

# BBC vs CNN: An Academic Comparison

Exploring the differences in news reporting and analysis between the BBC and CNN.

by Grace Ellen Owens



Founded to educate, inform, and entertain, broadcast networks like the BBC and CNN are each among the largest in the world.

General John Reith founded the BBC to separate "the creative process of program-making from administration and budgeting" (Carter & McKinlay, 2013, p. 1228). Furthermore, Turner Broadcasting Systems, Inc. founded CNN to provide round-the-clock news reporting, a pioneering vision for continuous news coverage in the media landscape, as Küng-Shankleman details (2003). As such, this analysis will further discuss the unique features of the BBC and CNN, their differing business models, and how each has affected news delivery and coverage.

As mentioned, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) has multiple features that make it unique. These aspects are summarized into four assumptions by Lucy Küng-Shankleman (2003) as follows: "Public funding makes us different, The best in the business, Part of the British way of life, and Defending a great heritage" (pp. 79-86). Each assumption addresses an integral part of the ideas that the BBC has established. The first assumption addresses how the BBC believes it is "special... because of its public service status" (Küng-Shankleman, 2003, p. 79). The second assumption concentrates on how the BBC provides "the best broadcasting in the world" (Küng-Shankleman, 2003, p. 80). The third assumption holds that the BBC weaves itself into the "fabric of Britain," as Küng-Shankleman (2003, p. 81) observes. Finally, the fourth assumption highlights that the BBC protects "a unique and important broadcasting heritage" (Küng-Shankleman, 2003, p. 81). Another way that BBC is a distinguishable broadcasting system is through its governing and funding models.

One of the ways the BBC governs is through a four-tier system. The four tiers are: "The Royal Charter, The BBC Trust, The Executive Board, and The Media regulators" (Küng-Shankleman, 2003, p. 87). In this way, BBC operations differ from U.S. broadcasting systems like the Cable News Network (CNN) because it is owned and regulated by the British government. In contrast, Turner Broadcasting Systems controls CNN's operations, as Küng-Shankleman (2003) notes.

## References

Carter, C., & Mckinlay, A. (2013). Cultures of strategy: Remaking the BBC, 1968–2003. *Business History*, 55(7), 1228–1246.

Cave, M., & Collins, R., & Crowther, P. (2004). Regulating the BBC. *Telecommunications Policy*, 28(3–4), 249–272.

Herman, E.S., & Chomsky, N. (1988) *Manufacturing Consent*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Küng–Shankleman, L. (2003). Organizational Culture inside the BBC and CNN. *Inside the BBC and CNN: Managing media organizations*. In Simon Cottle (ed.), *Media organization and production* (pp.78–105). London: Routledge.

License fee and funding. (2023). Retrieved March 6, 2023,  
from <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/bbc.com/aboutthebbc/governance/licencefee/>.



