



Determinants of world news coverage

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Abstract

What are the factors that decide whether or not a place or issue is covered by the news media? In spite of accelerating globalization, levels of world news in Japan remain low, and large imbalances exist in terms of the regions, countries, and issues covered. This researcher seeks to understand the factors and mechanisms behind the imbalances in international news coverage, through quantitative and qualitative methods, including measurement of coverage levels, content analysis and case study process tracing.

Background & Results

In recent years, the government, along with universities, corporations and NGOs in Japan, have begun to focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and are increasingly emphasizing their efforts and contributions towards their realization. But behind this positive messaging, there is little hope that the SDGs will be achieved, and in fact, it is difficult to say that the world is even progressing in that direction.

What is behind this gap between the image and the reality? As contained in the 'leave no one behind' slogan the SDGs project expounds, the realization of these goals depends on efforts aimed at low-income countries, yet attention on the SDGs in Japan is focused primarily on Japan.

Changing this situation requires the building of an information environment that furthers awareness and understanding of the world. The news media plays a key role in this environment. Yet the news media in Japan devote just 10% of their coverage to world news. This 10% is dominated largely by East Asia and Western countries, with coverage of Africa and Latin America combined making up only 5% of this. Furthermore, rather than independently raising awareness of issues, the media tends to follow the lead of political and economic elites.

This research led to the creation of Global News View (GNV), a media research organization. It produces and publishes online weekly analysis of uncovered issues (Global View) and world news trends (New View), and broadcasts a biweekly podcast. It also publishes a monthly report of data from major Japanese newspapers. As of November 2022, it has more than 3,000 daily page views.

Significance of the research and Future perspective

Imbalances in world news serve neither the world nor Japan. Without a comprehensive and objective understanding of the world, we cannot understand the problems the world is facing or mobilize the resources needed to solve them. And without this understanding, Japan's government and corporations cannot adequately assess their interests or risks faced. Bringing to light the imbalances in world news and their causal factors is required to change this situation. The work produced by the GNV project is intended to be a step in this direction.

News coverage by country (word count)
Annual coverage: Asahi Shimbun

