Abstract

If Afred Hitchock's horror films can make an audience scream out loud, and if Charlie Chaplin's comedies can make an audience laugh until their stomach hurt, then would real life news footage of people jumping off buildings and bloody murders cause an audience to feel sad? This thesis combines the studies of journalism and psychology to explore how broadcast news psychologically impacts Taiwanese audiences.

This study focuses on 1) whether tragic news negatively influences viewers' mood more easily than neutral news does; and 2) if the same story edited with different images, causes viewers to feel differently. This study concludes that 1) based on news type: both neutral news and tragic news don't appear to have a negative effect on viewers. More interestingly, the more that viewers feel that sad or bloody news brings a negative mood, the more they feel that neutral news positively affects their mood. And 2) based on the images types: if images like those of an emergency room are replaced by images of people leaping off buildings, using the same narrative, it doesn't make viewers feel any more or less negative. What's notable, however, is that when viewers see images of bloody scenes or of people jumping off buildings, the images still make them feel "nervous" or "afraid." On the other hand, this report also finds that viewers feel especially concerned or empathetic towards what is presented in news stories.

As for how tragedy news images influences views' mood, this report finds that the event's emotional impact, the color tone, brightness, close-ups shots, following shots, length of cut and sounds all contribute to the impression the story leaves on the viewer. On the difference between how men and women react to new stories, the statistics show that women will empathize with the victim and men tend to take the viewpoint of the fireman, witness or the suspect. Because men and women think differently, tragedy news stories affect the mood of women more than they affect the mood of men.

Keywords: tragedy news, negative mood