PUTTING THE BEST NEWS FORWARD: THE INFLUENCE OF PRESSURE TO BE A COMMUNITY BOOSTER ON COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER GATEKEEPERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine whether newspaper editors feel pressure to be a community booster and how such pressure affects their gatekeeping process. The study used a qualitative method, consisting of semi-structured interviews with 14 Missouri community newspaper editors. Results revealed that while editors and editor/publishers felt some pressure from both internal and external sources at their newspapers, editors' gatekeeping process remained largely unaffected, with gatekeeping decisions made more on the basis of journalistic values like balance, fairness and independence rather than in response to any perceived pressure to either give stories a positive slant or kill stories that showed negative aspects of the community. The principal conclusion is that while some pressure exists, it is merely one factor in gatekeeping decisions and does not carry more weight than other factors.