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Bibliography. Book review

Media Analytics Understanding Media, Audiences and Consumers in the 21st Century

C. Ann Hollifield And Amy Jo Coffey

Published by Routledge, New York (2023), 438 pp.

Although the title might suggest this is a math-based book filled with numbers and statistics, it is not that, but so much more. In it, Hollifield and Coffey draw on their extensive experience in the field and their decades of teaching/research practice to provide a comprehensive and long-needed text for media and audience analytics courses and programs. Part media management primer, part casebook, part occupational resource, the text introduces students to the myriad opportunities open to those who pursue careers as media analysts, outlines the key aspects of an analyst's job, explains the fundamentals of media management and economics in a clear and concise way and provides a thorough understanding of the 21st century media ecosystem.

Conversational in approach, the text is divided into three parts: Foundations of Media Analytics, Media Analysis and the Business of Media, and Media Analytics Across Industry Sectors. Among the topics covered are a discussion of revenue models, the tenets and challenges of quality research design and methodology, the importance of storytelling skills, the key components and players in the consumer behavior and marketing space and big data. Frequent reminders throughout reassure students that media analytics is not about the math, but “about solving problems” (p. 34) and that “the most important part of media analytics is figuring out what data mean in the context of specific media management problems” (p. 60). Because it addresses the reader with the use of the pronoun “you,” and often provides “pep talks” to students, the text feels more personal and engaging than is typically the case.

The layout of the text, particularly the use of boxes to summarize concepts, is designed to help students understand things like key financial terms and how they are calculated (Box 2.2, p. 40), content management goals (Box 2.3, p. 51), [Eastman and Ferguson, 2013, *Media Programming: Strategies and practices* (9th Ed.). Wadsworth Cengage Learning.], key advertising metrics, their definitions and formulas, (Box 5.1, pp. 129-133) and common Nielsen video measurement currencies in the United States (Box 9.2, pp. 223-224).

Importantly, Hollifield and Coffey devote a chapter to the fundamentals of research design and methodology, especially as they relate to the use of secondary data. After outlining the primary tasks associated with working with secondary data and what constitutes a representative sample, given their audience, the authors take pains to note “university media and communications students are a completely unrepresentative population to use for studying general audiences. In fact, they are probably one of the worst populations to study if you really want to understand the how the general public feels about and uses media” (p. 77) and “regardless of the reasons for using them, it is critical to remember that non-probability samples can never be assumed to be representative of any population” (p. 81).

Additionally, in virtually every chapter Hollifield and Coffey discuss the ethics associated with the topic, particularly as it relates to concerns about the use of an individual's data and privacy. For example, in the social media analytics chapter, the authors discuss fraud and

note, “the business is not about helping you connect with friends or clients. It’s about selling advertising to you based on your location, your demographics, and your attitudes and selling data about you to third parties” (p. 334).

As noted above, the book is part media management primer, part casebook and part occupational resource. From an instructor’s perspective, it is not only the casebook, but perhaps more importantly, the datasets that are particularly valuable. The cases are found on the book’s accompanying website www.routledge.com/cw/hollifield which includes a quick guide to cases that identifies the type of data needed for the assignment, whether the data are provided or original data collection is required, the amount of time needed to complete the assignment, whether pre-planning is necessary and whether the case is an individual or group project. A second table outlines the skills and learning goals of each of the cases.

The cases align nicely with each of the chapters. For example, in case 1.1 students are tasked with researching the media analytics job market by reviewing job postings on sites like indeed.com and monster.com. The instructor’s guide to the case includes tips on what kind of research to do to better anticipate students’ questions and a rubric for what to look for in students’ responses.

In case 1.2 students are asked to develop an audit plan for a new media measurement tool. The case includes a link to the Media Rating Council’s guidelines <https://www.mediaratingcouncil.org/standards-and-guidelines> and is especially timely given the challenges of finding a reliable and valid way of measuring audience behavior across platforms. Case 1.3 addresses the issues associated with measuring media around the world while case 2.1 requires students to use Excel to analyze a TV finance dataset and create charts to present their findings.

Tied to the importance of developing strong storytelling skills, in case 4.2 students are asked to analyze the data presented in a single line graph and write a professional memo to a television station general manager and news director reporting what they found. The instructor’s version of the case includes information on what the data reveal and a rubric for grading the more subjective aspects of the assignment. Other cases include designing a content analysis (3.3), scraping and critiquing data (3.4), converting radio listeners into car buyers (5.1 and 6.2), and a competitive analysis of the video games market in a hypothetical country (15.2).

Media Analytics Understanding Media, Audiences and Consumers in the 21st Century is a textbook that can be used, in whole or in part, not only in courses focused on media analytics and audiences, but also in introductory research, mass communication, advertising, broadcasting and digital media classes. In the exercises it provides and the discussion questions it poses, it also serves as a pedagogical model. It is the type of textbook that I wish I had as I struggled to write assignments and develop materials for a recent class in television viewership.