

UNDERSTANDING THE TYPE OF NEWS PREFERENCES: POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

AUTHOR NAME: TaniyaTokhi, Student UIMS, Chandigarh University, Mohali

CONTACT NO: 09872101223

EMAIL I.D: taniya2598@gmail.com

Abstract

Media plays an important role in our life these days. However, it is generally blamed for being biased and highlighting only negative news. The main purpose of the research is to find out that why media highlights the negative issues rather than positive ones. A research was carried out to lay importance on the consumer's demand for the type of news they prefer the most. The research was culled out on the basis of two parameters: negative news and positive news. The specific contents such as crime, sensational stories, controversial content, etc. is categorized under 'negative news'. On the other hand, factual articles, social issues, business news, etc. is included in 'positive news'. The results of the research revealed that most of the respondents preferred negative news over the positive news stories. In brief, media highlights the negative news stories because that is the kind of news that people are interested in.

Keywords: Negative News, Positive news, crime news, social issues and media preferences.

1. Introduction

Mass Media plays an important role in our lives these days. Majority of people all across the world are dependent on media sources for getting all kind of information and keeping themselves updated on various happenings around the world. There was a time when there was no source of information for people. But with the passage of time various technologies were invented and now-a-days, you just need to turn on the television by pressing a button and get the information about all the happenings around the world within seconds.

Roy, J. (2015) in his article described the role of media in our daily lives. He defined media as the sword arm of democracy. Media protects the public interests and also creates awareness among the public. Media confronts us to the real life issues happening all over the globe while we are sitting at one place. Media acts as mediator in providing us information about various acts and schemes passed by the government. Be it commonwealth scams or Nirbhaya rape case, it's all possible because of media that we know the insights of wrong happenings which are occurring our day to day life.

Media is always blamed for highlighting more of the negative news stories rather than the positive news stories. What could be the possible reason behind media's more preference towards the negative aspect of these stories? The research concentrates on the consumer's demand for the type of story they prefer to watch or read. It has been found that now-a-days because of so much of stress and depression among the people, their brain automatically attracts more of negative content rather than the positive content. The possible reason that the media is stuffed with celebrity scandals, political corruption and crime stories is because of the consumers demand or his psyche desire for dramatic and negative news.

Gilmar, P. (2017) described in her article that "According to Psychology Today, for every seventeen negative news reports, there is only one positive report" (p 1). One must keep this thing in mind that media broadcast only those stories that people are interested in. And because people watch such stories, media tends to highlight more of negative news stories than the positive stories. Neurologically, the negative part of our brain is far more sensitive than the positive part. Thus, when you watch or read more of negative content, it triggers your negative part which releases your stress hormones and you get completely absorbed in depression and fear.

Keeping in view this content, the present research was conducted to figure out whether people watch positive news stories or not. Media is stuffed with negative stories these days. But media works according to public interest only. If media is highlighting more of negative news then the reason could be that people like to watch the negative news highlighted by the media. The research was done to know people's preferences between negative and positive news stories. Negative news influences the brain of the audiences and now people are so used to it that they prefer more to watch such stories.

The research was conducted under major two parameters; 'negative news stories' and 'positive News stories'. Parameters are defined so that one can easily find out the types in which the news stories were categorised. Respondents were asked to choose between the both. Every parameter is described before in detail.

Negative news stories included: Crime news, Political news, paid news, page 3 news, sensational news stories and controversies and all the stories where media gave a negative opinion or highlighted negative image.

Positive news stories included: light news articles, researches and new facts, business news, sports news and speaking tree articles. Also any information that stimulates the positive part of your brain and which makes you feel light and distressed.

Objectives

Therefore, keeping in view the preference of news type by the respondents, a research was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To know what type of news is preferred by respondents.
2. To determine the reasons affecting the news preferences.

Rationale of the Research

Importance of the research on consumer's demand for a particular type of news has a social value. The research will explain and aware the people that how they are becoming prey to negative news stories and unconsciously they are getting more attracted towards the negative news stories and have forgotten the existence of positive stories.

2. Review of Literature

Literature was reviewed to know about the findings of various researchers about the type of news consumers' demand for and also determining the reasons affecting their news preferences. The material was collected from internet.

Trussler, M. and Soroka, S.(n.d.) in their research paper described that regardless of what respondents claim, they still exhibit a preference for negative news. And so the news may be negative because that is the kind of news that respondents are interested in. They covered a survey arguing the demand side preference than the supply side. They conducted a lab experiment "A study of eye tracking" and noted the participant's eye-tracking measures. And so they concluded that most of the participants unintentionally had preference for the negative news stories.

Stafford, T. (2014) in his article says that whenever you read the news, it feels like only the terrible and depressing events are reported by the media. He says that journalists are compelled to report the negative news because sudden disasters are to be reported. Another view is that media reports the stories about the corrupt politicians, which makes the news gathering easier for them. But the strong possibility is that we, readers or viewers prefer to watch such stories and that is what drags these journalists to cover more such stories.

Soroka, S. (n.d.) in one of his articles described that why we pay more attention on negative news than positive news. He says, "It is the human tendency to prioritise negative over positive news content." The media houses have one major goal i.e. to sell the news. And the experience says that the sales point towards the negative news stories than the positive. He gave an example of the news stand where the magazines with negative news cover sells faster as compared to the positive covers. His finding suggest that negative news content, in comparison with positive news content, increases both arousal and attentiveness.

Diamandis, H, P. (2017) describes that "every second of every day our brain is bombarded by way too much data than we can possibly process." He explored a term amygdala and says that it is our early warning system. It warns you at the time of any kind of danger and was evolved during the human evolution era which was the tiger in the bush. You would hear a

rustle in the leaved and think that it's a tiger and not the wind. But one percent of the time it was a tiger that saved your life. But today, the amygdala literally calls our attention to all the negative stories and when you see a thousand stories, you're going to focus on the negative stories only. And the media takes advantage of this thing and as it's an old saying that if it bleeds, it leads. And that is why 90% of the news stories on media is negative because that's what we pay attention to.

Epstein, A. (n.d.) explained about a social experiment conducted by a Russian News site "City Reporter". They reported only good news to its readers for an entire day and brought only the positive news stories to the front pages. The results were astonishing as no one wanted to read such stories. The City Reporter lost two-thirds of its normal readership that day. But this experiment proved that our fascination with for negativity may be more pervasive than we thought. He says, "Negative events are more memorable and emotionally impactful than good ones." And media only provides the people with they want to see or hear. But too much of bad news may leave people feeling hopeless and thus can have an opposite effect. But no matter what, one fact remains the same that people are not that interested in good news.

3. Research Methodology

The consumers demand for negative news is a major issue as negative news stimulates the stress hormones of our brain and which leads to depression. In order to know the consumer's preference between negative and positive news, the study was conducted with the following material and methods:

Research Design: The type of sampling design used to carry out this research is convenience sampling; non-probability design.

Type of data: The data type for the current research is 'Primary', collected by doing survey.

Sample Size: The sample size for the current study is 150 respondents.

Sample Area: The sample area for the present study is Kharar and Mohali.

Data Collection Tool: The data for this research is collected by using surveys. Thus, questionnaire comprising close ended questions is used for data collection.

Data Analysis: The data is analysed manually. Results of the current study are presented in percentage form by using tables.

4. Results and Discussion

In order to know what type of news people prefer to watch or read, data was collected from 10 Respondents from February 20 to March 20, 2018. The study was done to know respondent's news preferences as well as to know the reasons affecting their preferences. The data was collected and analysed on the basis of parameters (Negative news and positive news stories).

Question 1: Which media do you prefer for listening/reading news?

No. of Respondents	Type of media
5	Newspaper
40	Television
5	Radio
100	Digital Media

N=150

The above table defines the type of media people prefer to use. The number of respondents is 150, out of which 100 prefer digital media, 5 respondents prefer newspaper, 5 prefer radio and 40 prefer Television. It concluded that most of the respondents prefer digital media for reading or listening news.

Question 2: How fair do you feel Mass Media is in the reporting of public issues?

No. of Respondents	Media Accuracy
10	Very Fair
85	Fair
55	Not at all Fair

N=150

The above table defines the biasness of news reported by media according to the respondents. The number of respondents is 150 and majority of respondents think media is fair and 55 respondents think that media is not at all fair.

Question 3: Do you prefer reading crime news over any other news?

No. Of Respondents	Options
75	Yes
75	No

N=150

The above table shows the number of respondents who prefer to read crime news over any other news. The total number of respondents is 150 and out of which 75 prefer to watch crime news and 75 don't prefer crime news.

Question 4: Which one of these news stories you prefer to watch?

No. Of Respondents	Type of News
65	Political News
40	Business News
45	Sports News

N=150

The above table shows the type of news people prefer to watch out of political news, business news and sports news. The total number of respondents is 150. The table depicts that 65 respondents prefer political news, 40 respondents prefer business news and 45 respondents prefer sports news.

Question 5: Do you like reading soft stories and factual articles?

No. Of Respondents	Options
30	Yes
120	No

N=150

The above table defines the number of respondents who prefer and not prefer to watch soft news and factual articles. The number of respondents is 150. The table depicts that 30 respondents prefer reading factual articles whereas 120 prefer not to read such articles.

Question 6: Do you like to watch sensational news stories on TV news channels?

No. Of Respondents	Options
70	Yes
80	No

N=150

The above table shows the number of respondents who like or dislike watching sensational news stories. The number of respondents is 150. The table shows that 70 respondents like watching sensational news stories whereas 80 respondents don't like watching sensational news stories.

Question 7: Do you prefer watching controversial news shows?

No. Of Respondents	Options
75	Yes
75	No

N=150

The above table shows the number of respondents who prefer and not prefer to watch controversial news shows. The number of respondents is 150. The table shows that 75 respondents watch controversial news shows whereas 75 respondents don't prefer watching such shows.

Question 8: Which one of these news stories you prefer to read/watch?

No. Of Respondents	Type Of News
110	Social Issues
40	Bollywood Masala

N=150

The above table shows the type of news respondents prefer to watch out of social issues and Bollywood masala. The number of respondents is 150. The table shows that 110 respondents prefer to watch social issues and 40 respondents like to watch Bollywood masala stories.

Question 9: Do you believe that media only highlights the negative news?

No. Of Respondents	Options
95	Yes
55	No

N=150

The above table depicts the number the respondents who think that media only highlights negative news or no. the number of respondents is 150. The table shows that 95 respondents claim that media only highlights the negative news whereas 55 claim that media highlights both aspects.

Question 10: Would you like to watch positive news stories?

No. Of Respondents	Options
145	Yes
5	No

N=150

The above table shows the number of respondents who would like to watch positive news stories and no. the number of respondents is 150. The table shows that 145 respondents would like to watch positive news stories and 5 respondents would not like to watch positive news. The table concludes that majority of respondents would like to watch positive news stories.

Conclusion

The results concluded that majority of respondents preferred negative news such as crime news, sensational news and controversial news stories over any other news. They had no interest in factual articles and soft news stories. They agreed that media only highlights the negative news stories but also they want the media to show positive news stories as well. But when asked to choose between positive parameters and negative parameters, majority of respondents preferred to go negative news stories. Hence, it proves that respondents prefer negative news stories and media is meant to cater the needs of its customers and so they highlight more if negative news stories according to the viewer's interest.

References

Roy, J. (2015) *Role of media in our society*. Retrieved on February 10, 2018 from

<http://www.globalethicsnetwork.org/profiles/blogs/role-of-media-in-our-society>

Gilmar, P. (2017) *Why does bad news spread faster than good news?* Retrieved on February 12, 2018 from <https://www.quora.com/Why-does-bad-news-spread-faster-than-good-news>

Epstein, A. (n.d.) *Here's what happened when a news site only reported good news for a day*. Retrieved on February 13, 2018 from <https://qz.com/307214/heres-what-happened-when-a-news-site-only-reported-good-news-for-a-day/>

Diamandis, H, P. (2017) *Why We Love Bad News: Understanding Negativity Bias*. Retrieved on February 19, 2018 from

<http://bigthink.com/in-their-own-words/why-we-love-bad-news-understanding-negativity-bias>

Soroka, S. (n.d.) *Why do we pay more attention to negative news than positive news?* Retrieved on February 23, 2018 from <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/why-is-there-no-good-news/>

Stafford, T. (2014) *Why bad news dominates the headlines?* Retrieved on March 2, 2018 from

<http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140728-why-is-all-the-news-bad>

Trussler, M. & Sorok, S. (n.d.) *Consumer Demand for Cynical and Negative News Frames*. Retrieved on March 9, 2018 from <https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2013/Trussler-Soroka.pdf>