:** Articles/text items on culture pages of five major daily newspapers in Finland 1978–2008 (Aamulehti, Helsingin Sanomat, Kaleva, Savon Sanomat, Turun Sanomat)

**Timeframe of analysis:** 1978–2008, consecutive sample of weeks 7 and 42 in five year intervals (1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008)

**INFO ABOUT VARIABLE**

**Variable name/definition:** Journalistic genre

Unit of analysis: Article/text item

**Values:** see Table 1

**Table 1.** *Values.*

Journalistic genre	Description
1. News	Informative, fact-based article intended to deliver an objective account on an event
2. Review	Opinionated, subjective article related to a new cultural product with an intention to evaluate it, written by a reviewer or critic
3. Person portrait/feature	An informative article, typically interview-based, in which a person constitutes the topic
4. Reportage/feature	An informative article intended to give account of the context of a news event or examine a phenomenon
5. Essay	A longer opinionated, subjective article written by a journalist or reviewer to cover a phenomenon, process, state of the art or arts, etc.
6. Other commentary	A short opinionated, subjective article written by a journalist (non-reviewer): a column, causerie, comment, preview or analysis, sometimes related to a news article
7. Other	A text item not suited for any other category; e.g., a list, visualization, hybrid format, or similar

**Scale:** nominal

**Intercoder reliability:** Cohen's kappa > 0.76 (two coders)

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