

## **Sensationalism in the Media**

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Here in Taiwan, with all the competing media outlets, such as television channels, newspapers and magazines, each station or publication jumps on the tiniest scrap of news to differentiate itself from the competition. This inevitably leads to other outlets snatching up the same bit of news once it is first broken, spreading each story like a virus throughout the media community. This sort of sensationalism is bad for both the media and for the society as a whole.

Taiwan media tends to focus excessively on gossip-driven fluff pieces, such as those concerning local entertainment celebrities, human interest pieces that are often thinly disguised advertisements, and political scandals. A car accident could be dissected and replayed, complete with computer-generated graphics to illustrate what happened, for several minutes. The survivors of tragedies such as these are often caught on film, weeping and bloody. This sort of reporting is no longer news, but pure sensationalism and rumor-mongering. The media focuses inward, searching for that newest story, while neglecting to report on what is going on in the outside world for any significant air time.

As the media reports these kinds of stories day in and day out, society comes to expect and even desire them to the exclusion of all else. People are no longer concerned with what is happening in the wider world as the media feeds them images of celebrity and tragedy, often intermixed to gain the greatest amount of viewer attention. Society becomes accustomed to seeing nothing but sensationalist news, and hungers for more in a vicious cycle. Media outlets go searching for more news to feed this hunger, perpetuating the cycle.

The media here should strive for a higher standard of reporting. Television news anchors should watch their words more carefully, as current ones often sprinkle personal opinions or non-factual descriptions into their monologues. Society, on the other hand, should begin demanding these higher standards from its media instead of passively accepting it and feeding the machine. Sensationalism does have a place in serious, journalistic reporting, but is not meant to encompass the whole of it.