

Divine Word University

Abstract

NEGATIVE PRESS COVERAGE IN PAPUA
NEW GUINEA

By CELESTINE OVE

Supervisors: Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki and Patrick Matbob

Department of Communication Arts

The Papua New Guinean media, particularly the print media has received a lot of criticism from the public, but mostly leaders, for the negative image it has portrayed of the country both abroad and within PNG. This negative image stems from the number of reports of corruption, crime, physical and sexual violence, political and economic instability that seem to be predominant in the PNG press. Whether this gives a true and fair representation of the country and whether this is the result of the influence of the Western news value 'Bad news makes good news' makes this research significant.

While research has been done on the Australian press coverage of PNG, especially on the negative representation of the country in the region, little or no research has been done so far in how negative reporting from national media contributes not only to the negative image of the country abroad but also internally, especially when it comes to influencing the public's perceptions of their country. A survey, carried out by the author, among PNG citizens from the country's four regions shows that there is a general negative perception of the country from what is presented by the print media; 80 per cent of the respondents call for more positive stories for empowerment.

This paper is based on a research that investigates whether more prominence is given to 'negative' stories in the PNG press; and whether the reporters and the editors influenced by western news values that value more "bad news as good news" influence in their turn the way a 'negative' story is constructed and presented. This research is important because findings will help to create an understanding of how negative stories are constructed by the PNG press. It discusses the journalist's roles in ensuring that responsibility is exercised in the way stories are reported, especially negative news. In doing so, the research will define what is 'negative' news as they are presented in the PNG press.

The research is based on a content analysis of PNG's two dailies and one weekly newspaper, the *Post-Courier*, *The National* and the *Wantok* over a five-month period. It also takes into consideration the views of journalists and editors in the PNG print media in regard to negative news. The media is a powerful tool when it comes to creating perceptions; therefore it is important to study the media and its responsibility in presenting constructive negative news, especially so in a developing country like PNG.