

Frame Analysis of The Egg Shortage Crisis

Samantha Smith

**04:189:152:03 The Structure of
Information**

Spring 2025

Recently, a new crisis has arisen affecting people everywhere. A global egg shortage. Although eggs may seem like a frivolous thing, the impact of this shortage affects people in more ways than simply not having access to scrambled eggs in the morning. This shortage has a widespread impact on consumers, businesses, and the overall economy. The main cause of the crisis is an outbreak of avian flu, which is sickening and killing chickens, while also disrupting supply chains. This has caused a huge surge in egg prices. Through this ongoing outbreak, it is the responsibility of news platforms to be able to deliver information on this crisis to the public. As we've been learning throughout the semester, the way information is framed in media can shape the public's perception of an event. Frame analysis is "when researchers try to unpick the process through which a frame is presented...How have journalists told the story and why did they tell the story this way?" (Kitzinger, 2021, p.134) Each source examined provides information about this crisis, though some frame it in different ways than others. The sources we're going to be examining for this frame analysis are The New York Times, CBS News, NPR, CNN, Fox News, USA Today, Vox, The Daily Show, and a Reddit discussion. These platforms allow for a range of widespread coverage across all different kinds of media platforms. This paper examines how the egg shortage crisis is framed differently across various media outlets, through the lenses of economic crisis, as a public health crisis, corporate greed, and public reaction, shaping public perception and influencing audience interpretation. This frame analysis will analyze how these frames shape the narrative on the egg shortage crisis and influence audience interpretation by how the information is being delivered.

Economic Crisis Frame

Mainstream outlets like The New York Times, CBS News, and USA Today focus heavily on the economic impact of the egg shortage, highlighting how rising prices are affecting consumers. These sources frame the crisis mainly in terms of inflation and market instability, making it seem like a bigger part of an ongoing economic downturn. While the bird flu is mentioned in some articles, it quickly takes a backseat to the growing financial strain on consumers. For instance, USA Today's article *Egg costs predicted to rise in 2025, despite Vance saying 'prices are going to come down'* touches on the bird flu but quickly shifts the focus to the rising prices, pointing out that "the average price of a dozen large grade-A eggs was \$4.15 in December, up from \$3.65 in November." (Limehouse & Walraath-Holdridge, 2025) The article goes on to explain that egg prices are up 37% from the previous year, pushing the narrative of inflation and increasing costs. Similarly, CBS News, in *Egg Prices Are Likely to Shoot Up Even More in 2025. Here's What to Know*, highlights how egg prices are "rising to impressive heights right before our eyes," (Lee, 2025) quoting the USDA's prediction that prices will go up another 20% this year. Using dramatic phrases like "record-high prices ruffling feathers," CBS News emphasizes the financial burden on consumers. The New York Times article, *Egg Prices Are High. They Will Likely Go Higher* sticks to the theme of rising prices and their impact on household budgets, underlining the economic implications without diving into other contributing factors. These articles all convey a sense of uncertainty and financial hardship, consistently emphasizing how much more expensive eggs are becoming. By focusing on expert sources like the USDA and economic analysts, these outlets paint the egg shortage as a major driver of inflation in the economy. In week 6 we read the article *Framing and Frame Analysis*, by Jenny Kitzinger. Kitzinger's ideas on media framing, particularly the placement of information, source selection, and the repetition of key themes, help explain how these stories shape public

perception. She writes “it goes beyond commenting on the extent or degree of media attention, focusing instead on the nature of that attention and the aspects that are highlighted as salient.” (2021, p.137) By prioritizing the economic angle and focusing on rising prices, these outlets make the egg shortage feel like a financial crisis that demands attention. Other factors, like the bird flu’s impact on egg production, are mentioned but are not given the same weight, suggesting that the most pressing issue is the financial strain it’s placing on consumers.

Public Health frame

While those news sources presented the information on egg shortage as an economic crisis, others presented it in a health frame. The health frame in the coverage of the egg shortage focuses on the avian flu as a key factor of the crisis, highlighting how the disease is directly affecting the health of chickens and causing effects throughout the food supply. This approach presents the issue as a public health crisis that impacts both farmers and consumers. Sources like CNN, NPR, and Fox focus on how the spread of avian flu is attacking our farms. Fox News, in *"Egg Prices Hit Record High as Supply Struggles Continue,"* explains that once avian flu is detected, entire flocks must be culled to stop the spread of the virus. The article notes the “significant losses” farmers face due to the disease, highlighting the health emergency of this crisis. .”Once bird flu is detected, a farm must cull all the birds in the flock. This has had a devastating impact on the egg industry, as it takes approximately five months for a chicken to mature.”(Rouselle, 2025) The report makes clear that the avian flu’s impact goes far beyond the immediate financial consequences, as it directly affects animal welfare and the food supply chain. This is a direct emotional appeal as Kitzinger addresses. Using an emotional undertone contributes to the overall frame. The focus on culling emphasizes the health concerns involved in

controlling the outbreak, shifting the narrative away from economic instability to a broader health crisis affecting both animals and humans. CNN's *Expect record-high egg prices for most of the year* also adopts the health frame by highlighting the resurgence of avian flu and the significant impact it's having on poultry populations..The article emphasizes that “While some states escaped last year’s outbreaks, many have reported a resurgence of the virus, which killed about 17.2 million egg-laying hens in November and December. That’s nearly half of all birds killed by the virus in 2024, according to the USDA.” (Bacon, 2025) By highlighting the number of chickens killed, the report directly ties the crisis to the spread of disease, underlining how the health of these animals is causing a chain reaction throughout the egg industry. This framing draws attention to the health risks to chickens and the larger consequences for food production, stressing that the shortage isn’t just an issue of not having enough eggs in stores, it’s a direct result of a widespread health emergency that continues to affect farms across the country. By talking about half of all birds being killed, this employs a victim-frame as discussed in the Katzinger article. The "victim-frame" is often built on a moral foundation of compassion and empathy, appealing to emotions like sympathy and concern. Likewise in NPR’s *Here's a Super Bowl riddle: Why are egg prices surging — but not chicken wings?*. takes a more personal approach by quoting a farmer, Sam Krouse, who describes the ongoing struggle to protect flocks from the avian flu: “Egg farmers are in the fight of their lives to keep this disease at bay, to keep our hens safe and to keep eggs coming.” (Horsley, 2025) This quote highlights the direct health risks to the chickens, portraying farmers as being on the front lines of a health battle to preserve both their livelihood and the integrity of the egg supply. By emphasizing the health-related challenges farmers face in trying to safeguard their flocks, NPR underscores that the crisis is not just about economics but about the fight to protect animal health and ensure the continuity of egg

production. In this frame, the avian flu is presented as a major public health issue that has far-reaching effects. Rather than simply focusing on rising prices or supply chain disruptions, the health frame prioritizes the disease itself as a public health emergency, stressing the severe consequences for poultry populations and the challenges farmers face in managing these health risks. By using emotional language and metaphors the author's are shaping the public's opinions on this issue. By centering the story on the spread of disease and its effects on both animal welfare and food production, these outlets highlight how health concerns are a driving factor for the egg shortage crisis.

Corporate Greed Frame

The corporate greed frame suggests that egg producers are taking advantage of the situation to inflate prices beyond what's necessary. In a *Vox* article titled *Why we keep seeing egg prices spike*, it's pointed out that producers appear to be raising prices more than needed to cover their costs after the supply chain disruptions. According to the article, egg companies are "taking advantage of these moments and hiking prices beyond what they'd need to maintain their old profit margins." (Kim, 2024) The piece also highlights how the egg industry's lack of competition, due to consolidation, is allowing these big companies to set prices without concern for losing customers. The article frames the situation as one of "corporate profiteering," with quotes from Rebecca Wolf, a senior food policy analyst at Food & Water Watch, further emphasizing this view. By using phrases like "taking advantage of the crisis," and calling it "a story of corporate profiteering" the article frames the egg industry as more profit-driven than affected by market forces. By using these word choices it urges the audience to feel a negative type of way towards corporations for upping the egg prices.

Public Reaction Frame

The public reaction to the egg shortage crisis is framed in a way that highlights consumer frustration, adaptation, and humor. Both Reddit discussions and *The Daily Show* contribute to a narrative where individuals express dissatisfaction with the rising prices but also attempt to find humor in the situation to cope with it. On Reddit, in a discussion thread titled *How's everyone doing with these egg prices?* ([r/Baking], 2025), users shared their personal struggles and coping strategies. The thread features comments from individuals who express concern over the price hikes but also exchange ideas about how to manage the impact. Some users discuss using egg substitutes, while others joke about the "luxury" of buying eggs in such times. The overall tone, while frustrated, has humor, indicating that people are adjusting to the situation with a sense of resilience. By focusing on the public's reaction, Reddit frames the egg crisis as a shared experience, underscoring the emotional toll and societal impact of the price increases. On *The Daily Show*, Josh Johnson takes a satirical approach to the issue in his segment titled *How Much Are New Yorkers Willing to Pay for Eggs? Josh Johnson Investigates* (Johnson, 2025). Johnson frames the crisis as not just an economic issue but as something that is absurdly out of control. He uses humor and exaggerated comparisons, pointing out the ridiculousness of the rising egg prices while also critiquing the systems that allow corporate greed to thrive. By using the visual of going up to people on the streets on NYC, it makes the situation seem less serious. Johnson's comedic narrative encourages viewers to laugh at the situation, but it also reveals the underlying frustration many feel about the rise in egg prices. By using these emotional tones, this frame serves to highlight the public's growing frustration and a sense of powerlessness, with humor being used as a coping mechanism. These outlets combine humor and frustration, creating a narrative where the public is both shocked and learning to adapt to a tough situation.

This analysis makes it clear that the way the egg shortage crisis is covered in the media shapes how people understand and react to it. Some outlets frame it as an economic crisis, focusing on inflation and rising prices. Others highlight the avian flu's devastating impact, treating it as a public health emergency. Then there are those who argue that corporate greed is to blame, suggesting that companies are using the crisis as an excuse to drive up prices. And finally, the public's response, ranging from frustration to humor, adds another layer to the narrative, showing how people process and cope with the situation in real time. Through this framing analysis I've learned a lot about media framing, how different platforms choose which details to emphasize, what sources to prioritize, and how language can shape the way we see an issue. Depending on which news outlet you follow, your understanding of the egg shortage could be completely different from someone else's. Ultimately, this crisis is a perfect example of how media coverage influences public perception. The way a story is told can drive concern, spark outrage, or even make people laugh. It reminds us to think critically about the information we consume, question what is being presented to us, and recognize that there's always more than one way to frame the truth.

References

- Bacon, A. (2025, January 25). *Expect record-high egg prices for most of the year*. CNN.
<https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/25/business/egg-prices-avian-flu-outbreak/index.html#:~:text=Americans%20can%20continue%20to%20expect,Department%20of%20Agriculture's%20price%20outlook>
- Creswell, J. (2025, January 24). *Egg prices are high. They will likely go higher*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/24/business/egg-shortage-prices.html>
- Horsley, S. (2025, February 7). *Here's a Super Bowl riddle: Why are egg prices surging — but not chicken wings?* NPR.
<https://www.npr.org/2025/02/07/nx-s1-5270835/super-bowl-egg-prices-chicken-wings>
- Kim, W. (2024, April 30). *Why we keep seeing egg prices spike*. Vox.
<https://www.vox.com/money/24144715/egg-price-inflation-bird-flu-corporate-greed>
- Kitzinger, J. (2021, October 7). *Framing and Frame Analysis*. Michigan State University ILL. 134-161.
- Lee, A. M. (2025, January 30). *Egg prices are likely to shoot up even more in 2025. Here's what to know*. CBS News.
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/eggs-prices-shortages-bird-flu-2025/>
- Limehouse, J., & Walrath-Holdridge, M. (2025, January 29). *Egg costs predicted to rise in 2025, despite Vance saying 'prices are going to come down'*. USA Today.
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/food/2025/01/27/eggs-shortage-2025-prices-forecast-increase/77969871007/>
- Rousselle, C. (2025, February 15). *Egg prices hit record high*. Fox News.
<https://www.foxnews.com/food-drink/egg-prices-hit-record-high>
- [The Daily Show.] (2025, February 14). *How Much Are New Yorkers Willing to Pay for Eggs? Josh Johnson Investigates | The Daily Show*. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJAopYB75dQ>
- [r/Baking]. (2025, January 17). *How's everyone doing with these egg prices?* Reddit.
https://www.reddit.com/r/Baking/comments/li8dlzw/how_s_everyone_doing_with_these_egg_prices/