

An uphill battle for media focus

The United Arab Emirates in international television news

The participants of the World Economic Forum African Summit in Cape Town in June 2006 left with an agreement that there was a dire need for 'Branding Africa'. Largely absent in Cape Town were members of Arab countries, particularly the United Arab Emirates who – at least when looking at the media coverage in international television – have done some inroads in changing the perception of this part of the Middle East.

Merged in 1971 from seven emirates into one body, the United Arab Emirates was, until recently, primarily known for rich oil resources. But the intense focus on tourism as an additional source of revenue, as well as creating the perception as a business hub, seems to have made some impact on international media.

Because of the Iraq war, international media are devoting a considerable amount of coverage to the region. The largest coverage with almost 51% of all international news was on U.S. television. German TV, despite not having a military presence in Iraq, devoted almost 21% of the total international coverage to the region, while in South Africa the share of coverage was 'only' 11%. Reporting on the United Arab Emirates as a

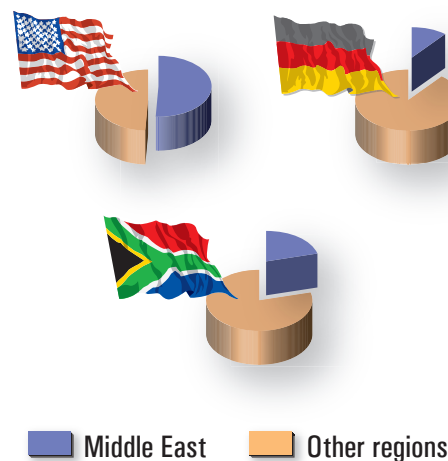
country however was marginal in most television news programmes with the exception of South Africa. Increasingly, the UAE is marketed as an alternative tourist destination to South Africans, supported by twice-daily flights of Dubai airline Emirates and, since December 2005, national airline Etihad. The UAE received an equal share of coverage in South African television to Russia and fellow African country Nigeria, while the coverage in US and German television was rather marginal and receiving similar coverage to Peru, Somalia, Chile and Zimbabwe.

While South African media focused mostly on the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom as areas of international reporting, the US focused almost entirely on Iraq, with the UK and Iran in the far distance. In Germany, both the United States and Iraq featured equally in terms of number of reports, followed by neighbour France and the United Kingdom.

But generally speaking the volume of television news coverage is relatively low and focused around a number of events including sport as well as business (such as the opening of the Dubai International Stock Exchange). This might also be largely due to a lack of 'media ambassadors' from the region, with Arab statesmen and business people absent in terms of media coverage. While there seems to be a general admiration of the business opportunities created in the Emirates, businesses from the region seem to be silent when representing themselves and/or the region

Because of the Iraq war, international media are devoting a considerable amount of coverage to the Middle East.

Share of the Middle East in international news: 01/05–03/06

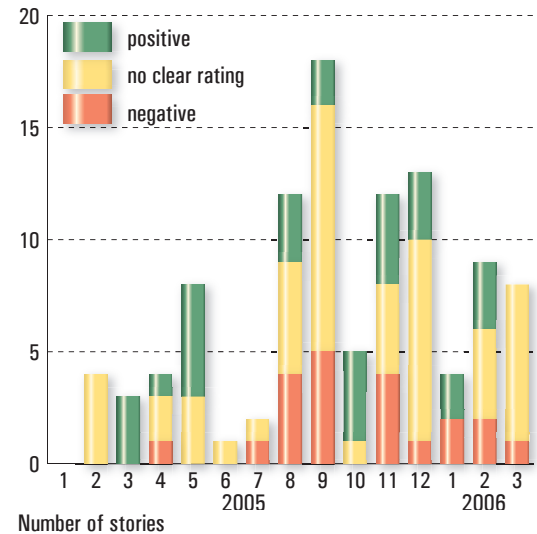


Share of stories

Source: Media Tenor 01/01 – 03/31/2006

Basis: all news stories in 9 German, 4 U.S., 5 SA TV news

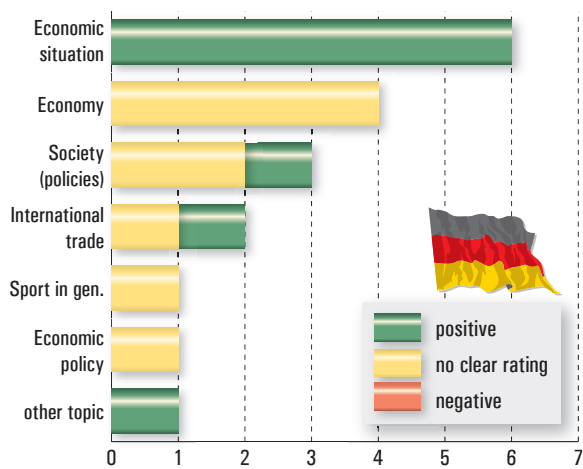
Protagonists from the UAE in international TV news: timeline



Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2005 – 03/31/2006

Basis: 103 reports on protagonists from UAE in 9 German, 4 U.S., 5 SA and 3 Arab TV news

Topic structure for protagonists from the UAE in German TV news

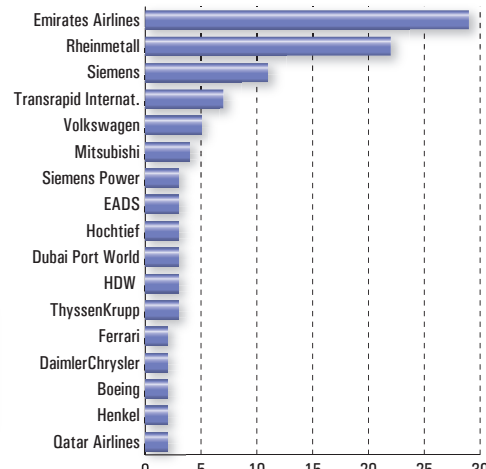


Number of reports

Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2005 – 03/31/2006

Basis: all reports on protagonists from UAE 9 German media

Top companies related to the UAE in German media: 01/05-03/06



Number of reports

Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2005 – 03/31/2006

298 reports on companies in at least 5 lines/seconds in relation to UAE in 14 media.

Clearly, the transition from petroleum to an alternative source of income seems to also have been achieved on television news.

in international television news. Conversely, this might also be based on international media's focus of large non-Arab companies in the region rather than those from the area.

But clearly, the transition from petroleum to an alternative source of income seems to also have been achieved on television news, with other industries but oil playing the most important role in international television news's coverage on the Emirates. This coverage is also explicitly positive, particularly on German television. But largely absent in all television news are other issues but sport and economy, with politics, education and/or science also not reported on. German media in particular were focusing on the potential of the export of German Maglev technology to the Middle East. The airline industry and Emirates airline in particular received coverage on all television news channels, underlining the increased status of the airline as one of the global leading airlines, now also one of the main sponsors for the Soccer World Cup. Prior to this, Emirates used the branding opportunity to sponsor Britain's Premier League Champion Chelsea, the first time an Arab company undertook large sponsoring in Europe. The corporate coverage on German television was largely positive, highlighting overall business results but also products and strategy. Less in focus again was the management of the Arab business, who – similar to their statesmen, seem to be aiming to stay out of international media spotlight.

But while most countries in the Middle East seem to generate largely negative coverage (Israel, the Palestinian Territory, Iran, Iraq) the United Arab Emirates seem to be on the right path to break the international media's stereotype of a region enraging in war and crisis. But the lack of volume of coverage is putting a damper on the hopes of the Emirates emerging as the 'media light' in the Middle East. Nevertheless, additionally to advertising branding, there is some editorial positioning visible, something that Africa as a continent has still failed to achieve. By choosing economy and business as a key issue for international communication – and showing success (such as Emirates), the UAE has showcased to Africa that a stereotype reporting could be overcome.

People involved in 'Branding Africa', as discussed during the World Economic Forum meeting, might have to pay closer attention to some of the countries in the Middle East. ws

Basis:

Media: NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News, ABC World News Tonight, FOX News; SABC2, SABC3, E-TV news, Zulu/Xhosa news, Sotho news; Al Alam, Al Manar, Al Jazeera
ARD Tagesthemen, ARD Tagesschau, ZDF Heute, ZDF Heute Journal, RTL Aktuell, Sat.1 News, ProSieben News, Deutsche Welle Journal (English And German)

Time: 01/01/2005 – 03/31/2006

Analysis: 197,969 news reports in 9 German, 4 U.S., 5 South African and 3 Arab TV news; 285,366 reports on companies in 14 German media