

# No global media?

## Comparison of company coverage by Wall Street Journal Europe, WSJ US and Financial Times

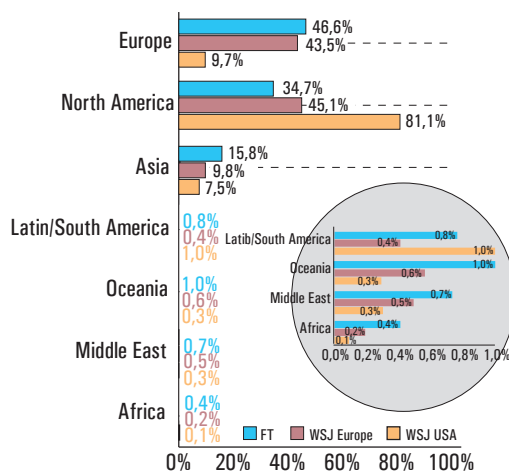
Research Links:  
[www.medien-tenor.de](http://www.medien-tenor.de)  
[www.usembassy.de/usa/wirtschaft-handel.htm](http://www.usembassy.de/usa/wirtschaft-handel.htm)

In contrast to its European affiliate, the **Wall Street Journal** in the US largely ignores globally operating companies and global markets. An analysis of the regional focus of company coverage shows that the European market is of minor importance to US journalists, despite DaimlerChrysler and other European-American co-operations. With this backdrop, it does not come as a surprise that the American population tends to exhibit a rather low level of knowledge on events outside of the US.

mentioned related to the US market. Barely 10% of the news dealt with Europe. With a mere 8%, information is insufficiently provided on Asia; a significant weakness, as this fast growing market is becoming increasingly important for global American companies such as the worldwide largest automobile corporation General Motors or IT giants like Microsoft and IBM. The economic reality looks quite different: In 2003, exports were responsible for a quarter of US economic growth ([www.usembassy.de](http://www.usembassy.de)).

The European affiliate paints a more subtle picture. Even if, with 45% of all coverage, it does attribute most of its attention to the US market, reporting on activities of companies in Europe come in a close second with 43%. The Asian region is also more visible (almost 10%).

## The business world ends in Europe, North America and Asia



Importance of regions in passages on companies

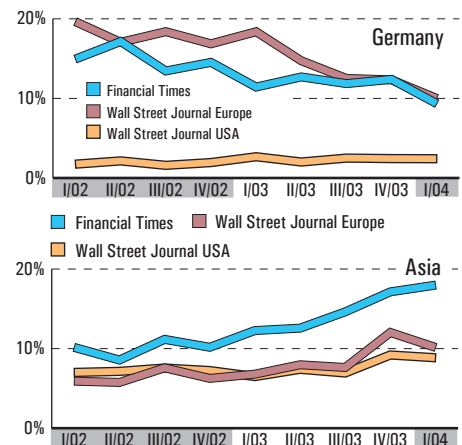
Source: Media Tenor  
 01/01/2002 – 03/31/2004  
 Basis: FT: 77,222 reports on companies;  
 WSJ Europe: 30,969; WSJ US: 60,004

The analysis looks at the coverage by the **Wall Street Journal US Edition**, **Wall Street Journal Europe** and **Financial Times** on companies as well as their managers in the industry sectors automobile, IT/electrical engineering, aerospace/defense, insurance, banking, chemistry and pharmaceuticals. The sample included a total of 168,195 passages of at least five lines that were published between January 1st, 2002, and March 31st, 2004.

The US edition of the **Wall Street Journal** is clearly focused on the American market: 81% of all passages on companies of the industry sectors

Among the big, Anglo-Saxon financial papers, however, the **Financial Times** turns out to have the broadest perspective. This is why it received the **Media Tenor** award for journalistic diversity in the past year (see Media Tenor no. 140, pages 36-40). Assigning 16% of its coverage to Asia, it gives that region twice as much column space as the US edition of the **Wall Street Journal** and is on an upward trend.

## Financial Times keeps an eye on the growing Asian market



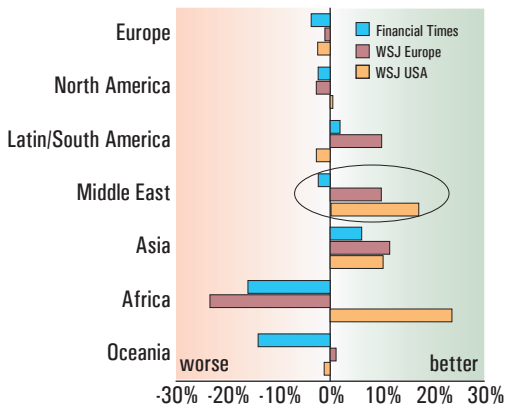
Importance of Germany and Asia over time

Source: Media Tenor  
 01/01/2002 – 03/31/2004  
 Basis: FT: 77,222 reports on companies;  
 WSJ Europe: 30,969; WSJ US: 60,004

Nevertheless, the world of economic activity seems to end in North America, Europe and Asia for all the three Anglo-Saxon financial papers analyzed. Central or South America, the Middle East or Africa play only a minuscule role in the

In the US edition of the Wall Street Journal, foreign companies have a hard time explaining causes and contexts for their decisions.

## Does the WSJ view the Middle East through the eyes of the liberator?



Assessment of companies by area of reference

Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2002 – 03/31/2004 Basis: FT: 77,222 reports on companies; WSJ Europe: 30,969; WSJ US: 60,004

company coverage of the **Wall Street Journal** and **Financial Times**. Thus they turn a blind eye on progress and, above all, the problems of companies in those countries, many of which are part of the developing world.

The impact of this one-sided selective regional focus in company coverage is significant: Considering the results on the **Wall Street Journal US** it is hardly surprising that European top entrepreneurs and politicians remain unknown to the majority of Americans. Even among the group of opinion leaders, for example, 95% have never heard the name Gerhard Schröder. The results should be even more sobering in the case of Heinrich von Pierer or Josef Ackermann.

Companies therefore have a hard time explaining the causes and backgrounds of their decisions to the public – even more so when they happen to experience difficulties. When the **Wall Street Journal US** coverage of a company like the Leverkusen chemical corporation Bayer is reduced to the cholesterol lowering drug Lipobay and its dangerous side effects, this not only affects the company’s image but its overall success.

### Arbitrary selection

The three financial papers analyzed also assess companies quite differently, depending on areas of reference. While they paint a comparatively uniform picture of Europe and North America, the assessments of companies in other regions diverge considerably (see graph above). The differences

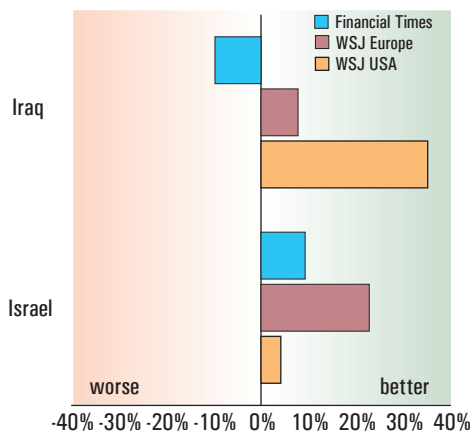
are particularly striking in the case of the Middle East. The **Wall Street Journal** coverage is clearly influenced by political developments, reflecting the interest of the Bush administration. Its editors shed a particularly positive light on companies that are involved in Iraq: More than 30% of all passages on companies paint a favorable picture – which is striking, given that the country has been haunted by terror and war for months.

Coverage on the African continent is generally erratic and arbitrary. The strong variation between the percentages of positive and negative assessment reflects the weak presence of company coverage over all. While the **Wall Street Journal Europe** and the **Financial Times** primarily picked negative examples, the **Wall Street Journal US** focused on optimistic stories on companies. However, neither of them appropriately reflects the complex reality on the continent. kek

Open question:

What role should regional diversity play in the selection of company news?

## Positive picture of companies in Iraq, despite terror and war



Assessment of companies with regard to Iraq and Israel

Source: Media Tenor 01/01/2002 – 03/31/2004 Basis: FT: 77,222 reports on companies; WSJ Europe: 30,969; WSJ US: 60,004

### Basis:

**Media:** Financial Times, Wall Street Journal Europe, Wall Street Journal Americas

**Time:** 01/01/2002 – 03/31/2004

**Analysis:** All reports (at least 5 lines/seconds) on companies/managers of the following industries: Automobile, IT, aircraft construction, insurance, banks, chemical and pharmaceutical

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