Panama Papers: A Worldwide Catastrophe

The world is sprinkled with the rich and powerful. They lead us, bargain for us, and show us what the world means to them. We look up to them and their examples of strength and unity. The Panama Papers make us question everything they stand for on so many levels. It started about a year ago, an individual contacted a German newspaper wanting to give an ocean of knowledge from a Panamanian firm named Mossack Fonseca. They help the rich and powerful live behind the law. Mossack Fonseca helps some of the world’s leaders secretly hide massive amounts of wealth. This gives reason to believe that these high powered people are paying critics off to stop the gossip, and making laws and policy changes that benefit themselves financially. This worldwide catastrophe has been published in many ways by many sources helping more to be informed, as well as causing different opinions and biases to form.

Most articles explain the Panama Papers as what our nations leaders have done to corrupt and deceive their people. It mainly describes how the money is used negatively. The authors used the fact that readers could reread passages to their advantage giving natural room for many facts about specific leaders such as Vladimir Putin, President of Russia. Each of the articles, besides the Russian article, gave explanation of the whole story basically covering from discovery of the papers, to the discovery of the perpetrators.

The New York Times article “Panama Papers Leak Casts Light on a Law Firm Founded on Secrecy,” goes even further than that and describes the personal lives of Mr. Mossack and Mr. Fonseca. This gives more insight into the back history of the foundation of the firm. The New York Times holds a lot of articles regarding national and international growth as well as crisis. This means that the audience that it is reaching is very intrigued by this type of information and will read lengthy articles to gain an understanding of the smallest details.
The National Broadcast Company (NBC) has a more broad and generalized audience. This means that there is a range of educated and uneducated individuals being informed by NBC. Their article was more vague and detail deficit, making it easier for everyone to understand. The Cable News Network (CNN) is very similar in this way. The article, though longer than NBC’s, is more generalized and easy to understand. Everything is explained thoroughly for the reader so there is no confusion.

The Moscow Times article is very brief. The only background that it presents is the fact that Putin’s representative “warned of an impending hatchet job on the Russian president by international journalists, anticipating the publication of “another hoax [article], pretending to be objective.” It gives no background about Mossack Fonseca. All it states is that there were many leaked documents and that there is an ongoing investigation of those papers. They seem to want the people to be uninformed about the vigorous research going on by the journalists at the ICIJ.

Many of the articles focus a lot on Putin and his contribution to the devious allegiance held with the Panamanian firm. This causes a distorted perception of the Russian government and how it is much worse than the United States government. Even the news article produced by The Moscow Times is focused solely on Putin and his foreshadowing of the leak. Interestingly enough, the same article starts out almost discrediting the papers by saying, “The so-called Panama Papers…” This shows the public how, almost careless the Russian leadership is taking this. However, the article produced by CNN accentuates the idea that “Some will try to downplay it, to dismiss it, to tell you it’s a big misunderstanding. They will say it’s a tempest in a teapot or perhaps a grand conspiracy. But don’t believe it. The release of the Panama Papers is a very big
deal.” This shows to us that the role of audience is extremely important in the production of these articles.

In the video produced by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (IBIJ) we feel more of an emotional connection to the proclaimed papers. There is more focus on the victims at hand, for instance, those being sold for sex, those effected by the Syrian bombings and the lack of financial assistance in their hospitals. The video depicts the fear of the victims, and the shady behavior of their leaders by the produced moving images. The entire video is cast in a brown mist. The leaders are portrayed as simple outlined, black shadows. The victims are shown in more color, yellows and oranges, presenting the idea that they are not voluntarily involved in the crime and consequence of their leaders. The video has segments from interviews with some specific sufferers to strongly draw in pathos. The strong empathetic standpoint draws the attention of a more emotional audience. They did not focus on statistics, but merely on the emotional let down, and the unethical practices occurring.

One story can be twisted and turned to help pinpoint different audiences. This can be used to create a bias, but it can also help everyone to be informed. There are different interests among individuals causing it nearly impossible to draw in everyone we want to inform. By creating this variety that we have seen, we are able to get many more individuals on board. Bringing in strictly statistics can attract many, while on the other hand focusing on a more emotional connection will attract others. The different presentations will cause many more to become involved in the discussion. We see the effects of this especially regarding the Panama Papers. The different articles propose different perspectives drawing in many independent individuals.
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