

The media coverage of antitrust enforcement: The Italian case

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This paper studies the media coverage of the antitrust proceedings completed by the Italian Antitrust Authority between 1994 and 2019. The empirical analysis considers the reports on antitrust investigations published in the top Italian newspapers by circulation. The data reveal that newspaper reports favor the conclusion (against the start) of proceedings, antitrust cases regarding immaterial services and investigations that establish a violation of antitrust law. In addition, the probability of media coverage increases if foreign firms are involved in cartel proceedings. While the press equally covers cartels and abuses, the imposition of unfair conditions is the most mentioned antitrust offense. These results are important for the public dimension of antitrust law and antitrust enforcement. Unbiased media coverage of antitrust enforcement can in fact foster the crucial collaboration of third parties in reporting alleged antitrust infringements. In addition, policymakers can draw crucial information from completed antitrust investigations and consider the possible regulation, deregulation or re-regulation of industries and companies frequently involved in the antitrust cases.