

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Q1. Negativity bias

Research has shown how economic news is characterized by a negativity bias. Economic journalists produce more news when the economy goes down, and they produce less when the economy recovers or grows. *Show figure displaying negative correlation between economic reality – volume economic news*

1A. To what extent can you relate to this negative relationship from the experience of your profession? Examples?

1B. The literature offers several explanations for this negativity bias. First, journalists are perceived as having a watchdog role in society. They are expected to hold (political, economic) power to account, and, as a result, their focus is more on tracing wrongdoings (negative trends/events) than on celebrating successes. To what extent can you relate to this role conception? Is this a relevant and valid explanation? To what extent do you envision a watchdog role for yourself in your profession as economic journalist?

1C. Another explanation refers to the idea of news values. Negativity is a classic news factor: in the case of a negative event, journalists assign more news value, and are more likely to select the event as news. In other words: negativity increases the newsworthiness of a trend/event. To what extent can you relate to this explanation for the negativity bias? Examples?

Q2 – Conditionality negativity bias

2A. In your view, is there a difference between type of outlet with regard to the overrepresentation of negative news? Between tabloid outlets compared to quality newspapers? Or between conservative versus liberal outlets?

2B. In your view, are there external factors that have an influence on the (over)representation of negative news? Such as elections, or economic crises?

Q3 – Structural constraints

There is a rich strand of research looking into the production process of financial news. I would like to present some of the findings in this literature and to ask you to reflect on these findings from the experience of your profession. Please indicate whether and to what extent these are relevant/applicable to the context of your work?

3A. The economy is complex, therefore economic journalists must always take the financial literacy of their target audiences into account. In other words: they need to simplify their stories as to produce a news product that is accessible and readable.

3B. Economic journalists lack expertise to fully understand the economic processes and practices they report about.

3C. Economic journalists are very dependent upon sources that work in finance. As a result, the perspectives brought forward by these sources are most prominent in their coverage.

3D. The profession of economic journalism has become more challenging as institutional pressures have increased over the years. As a result, investigative journalism has become a more costly and risky undertaking.

3E. News needs to be easy to grasp and entertaining. As a result, journalists focus most on well-known brands and companies, at the expense of less *catchy* titles.

Q4 – Additional questions

4A. Did the economic crisis change the way you do your work?

4B. Do you think we will face another economic crisis in the foreseeable future?

4C. Do you have a specific audience in mind when producing news?