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Not All Countries Are Created Equal: Foreign Nation Visibility in U.S. News and Entertainment Media

(With Tamir Sheafer and Shaul Shenhav, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Abstract:

Why do some countries appear as more popular than others in mass mediated programs? International communication researchers have long sought to explain foreign nation visibility. Comparative research to-date, however, focused exclusively on news media, leaving other types of media content unexplored. This paper fills this gap, by exploring factors that affect foreign nation visibility in US entertainment media. Our theoretical model proposes that known factors such as country size and geographic or cultural proximity affect visibility in entertainment programs, but—importantly—the effect is mediated through visibility in news reports. Analyzing the content of over 500 US television shows, four news channels and two newspapers spanning 2000 to 2011, we demonstrate that the effect of antecedent factors on foreign nation visibility in entertainment is mediated by visibility in US news media.