EFFECTIVE POLICY REPORTING METHODS FOR TELEVISION NEWS

Garrett Bergquist

Dr. Stacey Woelfel, Project Advisor

ABSTRACT

I spent the spring 2013 semester serving as KOMU 8’s Capitol Correspondent at the station’s Capitol Bureau. During that time, I reported on political issues facing the state both for daily newscasts and for longer enterprise pieces. For my research project, I wanted to determine what elements best help television news reports explain policy issues to an audience. My research questions were:

1. Does more information in a story lead to greater audience understanding?
2. Do viewers understand the story better if they enjoy watching it?
3. Do production elements in a story help viewers understand what they’re seeing?
4. Does covering policy issues make the audience want to learn more and/or act on the issue?

To answer these questions, I distributed an electronic survey to civic groups in the Columbia, Missouri area. Respondents indicated they understood the issue better if there was more information in the story, there was no correlation between understanding and enjoyment, production elements did not assist respondents’ understanding, and viewing stories about policy issues usually made participants want to learn more about the issue but not necessarily act on what they had seen.