

LIFESTYLE, ECONOMY, AND COVERAGE: A COMPARISON BETWEEN FOUR DAILY NEWSPAPERS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

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ABSTRACT

In September of 2008, the U.S. financial system teetered on the brink of collapse. The aftermath brought steady waves of layoffs and bankruptcies. As the impact of the economic collapse crept into every area of life, did it also bleed into lifestyle sections of newspapers? This study looked at how and why economic coverage edged into lifestyle sections of four daily newspapers during and after the economic collapse. In-depth interviews with eight lifestyle reporters and editors revealed both differences and similarities among the newspapers. A cursory examination of two constructed weeks of lifestyle sections from each newspaper provided additional guidance. The findings show that economic coverage often crept into the lifestyle section in the form of consumer reporting, news stories about the impact of the economy on the arts, trend stories that sought to explore uncovered aspects of the economic climate and features that humanized concepts such as bankruptcy. Many editors and reporters thought it was important to document how the economy was changing real peoples' lives, and also felt it was crucial to provide information that would help readers, such as consumer reports.