Quantifying and comparing web news portals’ article salience using the VoxPopuli tool

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Issue salience

- **Definition**
  „A level of concern, attention or importance placed on a given issue.”
  *Wlezien 2005*

- **Measurement**
  - Conceptual challenge: what is an „issue” anyway?
  - NYT Citation Index or equivalent
    - „issue” equated with key term (or nowdays hashtag)
    - reflects primarily salience according to media workers’ and owners’ rather than to media audience
    - can be quickly obtained by computer
  - Gallup’s „Most Important Problem” question and derivatives
    - most important issue for a respondent needs not be a problem at all
    - can only be (not so quickly) obtained by poll
News portals readers’ comments
Readers’ comments properties

• Plentiful, freely available, (mostly) persistent and fully public
  - up to ~1.000 commentators / ~10.000 comments per portal per day

• Real time media audience („public”) response
  - commenting starts within minutes after publication of an article and
    finishes within few hours

• Unsolicited and deep
  - posting a comment indicates commentator’s real interest in something
    contained in the news story (one or more „issues”)
  - no fixed predetermined structure, hence also difficult to code

• Pseudoanonymious
  - self-censorship is significantly suppressed
  - individual commentators’ can be tracked in time and across portals
  - „professionals” can quickly be identified and discounted for
VoxPopuli - news article salience

http://voxpopuli.hr
## Published articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Marijana Petir: Podvaljuju nam hranu koju Europa ne želi!</td>
<td>05/07 19:31</td>
<td></td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Raspisali upitan natječaj za predstojnike ureda HZZ-a...</td>
<td>05/07 19:22</td>
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<td>VESTI</td>
<td>Kovač otkrio koja su mjerila potrebna za deblokadu, srpski mediji tvrde: 'Hrvatska je tražila novce'</td>
<td>05/07 19:00</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>VESTI</td>
<td>Beljak za RTL: 'HDZ-u ne zamjeram ništa, ali prema nama su se podcjenjivački odnosili'</td>
<td>05/07 18:55</td>
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<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Hrvatska je dva puta pokušla zaustaviti Srbiju, nije uspjela</td>
<td>05/07 18:39</td>
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<td>NL</td>
<td>Policija i tužiteljstvo sumnjiči pet osoba da su HNK &quot;Ivan pl. Zajc&quot; oštetili za više stotina tisuća kuna</td>
<td>05/07 18:25</td>
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<td>UŽIVO Ministar Miro Kovač o odnosima sa Srbijom</td>
<td>05/07 17:10</td>
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<td>J</td>
<td>HASANBEGOVIĆ EKSKLUZIVNO ZA JUTARNJI 'Zašto se neću kandidirati za šefa HDZ-a'</td>
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Absolute article salience
Portal statistics (for 4.7.2016)

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<tr>
<th>Home</th>
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<th>Comments</th>
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<td>J</td>
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<td>SD</td>
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</table>
Relative (portal-normalized) salience

- Article commentators / portal commentators (log scale)
- Commentators who posted multiple comments / total commentators (linear scale)
From *VoxPopuli* to *VoxPoPolling*

- *VoxPoPolling*  
  - real-time public opinion monitoring system  
  - faster, more flexible, cheaper, deeper and more valid than traditional polling methodology

- **To-do list**  
  - Clarify operational definition of an „issue” (e.g. as key term network/map)  
  - Construct quantive measure of „issueness” (an „issue spectrum”) of a particular news article  
  - Develop methodology for coding of readers’ comments against selected „issues”  
  - Develop methodology for DSP profiling and construction of representative sample of commentators
Thank you for your attention...

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