

Daily Excess? A view from the States


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The British are familiar with the Daily Express, it used to be one of *the* great newspapers and it still sells hundreds of thousands of copies every morning. But in our latest guest-blog by a [POLIS Summer School student](#), *Lizzie Gotimer* from America is not impressed on her first encounter with an over-excited British popular newspaper.

[liz-gotimer.bmp](#)

What makes a newspaper successful? Is it the layout, the content, the quality of writing and pictures? In one of our early seminars, a group of LSE students were asked to dissect some of London's most popular newspapers.

Working in group of two to three, students investigated the quality of a given newspaper. In light of current events, the students were asked to pay particular attention to the publication's coverage of the UK floods. As the class is primarily composed of international students, many of us were looking at these papers for the first time. 

My group deconstructed London's *The Daily Express*. Our paper didn't flash a red top or include a "page three model" like traditional British tabloids; however, we soon discovered that the paper was more sensational than journalistic. Its pages were filled with dramatic stories whose subject matter was often emotional or grim. Opposite those stories of death and kidnapping were vibrant advertisements. Each article boasted a headline up to three times the size of the actual article. The dramatic storylines, the flashy advertisements, and the large headlines add to the reader's feeling of sensory overload. As you scan the page, your eyes bounce from picture to headline to advertisement.

The Daily Express covered the flood story with a two page lay out in the middle of the paper. The story was filled with moving pictures, attention-grasping headlines, and even included a map of the affected area. While the articles were supplemented by eye-witness accounts and were attributed to police reports, the articles highlighted only a handful of issues. For example, the paper focused on the deaths of the premature twins, alarmed readers of the need for clean water and warned of the disease that might ensue. While their story selection was clearly aimed to draw a response, they were covered thoroughly. However, what was accomplished by the two-page layout was undermined by articles on the following page. On the left there was continued coverage of the flood. On the right, the paper featured a story concerning a poodle who had had its identity stolen. The story was accompanied by a picture of the dog perched on its hind legs. The bizarre paring of topics seemed ridiculous in line with the week's current events. 

So while the Daily Express proclaims to be "The World's Greatest Newspaper", my colleagues and I found ample evidence to refute their claim.

By Lizzie Gotimer, POLIS Summer School, 2007



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