🖥 Showroom ☹ News and negativity

Handout

Re-examining news values

One of the best known lists of news values was drawn up in the 1960s by media researchers Johan Galtung and Marie Holmboe Ruge. By analyzing coverage by four Norwegian newspapers of international crises of the time, they developed a list of 12 factors which determined the value of a news item. One of the leading ones was "negativity". These factors are still widely used by editors today.

However, Galtung has said his list was not a guide but rather a warning. His study predicted that if news continued to reflect the world in an antagonistic way, it would generate extreme negativity and increase tensions. "Conflict will be emphasized, conciliation not," the study concluded.

Some analysts have proposed re-examining the list. Media researchers Tony Harcup and Deirdre O'Neill offered their own analysis in 2016 about what was guiding news selection and created an updated list. While "bad news" still ranked high, "good news" made an appearance, although fairly low.

Harcup and O'Neill stressed that their list was not the last word. More discussion about news values is needed. Perhaps further adjustment–such as giving "good news" more prominence–would provide a counterweight to the negativity that dominates. Others have argued for the addition of more positive factors such as "community", "achievement", "cooperation", "solution", etc.

News Values

Galtung and Ruge, 1965	Harcup and O'Neill, 2016
● Impact/Magnitude ● Frequency ● Negativity ● Unexpectedness ● Unambiguity ● Personalisation (centered on a particular person) ● Meaningfulness (cultural proximity) ● Reference to elite nations ● Reference to elite persons ● Consonance (matching perceived ideas/angles) ● Continuity (Already in the news) ● Composition (what other stories are running that day?)	● Exclusivity ● Bad news ● Conflict ● Surprise ● Audio-visuals ● Shareability ● Entertainment ● Drama ● Follow-up ● The power elite ● Relevance ● Magnitude ● Celebrity ● Good news ● News organization's agenda