

Ownership and control of the media

Choice

In recent years, more media outlets and new media types have emerged; in the 1980s there were only four main terrestrial channels in the UK. On the surface, there appears to be more choice for consumers. However, some sociologists argue that our choice has not really increased, because although there are more outlets, the number of companies that own these outlets has decreased.

Concentration

Bagdikian (2004) – In 1983, 50 corporations controlled most of all media in the USA. In 1992, 22 companies owned and operated 90% of the media. This reduction is even more stark in the UK magazine market, where only two major companies dominate the market.

Curran (2003) – The concentrated ownership of British media is not a new phenomenon. In 1937, four men owned most of the media companies: Lords Beaverbrook, Rothermere, Camrose and Northcliffe owned nearly 1 in every 2 national and local daily newspapers in the UK.

De Montfort University (2018) – The UK media industry is dominated by 13 companies. Ten of these are controlled and owned by wealthy and powerful individuals rather than shareholders, and a considerable part of the media industry is owned and controlled by global corporations.

Newsworthiness and news values

Events that are eventually reported in the news have been through gatekeeping to decide what is newsworthy and what is not. Journalists operate with values and assumptions (so called **news values**), which guide them to what is newsworthy. They decide what to report and how to present it. News doesn't just happen; it is crafted by journalists – it could be argued that it is **socially constructed**.

Galtung and Ruge (1970) – The idea of news values means journalists tend to include and emphasise elements of a story which make it newsworthy, and the stories which are more likely to be reported include newsworthy aspects.

Spencer-Thomas (2008) – News values are the general guidelines or criteria that determine the worth of a news story and how much prominence it should be given by the media.

Brighton and Foy (2007) – News values are '*often intangible, informal, almost unconscious elements*'.

Harcup and O'Neill (2016) – There are several news values that are shared by the journalists studied. Potential stories must generally satisfy one and preferably more of these news values to be selected.

Agenda setting

Agenda setting is the idea that the media have a powerful influence over the issues that people think about because the agenda is already set by journalists. They choose what to leave out and will influence the topics that we will discuss.

Cohen (1963) stated '*while the news media may not necessarily be successful in telling people **what** to think, they are stunningly successful in telling audiences **what to think about***'.

McCombs (2004) – News in the age of New Media increasingly not only tells us what to think about, but also **how** to think about certain subjects.

Philo (2012) – The media can act as a forum for public grumbles and discontent rather than to explore solutions.

Cohen (1963) – The mainstream media has control over what we are exposed to. Therefore, we only discuss some issues and we do not think about others because we are not aware of them.

Marxists argue that **news values and agenda setting** work together to reinforce dominant, elite world views as normal and natural, and to **marginalise alternative perspectives on society** which may upset existing power structures.