

THE EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE PROCESSING OF NEGATIVE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if the structural features and emotional content of negative news images affected viewers' responses. A pair of within-subjects experiments manipulated the color and size of the photographs as well as the intensity, which was defined by the arousal and valence ratings of the content. Experiment 1 manipulated the variables of color and intensity, and Experiment 2 manipulated size and intensity. Physiological and self-report scales were used to measure orienting responses, arousal, valence, newsworthiness and offensiveness. Recognition tests were administered to measure accuracy and response times. Results indicate that the structural feature of color failed to produce significant responses. The size of images and the intensity of the content had a greater influence on people's emotional assessments and news judgment. In addition, the intensity variable was replicated across two experiments, and the findings show that the results were the same for both.