

# One-sided reporting worries academics

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**Joshua But**

Academics have expressed concern about one-sided reporting in local newspapers as a Baptist University study reveals almost 80 per cent of news stories do not include even one opposite view.

The research found that only 20.2 per cent of articles analysed carried one or more opposite views, while 29.4 per cent of headlines used wording that was subjective or contained value judgments.

Journalism professor To Yiu-ming, who led the study, said the city's newspapers held extremely diversified views and that resulted in contrasting handling of news stories.

"Tending towards [one-sided] opinions in news reporting should not be encouraged," Professor To said. "There is no right or wrong in politics and you need different views to deliver the whole picture."

The research, conducted by the university's Institute for Journalism and Society for the first time, studied almost 27,800 news articles published last year in 14 newspapers.

It concluded that politics and economy stories remained the staples, taking up 34 per cent of news coverage. Crime news comprised 18.7 per cent of total coverage, while 18.3 per cent was about social and cultural affairs and 6 per cent focused



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on human interest. The study also revealed that 19 per cent of news stories contained criticism, of which 4.5 per cent were targeted at the Hong Kong government, 1.6 per cent at the mainland government and 2.7 per cent at business corporations.

Professor To noted a high proportion of critical articles from two major Chinese newspapers, *Oriental Daily* and *Apple Daily*, and suggested the findings might explain their large reader bases.

"Without a benchmark in the past to compare with, I cannot say whether the press has carried its function as the watchdog, or if it is under the influence of self-censorship," he said.

"But the Hong Kong government is definitely under heavy political pressure as the two most popular papers already comprise 60 per cent of the readers' population."

He said credibility might be a factor readers considered when choosing a newspaper, but was not the most dominant one.

"Habits matter and readers also tend to pick a paper that shares a similar viewpoint. Some people may also buy a paper because of the coupons or horse-racing information."