

EDITOR'S OPINION: Beware the bad news

Should we not try to focus on good news amongst the bad?



By [Oscar Bentley](#), Editor (2018)
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Image: United Nations Photo

The news is focused on bad things. It's a simple principle. People are more interested in bad things – they sell better. The public wants to know about things that they think will affect on their way of life – like war, disasters, and the weather – but are less interested in things that will have little effect on them, such as poverty in the developing world.

When studying journalism academically, there is a set of guidelines that make a story newsworthy, called news values. While it numbers among values such as frequency, familiarity, identification, shareability, and predictability, negativity, however – the idea that bad news is more newsworthy than good news – is a key value.

I find this all rather depressing, to be perfectly honest. At the moment, and I have full confidence that in the past, much like as at present, almost every story you look at seems to be negative in one way or another. A brief glance of the BBC News website as I write this column seems to confirm this – top stories include Donald Trump accusing Barack Obama of wiretapping his campaign offices (I'm pretty sure he didn't); controversy around whether Emma Watson can call herself a feminist for posing "almost topless" (she can); Chancellor Philip Hammond ruling out spending any surplus cash on social care in his upcoming budget (even though he kind of should).

I perfectly accept that I too probably select my news based on conflict and negativity, the drama of the situations make them all the more attracting and interesting. But should we not carve out a section of the

news to focus on something positive?

The work of organisations such as the United Nations doesn't always make the headlines. The UN states that each year it vaccinates 40 per cent of the world's children, assists 65 million displaced persons, provides food to more than 80 million people, and helps keep the peace with over 120 000 peacekeepers in 16 operations on four continents. Would it not be good to feature the positive work that the UN, and other organisations, do across the world? Would it not help to mitigate the negativity by throwing some positivity in there?

The UN is an important organisation that does some amazing work. And I understand it's important to tell the public key news, be it negative or not. But should there not be some good too? After all, happiness can be found even in the darkest of times.

If one only remembers to turn on the light.



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