



International journalists' expectations from the US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina

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Abstract

This study examines how international journalists evaluated the performance of the US media in the coverage of Hurricane Katrina through the concept of journalistic expectations. A survey was conducted to determine whether expectations were met and whether they differed across cultures. Data were collected from Europe, Asia/Middle East, Africa, North America, and South America. Expectations were not met for accuracy, diversity, and skepticism but were satisfied for investigative reporting and public dialogue. Major differences existed between journalists from Europe and other continents. This study advances the concept of journalistic expectations and contributes to understanding how they vary across cultures and how international journalists evaluate their counterparts covering a major natural disaster.

Keywords

Hurricane Katrina, international journalists, journalistic expectations, natural disasters, news coverage, newspapers, public opinion

When Hurricane Katrina hit Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana on 29 August 2005, the devastating consequences were witnessed by millions in the United States and around the world. For weeks, one of the worst natural disasters in US history was followed worldwide across print, electronic, and online media. International journalists played a key role in this process by bringing the disaster to their local audiences.

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This study provides a global perspective by examining international journalists' evaluation of the US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina. It investigates whether expectations were met, by testing variables derived from journalistic roles. Journalistic expectations, as we theoretically propose, derive from journalistic roles and represent how journalists envision their colleagues will fulfill these roles. While journalistic roles set the standards for professionalism, journalistic expectations address how journalists apply these standards to form opinions and attitudes about the work of their counterparts. An online probability random survey was conducted of 250 international journalists from Europe, Asia/Middle East, Africa, North America, and South America.

The debate about the political, environmental, social, and economic impact of the hurricane among experts, educators, and politicians has continued to this day. As part of the research on the social repercussions, a public opinion survey of the USA's four major ethnic and racial groups was conducted shortly after the hurricane: non-Hispanic Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians. The survey found that half of the respondents believed their country suffered 'substantial' damage to its image internationally (Bendixen & Associates, 2005). One-third said their own view of the United States changed for the worse and one-third of the Asian and Latin American immigrants said their country of origin would have done a better job in responding to the disaster (Bendixen & Associates, 2005). The question of how the world saw the United States during the disaster has already been asked of Americans, but for the real global perspective, we directed the inquiry towards the people who ultimately participated in shaping world opinion – international journalists. Editorial comments and features in the international press anecdotally show that the United States suffered considerable damage to its image.

It is important to study how international journalists evaluate the performance of their US colleagues for several reasons. First, it provides international journalists who may face similar events in the future with an insight into the professional expectations about their work. Second, this study contributes to understanding whether journalistic expectations and roles differ across cultures. Third, journalistic expectations could be an important aspect of international news flow and of how journalists across the globe construct news, which, therefore, would call for continued scholarly attention. Finally, the United States is a major newsmaker, which influences global media coverage (Sreberny and Stevenson, 1999), and the study explores how international journalists view this role.

Problem explication

International newspapers covered the disaster in myriad ways by reporting on the US government's response, the food and water shortage, deaths, and street violence. Many editorial authors and columnists portrayed Hurricane Katrina as a man-made, rather than natural, disaster and attributed the devastating consequences to the government's domestic and foreign policy. The *International Herald Tribune* blamed the disaster to 'a shortage of National Guardsmen and equipment, the environmentally reckless reduction of the wetlands, heavy firearms in the hands of private citizens, and a government dodging the blame' (Lewis, 2005). A British newspaper editorial said that President George W Bush found 'his reckless adventure in Iraq coming back to haunt him' through

the overburdening of the National Guard, whose primary role is to help in natural disasters, but who were instead deployed overseas (Associated Newspapers, 2005).

A Saudi Arabian newspaper was more blatant when writing that the combination of limited and incompetent government has lethal consequences. 'America is once more plunged into a snake pit of anarchy, death, looting, raping, marauding thugs, suffering innocents, a shattered infrastructure, a gutted police force, insufficient troop levels, and criminally negligent government planning' (Al-Bassam, 2005). A hard-line newspaper in Iran went even further by saying, 'Hurricane Katrina has proved that America cannot solve its internal problems and is incapable of facing these kinds of natural disasters' and because of that, it cannot bring peace and democracy to others (Stiglitz, 2005).

In Germany, Katrina was compared with an event in a third-world country; '20,000 people are vegetating in what looks like a camp for war refugees' (Brahler, 2005). On the other hand, a newspaper in Kenya was enraged by the event's comparison to an African tragedy and claimed that such an approach was racist (Mwangi, 2005). Racism was also a topic in Venezuela, where a newspaper quoted President Hugo Chavez saying racial segregation went hand in hand with extreme social division. 'The rich left and the poor stayed and had to face the hurricane. This is capitalism in its extreme individualist phase. Let the poor find the way to save themselves!' (Martinez, 2005). Newspapers in Africa also pointed out that if Katrina had hit there, it would have triggered criticism from the West about irresponsible, corrupt leadership which abandons its citizens (Mwangi, 2005; *The New Vision*, 2005). In Uganda, a newspaper stated:

The swift descent into anarchy in New Orleans should remind us that law and order are very fragile, everywhere in the world. No nation should consider itself morally superior to another. At base we all have the potential for wrongdoing, even for evil. (*The New Vision*, 2005)

The media roles international journalists were fulfilling when talking about Katrina are evident. Some articles were written with the interpretive role in mind, explaining why the federal government was slow to respond (Associated Newspapers, 2005; Lewis, 2005), while others took an adversarial role and attacked the United States for its foreign policy and its moral superiority to less developed countries (Stiglitz, 2005; *The New Vision*, 2005). Diversity was also discussed in detail (Martinez, 2005; Mwangi, 2005). Overall, international journalists were critical of the US government's response to the disaster but not of the US media.

Proposed theoretical framework

Journalistic expectations

The concept is studied extensively in the marketing field. Marketing experts and scholars relate it to consumer satisfaction, consequent product purchase, and consumption. In the consumer satisfaction literature, expectations are generally defined as 'consumer-defined probabilities of the occurrence of positive or negative events if the consumer engages in some behavior' (Oliver, 1981: 33). They are also defined in terms of what a product or retailer would offer according to a customer (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Confirmation or

disconfirmation of expectations drives customer satisfaction and, ultimately, the formation of attitudes toward a product or the company behind it (Kopalle and Lehmann, 2006; Oliver, 1981; Perse and Rubin, 1988). This theoretical proposition from the marketing literature has been tested in mass media research.

The concept of expectations has been applied to the mass media through the framing approach, according to Book and Barnett (2006). They hypothesized that media frames drive expectations through the ability to give salience to an issue and thus form attitudes. Poindexter et al. (2006) connected expectations with journalistic roles by demonstrating that the public's dominant expectation of local press was to be a good neighbor. The press failed this expectation because it saw its primary role as being a watchdog. The authors argued that this discrepancy may lead to further alienation of readers and decline in circulation. In a political context, when individuals feel a discrepancy between expectations and reality, they experience political alienation or an efficacy gap (McCluskey et al., 2004). McCluskey and colleagues argued that closing the gap between public expectations and reality may help reinvigorate collective participation and facilitate democratic functioning.

Journalistic expectations, as we theoretically propose, derive from journalistic roles and represent how journalists envision their colleagues fulfilling these roles. While journalistic roles set the standards for professionalism, journalistic expectations address how journalists apply these standards to form attitudes toward the work of their colleagues. In accordance with the marketing approach (Kopalle and Lehmann, 2006; Oliver, 1981; Parasuraman et al., 1988), measuring journalists' expectations can quantify satisfaction with their counterparts' work.

Research on journalistic roles, values, and standards is extensive and covers both American and international journalists (Herscovitz, 2004; Plasser, 2005; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986, 1996; Wu et al., 1996). Unlike the scholarship on journalistic roles, which spans over three decades, research on journalistic expectations is almost nonexistent. Since Weaver and Wilhoit's (1996) definition of journalistic roles is widely accepted among scholars, the variables measuring journalistic expectations derive from the media functions that served as a foundation for their concept of journalistic roles.

Journalistic roles

One of the seminal studies of journalistic roles was conducted by Johnstone et al. (1976), who investigated American journalists' support of two media roles, neutral and participant, and found that most journalists agreed with elements of both. Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1996) expanded on Johnstone et al. by examining the media roles of adversarial, interpretive, disseminator and, later, populist mobilizer. The authors argued their most important finding was that journalists were 'extremely pluralistic in their conceptions of media roles with about a third embracing fully both the interpretive and disseminator roles' (1996: 116). The interpretive/investigative role was most popular, followed by the disseminator and adversarial roles.

A number of scholars have examined the attitudes toward journalistic roles on an international scale. Provided that the United States is a major factor in international news flow and that gatekeepers around the world tend to apply a largely similar set of news

values (Sreberny and Stevenson, 1999), views about journalistic roles would be expected to be quite similar internationally. However, 22 studies from around the world have demonstrated that providing information quickly was very important for 58 to 88 percent of international journalists; while investigating government claims, or being a watchdog, was very important for 27 to 88 percent of journalists (Weaver, 1998). Support of functions such as providing analysis, reporting accurately and providing entertainment also varied greatly from one country to another. Differences in opinion existed also between US journalists and foreign correspondents working in the United States. For three-quarters of foreign correspondents, providing analysis and interpretation was extremely important, but only half of US journalists agreed with them. Similarly, providing information quickly was very important to two-thirds of American journalists but only to half of foreign correspondents (Willnat and Weaver, 2003).

Weaver concluded that 'there was more disagreement than agreement over the relative importance of these journalistic roles', which went against the arguments of universal occupational standards of some scholars (1998: 468). De Albuquerque (2005) found such disagreements to be natural. He argued that scholars should not be looking at how countries adopt American journalistic values and practices but at how they adapt them to their own cultural reality. Comparing journalistic practices and roles across media systems cannot be complete without attempting to explore the reasons for the existing differences (Hallin and Mancini, 2005). They argued that one cannot understand how the news media function in any nation unless one understands the nature of the state, the social and political culture, moral values, and its people.

Zhu et al. (1997: 93) examined the causal factors for the differences across countries and concluded that 'societal factors have much stronger effects than organizational factors, which in turn have stronger effects than individual factors'. They concluded that political systems are a stronger influence than cultural traditions. Herscovitz (2004: 73), however, argued that Brazilian journalists' value system is formed by three sources: newsroom routines and organizational constraints, foreign influences, and specific historical conditions such as democratic consolidation. For Plaisance and Skewes (2003: 844), journalistic role priorities may be influenced by the newsroom environment and professional socialization, but general values are shaped by family, religion, and culture. An examination of journalism students in Britain and Spain suggested that attitudes towards journalistic roles had formed before the students had started their education and, thus, could have been more influential than schooling in shaping their professional viewpoints (Sanders et al., 2008).

From roles to expectations

The variables employed here derive from journalistic roles, which Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) constructed according to different media functions. They based the interpretive/investigative role on the media functions of investigating official claims, analyzing complex problems, and discussing national policy. We conceptualized that as the expectation of *investigative reporting*, which means investigating and analyzing claims, problems, and actions by news sources. Weaver and Wilhoit based the disseminator role on getting information to the public quickly and avoiding unverifiable facts. The variable derived

from it is the expectation of *accuracy* because the term includes the avoidance of unverifiable information. The adversarial role was based on being an adversary to officials and businesses, and the *skepticism* variable incorporates these functions. The populist mobilizer role included allowing the public to express its views, developing cultural interests, entertainment, and setting the political agenda. The expectation of *public dialog* was conceptualized from this role because it entails the development of public opinions, interests, and agendas.

Two additional variables were developed. One was the expectation of *diversity*, which came from the international press coverage of Katrina. In this coverage, diversity and treatment of minorities was a popular topic and that prompted the inclusion of the variable. The other was *perceived superiority*, which is based on the concept of ethnocentrism: the tendency to view the values and norms of our culture as superior to others. Ethnocentrism in low levels can be important for in-group development, nationalistic pride, and even patriotism, but high levels of it can be damaging for intercultural communication (Wrench et al., 2006). For Sreberny and Stevenson (1999), the global structure of news gathering and dissemination, which favors First World countries and largely ignores developments in the Third World, produces an ethnocentric and narrow coverage for the audiences of local news channels worldwide. Participants were asked whether their own media organization would have provided a better coverage of Hurricane Katrina than the American media.

As with journalistic roles, which could be influenced by more than professional values, journalistic expectations may also be affected by more than what international journalists consider as their 'journalistic roles' (Herscovitz, 2004; Sanders et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 1997). Expectations of the American coverage of Hurricane Katrina could be influenced by one's general opinion of the United States. Since 2002, the image of the United States has declined in most parts of the world, according to the annual international public opinion polls by the Pew Global Attitudes Project. In the 2007 poll, favorable views of America were lower in 26 of 33 countries, with lowest support coming from Islamic states in the Middle East and Asia and also some of America's oldest allies in Europe. In many countries, however, the American people received better ratings than the United States (Kohut et al., 2007). World opinions about the United States are multidimensional and conflicting. In a survey among university students from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, most rejected American ideas about democracy and disliked the spread of American customs around the world, but liked American media products and the country's scientific and technological advances (Willnat et al., 2006).

Media coverage of natural disasters

The following overview of past coverage of natural disasters provides background to the coverage of Hurricane Katrina and also demonstrates the possible influences on journalistic expectations. According to Book and Barnett (2006), media frames drive expectations through the ability to give salience to an issue and thus form attitudes. In the coverage of natural disasters, journalists rely heavily on government sources, which supports the argument of some scholars that the media prefer an 'information czar' (Sood et al., 1987) or a 'command post' (Quarantelli, 1989) in situations of emergency. In the

TV coverage of Hurricane Hugo and the Loma Prieta earthquake, experts and elected officials were second to victims and witnesses as sources (Walters and Hornig, 1993), and in the print coverage half of the sources were government officials, while experts and witnesses were far fewer (Hornig et al., 1991). In the coverage of Hurricane Andrew, state and local government officials also emerged as major sources (Salwen, 1995). A top-down flow of information and a local focus were found in the Finnish coverage the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean (Kivikuru, 2006).

All sources looked for causes of the disaster, rather than solutions, and almost unanimously blamed nature (Walters and Hornig, 1993). The shift of responsibility away from the individual was also made evident by the use of government sources. Such use created a 'distorted picture of the emergency', in which the only significant action came from elected officials and reinforced the idea of the helplessness of those affected. Salwen (1995) noted that unaffiliated individuals were usually portrayed as suffering victims and objects of pity, while the dominant message of their quotes was helplessness. The weakness of the individual in the face of a natural disaster was the main message in the coverage of the snow blizzard in Colorado, where the media emphasized 'crisis, powerlessness and individual helplessness' (Wilkins, 1985: 62). The media tend to cover natural disasters as events and focus on immediate developments, instead of larger issues such as preparedness or hazard mitigation (Walters and Hornig, 1993; Wilkins, 1985). In this respect, Elliott urged the media to 'focus on the contextual meaning of the event rather than on victims, or drama, and participate in setting the agenda on the issues related to the disaster' (1989: 170). Looking at another recent US event which attracted global attention, the attacks of 11 September 2001, Clausen found that this 'global' news was mediated differently across cultures and largely domesticated in order to appeal to local audiences. 'There is no such thing as "global" news congruent in theme, content and meaning', the author concluded (2003: 114).

In an investigation of the visual portrayal of Hurricane Katrina by the *Washington Post*, Jenkins (2007) found that photographs gave the viewer distance, power, detachment, and externality and led him/her to a judgmental disposition. This coverage, according to the author, also interpreted the disaster in a nature vs. culture dominant frame, when other more complex and critical explanations should have been presented. Littlefield and Quenette (2007) studied the coverage of Hurricane Katrina by *The New York Times* and the *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans. They found that the newspapers played multiple roles: as objective informers describing the event and simultaneously as privileged reporters, which contributed to the distribution of blame and responsibility among the authorities managing the crisis.

Although there is a huge body of scholarship on media coverage of natural disasters, no known literature has covered the question of international journalists' expectations from the news media in such events. This study investigates that paradigm, together with the issue of how these expectations differ among participants.

RQ1: How were international journalists' expectations met by the US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina?

RQ2: How did international journalists' expectations contrast across geographic regions?

RQ3: What influence did specific journalistic expectations have on overall expectations of the US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina?

Method

Data were collected through an online survey on the *Survey Artisan* website between 9 February and 8 March 2006. We sought 250 respondents, 50 from each continent, from Africa, Asia/Middle East, Europe, North America, and South America. Subjects were randomly sampled from the IPI *Global Journalist* and *World Press Institute* databases, and the *News Media Yellow Book* chapter on non-US media. Our sample included journalists who were personally involved with the coverage, such as foreign news reporters and field correspondents, and those who were editing or assigning coverage, such as foreign news editors or foreign assignment editors, because they would be most knowledgeable on the subject. In recruiting participants for this survey conducted in English, we recognized the changing typology of the foreign correspondent (Hamilton and Jenner, 2004) and tried to include journalists that better reflect it. Thus, the IPI *Global Journalist* and *World Press Institute* databases allowed us to reach parachute journalists and local foreign correspondents or editors, and the *News Media Yellow Book* allowed us to reach traditional foreign correspondents who were stationed in the United States. Subjects were asked for consent both via email and on the survey's front page.

A total of 148 international journalists completed the survey, 77 male and 71 female, registering a response rate of 59.2 percent. Forty-five of the respondents were from media outlets in Africa, 21 from Asia and the Middle East, 48 from Europe, 12 from North America (Canada and Mexico) and 20 from South America. Two respondents did not specifically identify themselves as residents (residing) in the regions where they were working as international journalists.

The survey contained 33 questions with answers based either on the Likert scale with the words strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree or on multiple choice. Several demographic questions were borrowed from Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) and the question on perceived superiority was based on Bendixen & Associates (2005). The fundamental issue this survey addressed was whether the overall expectations of international journalists were met by the US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina, and that was the dependent variable. Further, the survey sought how specific journalistic expectations influenced overall expectations of the coverage.

Specific journalistic expectations were measured by five independent variables (IVs): accuracy, investigative reporting, diversity, skepticism, and public dialog. Four of these IVs were derived from Weaver and Wilhoit's (1996) media functions. The expectation of diversity was developed from the review of the international press coverage of Katrina. In terms of perceived superiority, participants were asked whether their media organization would have provided a better coverage of Hurricane Katrina than the American media. The variable was based on the concept of ethnocentrism. Since participants were professional journalists, the definitions of the IVs were assumed to be familiar to all. Still, certain cultural differences needed to be recognized in the wording of one variable, diversity, which we renamed 'various ethnic groups' because the original term has little name recognition in some countries. Also, we referred to the US media as American

media because that is the more common usage outside the United States. The best predictors that impacted on overall expectations were analyzed through multiple regression. In addition, descriptive indicators and crosstabs statistics provided a general understanding of the results.

Results

Before we present the opinions of our participants, let us first elaborate on who they were. Close to 28 percent of them had received some type of American education. Formal education includes high school, undergraduate, or graduate school in the United States, while informal education pertains to American journalism workshops or seminars in their home country. Most were foreign news reporters (60%) or foreign news editors (27%) and their average media experience ranged between six and eight years. The majority worked for newspapers (43%) or television (30%) and their respective media organizations covered Katrina either by using copy from news agencies with internal additional reporting (49%) or solely relying on their own reporters (24%).

In response to RQ 1, results show that the level of accuracy, diversity, and skepticism of the US media coverage did not meet respondents' expectations, while the level of

Table 1. International journalists' demographic variables

Education and visits	Job description	Covered Katrina	Media experience (Average in years)	Media affiliation	Location
Formal education in USA 15%, n = 22	Foreign assignment editor 3%, n = 5	Exclusive from news agencies 10%, n = 15	Africa 7 yrs, n = 45	Newspaper 43%, n = 64	Africa M = 21, F = 24 30%, n = 45
US informal education 12%, n = 18	Foreign news editor 27%, n = 40	News agencies & additional reporting 49%, n = 72	Asia/Middle East 8 yrs, n = 21	Magazine 13%, n = 20	Asia/Middle East M = 10, F = 11 14%, n = 21
Plan to have a US education 34%, n = 51	Foreign news reporter 60%, n = 89	From our own reporters 24%, n = 35	Europe 7 yrs, n = 48	Radio 10%, n = 15	Europe M = 32, F = 16 32%, n = 48
Had online US courses 0.7%, n = 1	Foreign field correspondent 5%, n = 7	Dispatched own correspondent 16%, n = 25	North America 8 yrs, n = 12	Television 30%, n = 44	North America M = 8, F = 4 8%, n = 12
Visited USA 38%, n = 56	Other 5%, n = 7	Other 0.7%, n = 1	South America 6 yrs, n = 20	Online media 3%, n = 4	South America M = 6, F = 14 13.5%, n = 20

Notes: N = 148; M = Male (n = 77); F = Female (n = 71)

investigative reporting and public dialogue did. On the public dialogue variable however, the difference between those who agreed that expectations were met and those who disagreed was only 0.7 percent (one person), so opinions were virtually split. In terms of perceived superiority, 37 percent said their media organization would have performed better in covering Hurricane Katrina and 36.3 percent said it would not have. Again, the difference on this question was one person. See Table 2 for more details.

This study also asked how expectations varied across regions and Table 2 demonstrates great differences in this respect. Journalists from Europe said that expectations of the five independent variables were mostly met by their American colleagues, with positive answers ranging from 41.6 percent for skepticism to 68.7 percent for investigative reporting. Journalists from Africa and South America, however, were mostly unsatisfied with the performance of the American media. Expectations were not met for 24.4 percent to 53.3 percent of respondents from Africa, and were satisfied for only 8.9 percent (skepticism) to 19.1 percent (accuracy). The negative responses of respondents from Africa and South America outweighed positive ones for accuracy, investigative

Table 2. Journalistic expectations (specific and overall) and perceived superiority by geographic location (data in %)

Expectations		Africa	Asia Middle East	Europe	North America	South America	Total
Accuracy	Yes	20	14.3	50.1	25	5	27.4
	No	53.3	23.8	18.8	41.7	45	35.6
	Y/N	26.7	61.9	31.3	33.3	50	37
Investigative reporting	Yes	31.1	28.6	60.5	25	5	36.3
	No	35.6	23.8	18.8	50	60	32.9
	Y/N	33.3	47.6	20.8	25	35	30.8
Diversity	Yes	24.4	23.8	52.1	16.7	5	30.1
	No	48.9	28.6	16.7	75	65	39.7
	Y/N	26.7	47.6	31.3	8.3	30	30.1
Skepticism	Yes	8.9	33.4	41.6	33.3	5	24.6
	No	31.1	42.9	16.7	41.7	55	32.2
	Y/N	60	23.8	41.7	25	40	43.2
Public dialogue	Yes	17.8	9.5	41.7	41.7	5	24.7
	No	24.4	28.6	10.4	41.6	40	24
	Y/N	57.8	61.9	47.9	16.7	55	51.4
Perceived superiority of own organization	Yes	48.9	19.1	16.7	58.3	65	37
	No	37.8	38.1	45.8	33.4	10	36.3
	Y/N	13.3	42.9	37.5	8.3	25	26.7
Overall expectations	Yes	37.8	33.3	73	33.3	5	43.9
	No	46.7	28.6	16.7	66.6	60	37.7
	Y/N	15.6	38.1	10.4	0	35	18.5

Notes: N = 146

Yes = Strongly agreed and agreed (Journalistic expectations were met)

No = Strongly disagreed and disagreed (Journalistic expectations were not met)

Y/N = Undecided or neutral

reporting, diversity, skepticism, and public dialogue. South American participants had negative responses ranging from 40 percent to 65 percent. Their positive responses ranged from 5 to 10 percent for all variables, except perceived superiority at 65 percent. The opinions of journalists from Asia and the Middle East were not as polarized, with the biggest difference being in the public dialog variable. As for journalists from North America (Canada and Mexico), their opinions were split on public dialogue and most polarized on the level of diversity. Finally, 48.9 percent of African journalists, 58.3 percent of North American journalists and 65 percent of South American journalists said that their media organization would have performed better than the American media in covering Katrina, while 45.8 percent of European journalists and 38.1 percent of Asian and Middle Eastern journalists disagreed.

Of all respondents, 43.9 percent said their overall expectations were met and 37.7 percent said they were not, while 18.5 percent remained undecided. The US coverage satisfied the overall expectations of 73 percent of European respondents, but only of 37.8 percent of African and 33.3 percent of North American or Asian/Middle Eastern respondents. Only 5 percent of South American respondents had their overall expectations met.

In response to RQ 3, regression models were simultaneously entered to predict how each of the IVs influenced overall expectations. The values in the simultaneous regression indicated that three IVs – investigative reporting, perceived superiority and accuracy – were strong predictors at $R^2 = 0.659$, correlated at 0.812 between the observed dependent variable (DV) and the predicted DV. The model showed that 66 percent of the variance in the DV could be explained with the three predictor IVs. For the estimated variance explained in our IVs, that model was run to eliminate any chance or bias in the multiple correlations when all predictors were entered into the equation. According to the standardized coefficients, investigative reporting (Beta = 0.404) predicted that overall expectations were met.

Diversity, skepticism, and public dialogue were excluded because they not high enough (tolerance > 0.1, and VIF <10) and their betas were not close enough to affect collinearity. The expectation of public dialogue had the least influence with a condition index at 17.4, which is over the threshold of 15. So, public dialogue could possibly cause a multicollinearity problem to the IVs in the equation. The eigenvalues of skepticism

Table 3. Journalistic expectations from US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina

Independent variables	Beta	Coeff. Sig
Accuracy	.185	.003**
Investigative reporting	.404	.000**
Diversity coverage	.140	.148
Skepticism	.068	.279
Public dialogue	-.070	.323
Perceived superiority	-.229	.001**

Notes: N = 148

* significance at $p < .05$ alpha level

** significance at $p < .01$ alpha level

Dependent variable (DV): Overall expectations; the Adj. $R^2 = 0.611$

(.030) and public dialogue (.012) were close to zero, an ill-conditioned cross-product concern for multicollinearity.

Overall, the regression models showed that three variables – investigative reporting, perceived superiority, and accuracy – were good predictors of overall expectations. The regression scatter plot showed that 95 percent of the residuals fell between -3 and $+3$, validating the significance of these predictions. The overall impact the US media coverage had on journalistic expectations was significant at $F(df6, df140) = 47, p < .05$.

Discussion and conclusion

This study shows that the US media coverage of Hurricane Katrina did not meet international journalists' expectations of diversity, skepticism or accuracy but met their expectations of investigative reporting and public dialogue. International journalists were evenly divided on whether their own media organizations would have produced coverage superior to that of the US media. Yet, despite the fact that respondents said the American media coverage did not meet their expectations in most specific areas, close to 44 percent said their overall expectations were met. One possible explanation is that international journalists considered accuracy and investigative reporting as the more salient journalistic roles; hence, their satisfaction with the US media performance in these two areas could have significantly influenced their overall assessment. Other unexplained and specific journalistic expectations might have influenced the overall estimate.

Our findings are consistent with Weaver and Wilhoit (1996), who observed that journalists were extremely pluralistic in viewing their roles, with the majority supporting both the interpretive and disseminator roles. Another earlier finding by Weaver (1998) is also supported by our data, which show that there are more disagreements regarding 'disseminator roles' and expectations among international journalists than agreements. That pluralism of opinions was even stronger for the study of non-US journalists. Coverage of natural disasters is often politicized (Keshishian, 1997) and major national disasters acquire international significance because subsequent global coverage not only influences public opinion but also shapes the credibility of the news media.

European journalists were most supportive of their US colleagues, while South American and African journalists were most critical. One possible explanation could be that journalists from South America and Africa identify with the Hispanic and African American minorities in the United States who were most affected by the disaster. This identification is part of individual level influences on journalists, which is contrary to Zhu et al.'s (1997) conclusions of stronger societal and organizational factors. Another explanation could be that as American and European media are at the core of international news flow (Sreberny and Stevenson, 1999), their journalistic traditions and practices are quite similar and, consequently, the expectations of European journalists matched the US media reality better than the expectations of other journalists.

This study shows that expectations of investigative reporting and accuracy were the strongest predictors, which implies that international journalists place the most weight on the interpretive/investigative and disseminator roles of US journalists. These roles and expectations were central in the views of US journalists about their profession (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996). Another implication is that these expectations transcend

national boundaries although they are also subject to differences, as demonstrated by the opinions of European versus South American and African journalists.

One of the limitations of this study was the disproportionate number of respondents from each continent. North America (Canada and Mexico) had 12 representatives, while Europe had 48. The findings are exploratory because of the small number of participants and perhaps future studies with larger datasets could provide further insight. However, the return rate of 59.2 percent was satisfactory and we did focus on an extremely restricted population – international journalists who covered Hurricane Katrina and the editorial staff of international media who were directly involved in covering the crisis. Although it was difficult to generalize in an under-researched area, the scope provides future scholars with a foundation to develop the concept of journalistic expectations and to study how it translates across the individual, organizational, and societal levels.

The assessment of international journalists' attitudes towards the United States or how they evaluated the government response to the disaster was beyond the scope of this study. Future research should consider examining whether journalists were able to separate those two important factors from their expectations. Also important to future research is the idea that news from New Orleans might have appeared to many audience members as a disaster in 'another country', not from the United States.

The study has demonstrated how coverage of a major disaster can have global implications. Marketing researchers have concluded that when consumers state their expectations, they become more critical of their experiences and the product (Ofir and Simonson, 2007). In applying these findings to journalism, we hope that local and international journalists can use the concept of expectations to become more self-critical of their work and ultimately improve the quality of the product they offer to the general public.

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