Helping viewers positively identify with local news stations: A focus group study to determine local viewers' preferences

Jo Elizabeth York

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Helping Viewers Positively Identify With Local News Stations

A Focus Group Study to Determine Local Viewers' Preferences

by

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B.A., University of Montana, 1986

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

University of Montana

1993

Approved by

[Signatures]

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

May 10, 1993
A total of six focus groups to determine viewer preferences were conducted for local television stations in two Montana cities. A total of 72 randomly selected participants representing a cross section of the news-watching populations in the two cities were gathered in groups of 12. A written questionnaire and oral questions helped discern how news coverage and promotional themes were perceived, and reasons for ratings status. Findings showed participants were beginning to expect better quality news coverage of their local and surrounding areas, and that a community-oriented promotional theme was less effective than hoped because news coverage and news teams were not perceived as being truly involved in the community and seriously interested in serving its best interests. The author concluded that local broadcasters would be wise to implement a high profile public affairs approach that would more fully reflect the positive values and culture of the people, and which would resonate the identities of the cities they serve. She also concluded that in order to make this strategy meet its potential, owners and shareholders would need to refrain from running these businesses by quarterly reports and begin thinking in terms of long-term investment strategies that make it a priority to offer stable news talent who are dedicated to and supported in serving the local community. The author asserts that these steps, correctly executed, would help viewers positively identify with local news stations in a day when channel-switching characterizes viewing behavior, and advertising dollars are going to the more congenial viewing options.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*In this Day the secrets of the earth are laid bare before the eyes of men. The pages of swiftly-appearing newspapers [and up-to-the minute television newscasts] are indeed the mirror of the world. They reflect the deeds and the pursuits of divers peoples and kindred. They both reflect them and make them known. They are a mirror endowed with hearing, sight and speech. This is an amazing and potent phenomenon.*  
*(Baha'u'llah, 1978)*

The fast-moving American lifestyle allows for little time to glimpse at newspapers or watch regularly scheduled broadcasts of network television news. Local newscasters find it increasingly difficult to attract an audience because the networks no longer monopolize television news. A recent Roper poll shows that for the first time a majority of the American people receive all of their news from TV (Graham, 1990), partly because television has the visual means to grab audience attention by conveying more accuracy and credibility than newspapers. But while the swing away from newspaper reading and toward television viewing has helped, it has by no means solved the local broadcasters' dilemma.

Local television broadcasters face enormous financial pressures. Labor and
capital costs are high due to the need to purchase expensive modern technological equipment and reap a profit for owners and stockholders, while revenue, money paid from advertisers, is threatened. Employees' wage scales remain low and local stations experience high turnover rates. What strategies can work to pull in and keep audiences, given these tough limiting factors? To gain perspective on what actions are feasible, a closer look at the income and expenditures at local television stations is necessary.

Any given advertisement generates an amount of revenue directly related to the number of viewers watching it. Thus competition for viewers' time is the same as competition for advertising dollars. Until the early 80s, local networks dominated the market with about 85 percent of the viewers watching them. By early 1990 this figure had slipped to 68 percent, with cable and independent television stations becoming broadcast network competitors (Mahoney, 1990). Additionally, by 1988 videocassette recorders had penetrated 56 percent of U.S. homes (Buckman, 1988). Until now, the three broadcast networks did not need to create strategies to draw viewers away from videocassette movies and cable television options such as 24-hour news and sports networks. They did not have to market their news or tailor their news coverage to viewers' preferences. Now, perhaps for the first time, they are being forced to re-examine themselves (Klein, 1990). This re-examination is not pleasant, because it often means compromising strict journalistic standards and considering more strongly what works and what does not work to attract an audience.
Due to the lack of an abundant number of viewers, newsroom budgets are not keeping up with inflation. Given that 75 percent of newsroom costs are labor-related, news directors are making changes to enhance the efficiency with which their reporters cover the news and the efficacy with which the news is presented (Shaw 1988). Often instead of getting greater efficiency, the ultimate outcome is rather a poorer news product. Van Gordon Sauter, former president of CBS news, predicts that within the next 10 years broadcast network news will experience more viewer erosion and continued economic stress ("Journalists on Journalism," 1989).

Some stations choose to use the services of news consultants to get a better match between their viewers' preferences and the news products they put out. Frank Magid of Marion, Iowa is one such consultant. After news consultants do their research, they are given sanction to entirely revamp the faces and images of the stations that hire them. If ratings then reflect the desired results, station managers are content to make large payments that span the course of two or three years. The complaint about consultants is they are paid to find fault so they tend to do so to justify their existence. They also tend to encourage management's latent instincts to stress appearance over quality (Graham, 1990).

This sheds light on the tough economic setting in which research for this thesis was solicited. The owners and operators of two Montana television stations, KPAX in Missoula and KRTV in Great Falls, arranged for focus group research to be done to help develop a marketing strategy. A focus group is much like a board meeting of representatives from a target population of people who use the service
being studied.

Author's Hypothesis.

Due to the vast array of television options, the days when viewers take a sympathetic view of their local news have drawn to a close and findings will indicate local news viewers expect more quality from local news than has historically been the case. Furthermore, if broadcasters were to use creative business strategies to help offer quality news that viewers identify with as a reflection of and a service to the local community, simple marketing strategies would be effective.

The Need for Research is Actually a Need for Better Interpersonal Communication Between Viewer and Broadcaster.

Quality news does not just reflect the activities of people, it also communicates messages about these activities (Berman, 1987). Journalists are taught to emphasize what viewers should know rather than what they want to know, and media managers have traditionally assumed that if they like something, others agree (Lavine and Wackman, 1988). This means mass media have been good at sending out vast numbers of messages they have chosen for viewers to receive, with little regard for feedback from those they are sending messages to.

One of the striking characteristics of mass media television is it gives the illusion of face-to-face relationship. While face-to-face communication normally offers continuous feedback through which communicators can monitor themselves, the pseudo face-to-face interaction between broadcasters and their viewers offers
little feedback and elicits little obligation from viewers, who are free to withdraw at any time (Gumpert and Cathcart, 1979). Simply put, the fact that broadcasters are conducting research to discern viewers' preferences means they have realized they must solicit feedback in order to complete the communication-feedback cycle. Media corporations are finding they must do research on both the preferences and motivations of those who use their services. For local broadcasters, this translates to mean research must aid them in their mission capture the vision of local residents so they will then be captivated as an audience (Cox, 1989).

Communication is often thought of as sending messages effectively: persuading, explaining, advising and generating options. But more importantly, communication means listening to feedback given (Lavine and Wackman, 1988). Due to a general lack of knowledge about alternative means of gathering information, businesses often conducted surveys to solicit feedback because surveys have a scientific aura. However quantitative survey conclusions often wound up being an odd mix of facts, conjecture, experience and hunches (Kiefer, 1988). Even with the aid of new technology, quantitative surveys did not always serve the full spectrum of needs. Alternate methods of soliciting feedback gained popularity as the need to listen to subtler feedback increased. Viewers' reactions to television are such a complex psychological mix that only people who aspire to be experts can claim to comprehend them (Graham, 1990). Therefore any research conducted must be broad-based enough to make relative certainty that viewers are actually being heard with some of this complexity intact.
One way to make sure listening to viewers is effective is to use the attentive listening process. It is quite simple. Let other people tell their stories spontaneously. Do not direct them, just encourage them. In fact, attentive listening takes less time and is more productive than other ways of getting information. Most people can tell their own story in two to four minutes. What lengthens the time is for them to phrase what they have to say in response to others' questions. Attentive listening skills are as follows: look and listen, acknowledge messages, invite more information, clarify information and summarize to insure understanding (Lavine and Wackman, 1988). Focus group interviewing, an alternative method for obtaining feedback, is the chosen method because it encompasses all of the above.

**The Importance of Local News to a Local Television Network Affiliate.**

Why research news, versus advertising or programming? While free broadcast TV does not monopolize viewers' attention like it once did, the passage that American communications is now going through means local news is poised to assume a larger role in informing the American people. Many local television stations are being acquired by large media conglomerates and this may be setting the stage for a stimulating wave of news competition in local TV (Graham, 1990). Research proves that a majority of viewers aged 35 to 65 still watch the network stations regularly (Mahoney, 1990). Offering a good local news product helps local broadcasters maintain a share of the viewing public pie and it is a significant part of the strategy to draw advertisers and revenue.

Consequently investing in local news is a futuristic step for station owners.
Some speculate that the most exciting growth in the field of television will be taking place at the local level. "In a few years, local news will perk up," said former CBS news law correspondent Fred Graham (Graham, 1990). According to a retired NBC vice-president, local news operations have lead the way in the use of new formats and technology ("Journalists on Journalism," 1989).

While a need for research on local news exists, there is no need to repeat research already completed. Following is a brief summary of what is already known.

**Assessing the Need For Research: What Has Already Been Done?**

The public has expectations that have long ago been spelled out. They expect the media to play the role of the public watchdog, to inform them about significant occurrences and trends, to interpret those happenings and to act as a sounding board against which a broad cross section of citizens' opinions can be heard (Lavine and Wackman, 1988).

Secondly, research has shown that anchors are the dominant component in any news program, rather than grand sets with monitors flickering in the background or glitzy electronic wizardry, and that the anchors with the most market experience, air time and promotion in the area are the most popular (Goldburg, 1989). Research has also shown that viewers tend to philosophically identify with news personalities, and this identification creates an emotional bridging that binds viewers to a station, upgrading its image, impact and ratings (O'Brien, 1988). It is already known that it is worthwhile to invest in having
respected, stable anchorpeople who will maintain a commitment to the station if they are liked by the viewers. This is precisely why anchors command high salaries in large markets. Their names become part of the news product.

Research using audience rating scores and evaluations has shown that most television viewers are pleased with television news, and they particularly like news that is exciting, dramatic and filled with human interest appeals. Audiences do not relish lengthy serious discussions about societal problems when entertaining alternatives are available, and while audiences often profess to want such serious fare, their viewing behavior tells a different story (Grabner, 1989). It has been shown that the subjects that help boost ratings are health, consumerism, crime, taxes, politics, weather, sex, pets, children, sports and gossip. Also, if a station has top-rated programs as news block lead-ins or lead-outs, directly following or before their news, ratings will thrive (Goldburg, 1989).

In general, viewers have become accustomed to movement, sound and dash on TV and they are changing channels to compensate for movement they find lacking on the screen. Attention spans have shrunk and expectations have raised. Some critics say these "raised" expectations are raised in excitement but not quality, coining the phrases "flash and trash," "fuzz and was" (police and dead people). But if there is anything predictable about what preferences exist among viewers today, it is that old habits of television watching have faded in the swirling mists of change, and viewers are switching to the more congenial channels (Graham, 1990).
It is not hard to figure out that cost-cutting is affecting the news when you see anchors talking back and forth to one another, more features and soft news but less solid investigative reporting, and less coverage of significant events (Shaw, 1988). Cutbacks usually also mean reporters will not be able to go as far out of their way to cover remote stories or get pictures (Viewpoint, 1988). Therefore if these problems exist in local news broadcasts, it does not take research to show that whenever possible they should be addressed. One editor of *Electronic Media* comments on what to do if pictures are lacking, "In the absence of appropriate, credible pictures, the proper substitute is the spoken, fully informative word. TV news does not have to be visual to be riveting. What news must be is accurate, informative and credible. And if it is not as entertaining and eye-appealing as a soap opera or sitcom, so be it" (Viewpoint, 1988). Certainly this is one view. But the terms "informative" and "visual" are inseparable in television news, and this is precisely why so many graphics are used when no pictures are available. The very reason networks have spent so much money on graphics is because news must be visual to be riveting.

The question now arises. If high-quality standards, proven to be effective, are unaffordable, what can best be done to compensate, in viewers' opinions? In the summer of 1988 KPAX and KRTV had quantitative research done that paved the way for this research. In a quantitative survey conducted by a university intern the following specific questions were asked. What are advertisers' attitudes toward salespeople and products? What are viewers' basic attitudes toward news? Results
of this study brought to light many other questions. In order to understand those questions (Appendix I), it is important to know more of the history of the two stations involved.

**A Brief History of the Two Local Network Affiliates Requesting Research.**

The following information was obtained in candid interviews with Bill Sullivan, general manager at KPAX, and Ed Coghlan, former news director and anchorman at KRTV.

In the early 80s, corporations started buying many small family-owned broadcast stations in the United States. Families who had owned stations for many years suddenly found their stations had increased in value. They had incentive to sell. When owned by families, these stations had no real guidelines to indicate how much profit a station should make. Corporations bought so-called under-performing stations and used investment and business strategies to make them turn a higher profit. They would then turn around and sell them for much higher prices.

Prior to 1983, Joe Sample and the Gary Owens holding company owned four television stations in Montana: KPAX in Missoula, KRTV in Great Falls, KXLF in Butte and KTVQ in Billings. The organizational structure of this conglomerate was designed so all these stations received the primary component of their newscast from Great Falls. Together the stations were called the Montana Television Network (*MTN*). KRTV in Great Falls was its headquarters. The stations in Great Falls, Butte and Billings broadcast their own programming and commercials. KPAX in Missoula was a satellite of the Butte station, meaning it
simply broadcast Butte's programming and commercials and had no programming or commercials of its own.

In 1983, a corporation owned by George Lilley purchased all four stations in Montana. It reorganized the MTN network by moving its headquarters from Great Falls to Billings. In late 1986 this corporation sold three of the four stations, keeping the one in Billings.

Evening Post Publishing headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina bought the three stations: KPAX in Missoula, KRTV in Great Falls and KXLF in Butte. Evening Post Publishing had been in the communications business since the late 1800's, and slowly built its media assets. All stock is owned by the original owners' family and its close associates. It reserves the first option to buy back any stock sold and stock is not traded on the open market. Evening Post Publishing created a holding company based in Spokane, Washington, called Cordillera Communications, which runs KPAX and KRTV.

Evening Post Publishing had by that time acquired three television stations in Montana, one in Idaho and one in Colorado, and five newspapers including four in the eastern portion of the United States and the only English-language newspaper in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Evening Post Publishing is not interested in selling its Montana television stations, but it is interested in turning a profit on its investments.

The first corporate investment was designed to update technology and service and all three stations began producing their own newscasts. The satellite
status of KPAX in Missoula was eliminated and it starting choosing its own
programming and running its own commercials. With this latter change came a new
look at Missoula from national advertisers. For the first time they had the
opportunity to see Missoula and Butte represented as separate markets with
separate statistics. Ratings research that followed proved Missoula was a much
better market in terms of demographic statistics than advertisers had previously
assumed and they saw Missoula's consumers as consumers they wanted to advertise
to. This change in perception caused advertisers to invest more money in Missoula.
Increased advertising dollars along with corporate investment meant KPAX was
able to provide its viewers with more newscasts and better programming such as
"The Cosby Show," "Bob Newhart," "People's Court," and "The Oprah Winfrey
Show." The general staff grew from 26 employees in 1986 to 40 employees in
1990. In the news department, the staff increased from four people who produced
part of a newscast, to 14 people who produced an entire newscast. Thus throughout
the process of changing owners a number of times, viewers of KPAX in Missoula
experienced nothing but growth in the news services and programming choices
offered by KPAX.

Viewers of KRTV in Great Falls did not experience this consistent positive
growth. Prior to 1983, KRTV had the longstanding status of being headquarters for
the MTN network. During that time KRTV's news director and MTN's main anchor
was Ed Coghlan. The network news he anchored had attracted an audience and he
had earned a good reputation in Great Falls. When KRTV changed hands in 1983
Coghlan was no longer head news director and main anchorman for MTN because the new owners moved the headquarters to Billings. Coghlan moved away and KRTV viewers suddenly found their statewide news headquarters had disappeared, and their local news was being broadcast from Billings. Later when Evening Post Publishing purchased KRTV and it began producing its own local newscasts, the damage done to the news reputation of KRTV needed to be addressed. This research was designed to help address this problem.

Due to the cohesive history of the three stations owned by Evening Post Publishing, the newscasts at the three of its stations are produced with considerable coordination and interdependence. These three news teams continued to cooperate with the Billings news team, even though it was no longer owned by the same owner. A "People Helping People" image emerged from the network's history. This theme was given direction by a focus group study conducted by the Mitchell Group in 1986. A community-oriented, good citizen image became not only a theme, but an overriding superordinate goal. Through public service announcements, advertising, programming and news coverage, these stations give exposure to as many community-service organizations as possible.
Research Questions.

As established before, the perceptions of KPAX viewers and those of KRTV viewers differed due to their diverse histories. KRTV had the problem of lower ratings in the city limits and General Manager Don Bradley wanted to see if his hunch was correct that viewers were confused about the status of the MTN network and put off by the location change of its headquarters. KRTV competes with both its longtime competitor, ABC affiliate KFBB, and with the new station in town, NBC affiliate KTGF. Bradley also wanted to know why KRTV's ratings remained high outside the city limits.

KPAX was in head-to-head competition with the only other station in Missoula, NBC affiliate KECI. For Bill Sullivan at KPAX, there was a question whether the CBS-affiliate theme of "Time To Care," and the community-oriented image were coming through to viewers. He also wanted to know if the community-oriented marketing strategy was as effective as he wanted it to be in attracting viewers, and whether viewers were getting what they wanted in news. The focus group method of research was used to answer the above questions.

A Discussion of the History, Advantages and Disadvantages of Focus Groups.

Nondirective or focus group interviewing began to have particular appeal to social scientists and psychologists in the late 1930s and 1940s. It was used in studies of employee motivation and psychotherapy. Then during World War II it was used as a means to design methods to increase military morale (Coe and MacLachlan, 1980).
Most focus group research done in the past 30 years has been used for market research, and recently it has even come to be considered a crucial step in shaping marketing strategies. Why? Focus group studies produce believable results at a reasonable cost (Coe and MacLachlan, 1980). WLS-TV, the ABC-owned station in Chicago, regularly holds focus group sessions. When looking to replace a local talk show host a few years ago, a focus group of 15 viewers selected Oprah Winfrey as its favorite candidate (Paskowski, 1989).

The focus group research method has been used previously by Montana television stations. In 1986 KRTV had a focus group study conducted by The Mitchell Group from North Hollywood, California, and KECI in Missoula has conducted at least one focus group study.

The focus group approach is an opportunity to obtain a greater amount of information and more in-depth information than might be the case with other research methods. Letting people speak builds rapport, reduces fear and generates trust. It is an attempt to go to the viewer's world and experience the situation from their vantage point (Lavine and Wackman, 1988). Focus groups are gaining popularity because they bring research down to earth. Little is left to the imagination when a group of people get together and debate about the value of a news service. Most people find it is easier to participate in a group discussion about their opinions than it is to write about them. In a group, people are more likely to talk openly about their own needs and expectations and about what they admire and deplore in words that are understandable and recognizable. The
permissive group environment of a focus group gives individuals license to divulge emotions that often do not emerge in other forms of questioning, and often emotions surge and find agreement or conflict, which means trends can be easily discerned and points of disagreement can be readily recognized.

One problem with straight question-and-answer formats is that people often want to tell how they wish to be seen as opposed to how they really are. Group dynamics help curb the influence of this tendency (Kruegar, 1988). An assumption made in the traditional survey-oriented approach is that individuals form opinions in isolation. But evidence from focus group interviews suggests that people influence each other with their comments, and, in the course of a discussion, the opinions of an individual might shift (Kruegar, 1988). This did prove to be an accurate summation of what actually happened during the study. A lady said, "Oh, I didn't realize how critical I was of these people (news anchors)." Thus the focus group interview taps into human tendencies, which means focus group research proves to be extremely accessible and irrefutably persuasive.

Herein lies a focus group's major strength and weakness. The major shortcoming of focus group research is hidden in the fact that while the information proves to be accessible and persuasive, it may then seem all-pervasive, when in reality it may represent a slender amount of evidence. Today the focus group is probably the main bone of contention in the qualitative and quantitative camps in market research. Critics say this type of research is not broad-based, incremental, quantifiable, free from bias and misrepresentation, or exactly replicable. Still, the
use of demographic breakdowns, numerical contingencies and a nameless, faceless target market does not always suffice either. There is a lack of appeal in the tedious numbers, grids and deviance variables that come of quantitative research. This is more than made up for in the more human focus group approach.
CHAPTER 2

Methods

Conducting a focus group study involves three major steps: recruiting people, facilitating sessions, and analyzing results. This chapter will delineate the procedures used to recruit participants and facilitate discussions.

Sampling.

Six focus group sessions were conducted, three in Missoula and three in Great Falls. About 12 randomly recruited viewers over the age of 20 participated in each focus group session. Only people over the age of 20 were eligible to participate in the study because very few people under the age of 20 watch the news according to ratings statistics.

To randomly recruit a representative cross section of the news-watching population from Missoula and Cascade Counties, 1980 Census figures on age and household income were used (Appendices A and B).

The desired populations were broken into three categories each for age and income, with approximately one-third of each population per category. For example in Missoula County the three age categories for females were ages 20-29, 30-46 and 47 and over (Appendices A and C), and for males the three categories were
ages 20-29, 30-44 and 45 and over. A similar breakdown was derived for Cascade County (Appendices A and D).

Each population was also divided into three approximately equal income categories (Appendix B). The income categories for people aged 20 and over in Missoula County were: $0 - $11,200, $11,300 - $22,000 and over $22,100 (Appendix C). A similar breakdown was derived for Cascade County (Appendix D).

Two cell charts were drawn up for each city, one for females and one for males. Each chart had nine cells, each cell representing a specific age group and income level. These charts were used to recruit the appropriate cross section of people from each County. The Southgate Mall meeting room and the Great Falls Gas Co. meeting room were reserved for three evenings each, and the scheduled times for the sessions were arranged.

The first six people recruited in Missoula were asked to participate in a practice focus group session, so the methods could be tested and corrections could be made. This session was tape recorded and the focus group facilitator was critiqued by those requesting the research.

Face-to-face recruiting was used. My assistant, Jim Fluri, and I placed ourselves in strategic public places. When people walked by we asked: "Do you watch the local news?" This question almost never failed to get them interested. We explained we were doing a study for a Master's thesis, and that the study was about the local news. We told them we were looking to find a cross section of
people from the area, and we started qualifying them by showing them the cell chart and getting them interested in finding out where they fit on the chart. We would then explain that anyone who fit an opening on our chart would receive $25 if they agreed to participate in a two-hour discussion of their views about local news. A follow-up letter was sent to all those who had agreed to participate (Appendices E and F).

Procedures.

The focus group sessions had three parts, the written questionnaires (Appendices G and H), the evaluation of anchors based on videotaped clips of actual newscasts, and discussions based on a set of oral questions (Appendix I). Concerns addressed in the written questionnaires in Missoula were how KPAX stood in comparison to KECI with regard to political bias and sports coverage; whether the "Time to Care" theme and the community-oriented image of KPAX were coming across, and whether people liked having a separate weather person. The same basic written questionnaire and oral questions were used in Great Falls, with some additions to the oral questions concerning perceptions about the MTN network and the history of what happened when KRTV changed hands in 1986.

When participants arrived they filled out written questionnaires and gave written ratings of news anchors according to clips shown on videotape. They then participated in a discussion based on oral questions. All sessions were taped and transcribed. The transcriptions were then highlighted, physically cut up and categorized according to theme, put into logical order and summarized.
CHAPTER 3

Results

In this chapter, results are divided into sections according to subject matter. Written results are categorized with discussion results on the same subject matter.

The questionnaire asked people to rank the reasons they watch local news based on a list of elements contained in local newscasts. Answers to this question in Missoula and Great Falls were similar enough to be combined. This chapter is organized according to the following priorities for why people tune in to local news:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for tuning in</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local coverage</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide coverage</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and international news</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted stories</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News from the capital</td>
<td>6.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular features</td>
<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth reports</td>
<td>7.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports coverage</td>
<td>7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News series</td>
<td>9.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table of Priorities for Why People Tune in to Local News
The subject matter in the first section of this chapter is presented according to the above priorities. The second section includes information about community orientation, the midday news, coverage of minorities, and the stations' promotional themes.

Local News in Missoula.

Written statistical results about local news in the Missoula area were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENT WATCHING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KPAX 65%
KECI 35%

Overall local news coverage was rated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KPAX 2.63
KECI 3.11

Written comments about how stations could improve news coverage were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number of times response repeated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More local community news</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More follow-up</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better reporting using unusual angles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How stations could improve news coverage (continued):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number of times response repeated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-depth coverage of national news that affects the area</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard news rather than human interest reports</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More reports on high school and college student activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report more on service organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have better anchors who do not just appear to be reading copy and who are more familiar with Montana</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quit the chit-chat between anchors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve sound, lighting and graphics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen sports coverage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do more personal positive stories about individuals or groups that have done something to improve the city of Missoula and its inhabitants</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By far the most frequent request concerning local news was for more positive stories. As one participant put it, he would like to see more of "the local boy or girl does good; not just stories off the police blotter." Several participants wanted to see more human interest stories, but one participant wrote that he did not want shallow and uninteresting stories where "reporters ask people off-the-wall questions that the interviewees are uncomfortable answering." Numerous participants would like to see more digging for information and more integration of stories, that is, more "hardcore broadcast journalist reporters." The only Native American participant wanted to see this with regard to minorities. One participant
summed it up: "They don't have journalists go out and seek these stories. They have people they can set in front of the camera, give the copy to, and they read it. They read AP (Associated Press) wires, they read whatever. They ought to operate their local news more like national news, where there's just one anchor who leads into a story, and then they flip it over to somebody who's gone out into the field with the camera and done the work on each story -- whatever it is, be it hard news, elections, 4-H things, whatever. And I think that's the problem. We're seeing people just reading the news, and I can do that myself. The question is, are these journalists or just T.V. personalities?"

Focus group discussion results indicated station preference was based on time slot first, while lead-in programming, reception and anchor preference played secondary roles. There was sentiment among many that both stations' anchors could cut out the chit-chat, while some said they enjoyed the light-hearted effect that this chit-chat had. Those who watched KECI thought KECI had more local news and those who watched KPAX thought KPAX had more local news. One person mentioned the forest service hearings in Seeley Lake or Condon, which were covered by KECI and not by KPAX. Two people liked it when KECI broadcast its news from small towns around the area for a week at a time. One person suggested having Tobby Hatley do the news live from Flathead Lake on a sailboat.

One participant pointed out that court coverage was repetitive because similar pictures were shown over and over. Others said information reported was often confusing. Two lawyer participants said reporters usually have access to a
very small amount of information and they portray the image that they are giving an accurate representation of what is really going on when in fact they have a sketchy outsider's view.

**Written results indicated 25% of the participants believed stations were biased.**

Of those 25%:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Type of Bias</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KECI</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KECI</td>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KECI</td>
<td>Political coverage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Both said it was too liberal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPAX</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPAX</td>
<td>Sports coverage</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPAX</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Group discussion indicated bias shows up mainly through omission of a full spectrum of angles on a story, lack of stories about things voters would be asked to vote on, and a lack of depth in what was covered, "a failure to inform us." To avoid this bias through omission, one person suggested they pare down the news to three or five major stories, and cover one topic in-depth, such as the mayoral candidates: "Where are they getting their money? How much money are they spending? What are they saying about one another? What are other people saying
about that candidate? Who's backing this candidate? What other issues are involved?"

Discussion indicated political bias comes through if all the candidates are not mentioned with the same frequency, and three people agreed that name recognition plays an important part in their perceptions of candidates. One person applauded both stations for attempting to be fair during political campaigns compared to the newspapers. KPAX was commended by one for trying to be informative about political candidates.

Other comments about local news were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Number of times response repeated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More news about the University of Montana</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The length of the newscast could be extended to an hour to serve more of the community's news needs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local News in Great Falls.

Written statistical results about local news in Great Falls were as follows:

| PERCENT WATCHING |
|------------------|------------------|
| 0    10  20  30  40  50  60  70  80  90  100 |
| KRTV 11%     |
| KTGF 55%     |
| KFBB 34%     |
Overall local news coverage was rated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KRTV X
KTGF X
KFBB X

A written request for suggestions on how to improve local news in general brought suggestions that more local, positive news ought to be covered using better follow-up, more live interviews and more detail. Written comments also indicated that the professionalism of the news could be improved by having anchors use less chit-chat, less overkill of points and better reading skills.

Group discussions indicated several different Great Falls participants would like to see all the stations do more coverage of local events and less of crime and politics. One person would like to see the solutions instead of the problems: "what good people can and do do, rather than just what they mess up on."
Written results indicated 22% of the participants believed stations were biased. Of those 22%:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Type of Bias</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KTGF</td>
<td>Political coverage</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(In favor of Republicans)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFBB</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFBB</td>
<td>News</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFBB</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRTV</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRTV</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One person thought KTGF's news coverage was biased in favor of the Republicans because the owner once ran for public office on the Republican ticket. Two others agreed. One thought KTGF was the station with the best budget. KTGF was perceived by many as being the most "on the spot" local news station. This perception was substantiated by comments that their microwave truck was seen frequently around town, they broadcast live from news scenes like the Yellowstone fire, and they did the weather live at places like the local art fair. KTGF was also perceived as covering more news in the immediate surrounding area, such as in Fort Benton, Cascade, Belt and Stockett. Several pointed out that KTGF did a community calendar, which no one noticed on the other channels.
KFBB.

For some, KFBB was seen as presenting more interesting news because it had more in-depth coverage. KFBB was perceived as being serious. One person commented that Dick Pompa, the main anchor, should "lighten up."

KRTV.

KRTV "used to be the most professional station," said one participant. There was agreement from three participants that KRTV "just doesn't seem to have much life." Of those, one commented: "It's kind of talking heads. It's just really boring watching that station." Many thought KRTV lost credibility when it changed hands and started broadcasting news out of Billings. One person resented getting Billings weather on maps she could not read. "I don't know if I'd watch it even now, because of the resentment of having it fed here from Billings and Missoula and everyplace but," said another participant.

In general, people were confused about whether or not KRTV was being broadcast from Great Falls. They said they often heard news about Billings, Helena and Bozeman, "everywhere but Great Falls." While some knew the news was being broadcast from Great Falls five days a week, a number of participants debated whether KRTV's news was still broadcast from "somewhere else" on the weekends. One woman was correct in saying it was broadcast from Missoula on the weekends.

Several people remembered the days when Ed Coghlan was news director and anchor. KRTV "used to have a lot of public input," it "used to have Today in
Montana, everything local: farm, agriculture reports." Now, "they're trying to be like a big city station," and "they seem more interested in money gains, advertising," said one participant. "They've got to impress the guy that's their boss in Billings or in Salt Lake. So they impress him by giving him what he wants to see, not what the locals want to see," said another. One person recommended KRTV broadcast their news at a different time than the other stations do, to attract new viewers. Ron Shultz, the weatherman, caused one person to refuse to tune in.

There was confusion about what the MTN network was. Some said it had split up, but in general most knew that these call letters represented an alliance between KRTV and stations in other cities.

One person favored KRTV over the other stations in spite of the fact that Dick Pompa from KFBB was his neighbor. He said this was because he felt KRTV had better statewide coverage and concise, thorough coverage of whatever else he wanted to know about. He said if he wanted to know about something that was going on, he could turn on KRTV and be sure to hear about it within the next ten minutes.

Time Slots for Local News.

Some watched the early evening news at 5:00 or 5:30 and some watched the news at 10:00. There was little complaint about these time slots, although a few agreed they would like some stations to air their local news at different times so they could tune in to the one that is the most convenient for them. There was some sentiment among women that 5:00 was too early and 10:00 was too late for news.
One said she was making dinner and dealing with the kids at 5, and exhausted by 10. Other women concurred with this, and many women said they listened to the news in the living room while they made dinner in the kitchen. One woman mentioned wanting more news at 5 or 5:30 on Sundays, and another mentioned wanting to see more recipe shows. A third wanted to see more information services for parents, such as information about unsafe toys or medical exams for school children.

**Statewide News Coverage in Missoula.**

Participants generally agreed they would like more statewide news. Many of them said they wanted to hear about what is going on in the eastern part of the state. Several agreed that because agriculture is a big part of the economy in Montana, they would like to hear more about agriculture, ranchers, farmers, and weather in eastern Montana. One person said he missed the statewide news he got when KPAX was broadcast from Billings. When asked, participants said no station stood out with regard to statewide coverage.

**Statewide News Coverage in Great Falls.**

Participants did not notice much statewide coverage, except when significant events happened like the fires or the train wreck in Whitefish.

**National and International News Coverage.**

Participants expressed mixed sentiment about how much national and international news the local stations should air. Some wanted more, others wanted less. Of the Great Falls participants, only one got all his national news from the
local news broadcast.

**Weather Reports in Missoula.**

Written results indicated 63% of participants preferred to have a special weather person. During discussions, several said they enjoyed Jim Harmon's weather because he had viewers call in temperatures from small towns in the surrounding area, and he often mentioned the name of the person who called in the report. Many agreed it is distracting when the weather person stands in front of the map or points to the wrong place on the map. Many said they liked a separate weather person, skilled at presenting the weather and educated about what he or she was saying. Four different people mentioned they would like to be educated as well as informed about the weather. One suggested it would be interesting to hear about how the weather affects the area economically, and what the weather terms mean. Another suggested an old farmer predict the weather.

**Weather Reports in Great Falls.**

Written results indicated 95% of participants liked having a separate weather person. Several participants agreed that because agriculture is an important part of the Great Falls economy, they would like to see the weather person inform them about both the weather and its impact on the farmers. One person said he would like to see someone from Montana do the weather, and it was real obvious when a weather person was not from Montana. Three people agreed that they would like to be educated as well as informed about the weather.
**Promoted Stories.**

A few participants said promoted stories or "news teasers" sometimes enticed them into watching the news. One said these worked best when they were promoting unusual but pertinent hard news stories that most likely would not be covered by everyone else in town. Four people agreed that KPAX did a better job than KECI in teasing people into watching the news. Also, sports teasers did not seem to entice anyone into watching unless they were about something really special like coverage of a Little Grizzlies game.

**News from the Capital.**

There were very few comments about news from the capital, other than agreement with the observation that there was little coverage. Some said they would like to see more of this type of coverage, and a few agreed that Ian Marquand did a good job covering the legislature. Two agreed that Tobby Hatley also did a good job covering the legislature.

**Regular Features.**

Several participants in Great Falls mentioned they enjoyed the feature KTGF ran for the Centennial in which people 89 years old or older were interviewed. Other than that, not much attention was paid to regular features.

**In-depth Reports.**

Of all the "specialty" news items, in-depth reports seemed to have been the favorite. One woman mentioned she liked the one on abortion that was done in Great Falls. In general the complaint was that there were not enough in-depth
Sports Coverage in Missoula.

Some applauded local television sports coverage as being better than the Missoulian's coverage, because there was better coverage of certain sports figures. A significant number agreed the television coverage still did not go much beyond the "big stuff like the university stuff." The phrase, "all we see is football and basketball" was repeated over and over. Two people said sports coverage was too predictable. Numerous people mentioned they would like a greater variety of more obscure sports covered, such as racquetball, hockey, bowling, Little Grizzlies, sailing on Flathead Lake, tennis, track, children's baseball and softball, trapshooting, rock climbing, the downtown bike race, soccer, fly fishing and volleyball. One woman also mentioned she would like to see more digging to get coverage of unusual sports enthusiasts who make their mark somehow, such as the young female world class judo champions in the Bitterroot. Another man agreed, saying he would have liked coverage of the top fencers in the country from Plains and Thompson Falls. He also mentioned he wanted to see feature stories about community members involved in sports, for example the story behind a dedicated volunteer coach. One woman suggested sports coverage be educational as well as informative. She said she would like to see reporters find local sports experts to acquaint people with what their sport is all about.

Coverage of the "big stuff" was good across the board on both KECI and KPAX, according to the qualitative results, but KECI was ahead according to the
quantitative results, with 61% saying they believed KECI gave the "most complete sports coverage." KPAX excelled in being "up-to-date," according to the quantitative results, while KECI excelled in "credibility." Sports reporters themselves were more directly associated with sports coverage than anchors were with news coverage, maybe because they did both the reporting and the anchoring of sports coverage. Because of this, preferences for the sportscasters themselves seemed to play a bigger role in people's assessments of sports coverage. Some complained about Rory Hentz reading different scores than the ones that appeared on the screen, as opposed to Larry Frost who many thought excelled in his ability to read scores quickly and accurately. Comments on the written results said Larry is "involved," and he "does a real good job." Written comments also said reporters on KECI have "been in the area longer and therefore are more familiar," and that KECI has more local coverage. Written comments said Dave Tester "has become more involved in the community" and "KPAX has more interviews with sports personalities." In the discussions three people said Dave Tester was very involved. Both Dave and Larry were perceived as "hokey" at times, and this went over well with some and not others. Four people mentioned they liked Dave Tester's special segments on golf. Larry Frost's commercials and special segments were laughed about during one discussion. Afterward it became evident some were laughing with approval and others with disapproval. One person said she did not like Dave Tester and five people said they did not like Larry Frost.

Coverage of sports from small towns around the area was good according to
a few, and two wanted to see more of this type of coverage. One woman said she
wanted to see coverage of Spokane sports teams, and another said she would like
to see some coverage of sports in Seeley Lake and Frenchtown. Several
participants said rather than hearing more about small town sports, they would like
to hear more about the small or more infrequently covered sports teams in
Missoula such as Little Grizzlies. The sports coverage enthusiasts generally
recognized and enjoyed "Sportsweek" on KECI. Two people could recall the
extended sports coverage on Fridays by KPAX, and both liked it.

Sports Coverage in Great Falls.

In Great Falls, those who followed sports coverage really liked it when
KTGF broadcast the Dodgers games live. One man from Great Falls mentioned he
wanted to see coverage of the Denver Broncos, and another wanted to see coverage
of the Seattle Seahawks. Participants in both Missoula and Great Falls agreed "you
just have to take what you get" because this is a small town. Some felt sports
coverage in general was just "terrible, awful." One person summed it up: "Take
some risks. And do something different."

Multi-part Series.

Although multi-part series did work to pull some people in so they would
watch the news all week, in general the participants did not prefer them and one
participant resented them. Several said they did not have regular enough schedules
to catch every segment, and one woman said she resented stations who ran series
because each segment always told what had been covered before, and therefore she
knew exactly what she had missed. She said what she missed stuck in her mind more than what she saw. One man said he did not like the way each segment summed up the last segment and previewed the next one, so by the last segment he thought he was getting very little new news. Participants generally agreed stations should take more time the first day to give the entire story, right then and there while people were interested and participating. Also, people said the reports were not in-depth enough. "It's always a little bit here and a little bit there. It's never enough," said one man.

**Community Orientation.**

Participants said a community-oriented image comes across when stations broadcast special features, spots about local people who have done something to contribute to the community, a community calendar, the Jerry Lewis telethon, and public affairs on the midday news. One man thought the attempt to portray this image was just a way to beat out the other station or "keep up with the Joneses." Some examples of suggestions for ways the news could serve the community were, keeping people informed about how much it costs to get physicals for their children before school starts, information about air conditioner maintenance tricks during the summer and auto care tips during the winter, recipes, and toys on the market that are harmful to children. One woman mentioned these types of information services would go well on the noon news. Complaints about the community calendar were that it ran at funny times and the events were flashed too quickly.

Participants expressed a general sentiment saying there were not enough
spots about local people. There was good recognition of "For Kids' Sake," while "Time to Care" messages were thought to be too repetitive and unclear as to what the messages were supposed to be promoting. Some were unsure whether these were ads for sponsors or public service announcements for the sake of the public only. This uncertainty about public service announcements made three people think the public service announcements were just a tricky way to advertise, and one woman said this made her think the station was insincere.

Several people said they liked the spots on the Humane Society. Suggestions for spots about community members included covering volunteer fire department retirees, foster grandparents, volunteers at daycares, schools, and Head Start, volunteers at the university's reading service for the blind, and volunteers at the Poverello center, speech meets, theaters, and hospitals.

Three people did not like Vi Thompson, whereas Norma Ashby, former host of Today in Montana, broadcast statewide from Great Falls at noon, was popular with a number of people. Jim Harmon's efforts for Big Brothers and Sisters impressed some, but two people agreed that they thought his contribution to that organization was shallow and for show.

A number of participants said they would enjoy seeing community events promoted as a service to the public. Some events mentioned were the luncheon bands at Caras Park and university events such as lectures, concerts, book fairs and art fairs.
Missoula written responses about which station is more involved in and supportive of the community were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORE SUPPORTIVE OF AND INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPAX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KECI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the discussions, no comments were made about why one station or the other was more community oriented, but two written comments said KPAX had more community-minded news and more live coverage. Written comments said KECI came off as being "more down-home," even though "Jim Harmon comes off aloof and cold," and that KECI has "better coverage." One person also mentioned that KECI was "on the air longer and therefore probably more aware of community needs."

Great Falls written responses to a question about which station is more involved in and supportive of the community were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORE SUPPORTIVE OF AND INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KTGF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFBB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRTV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Midday News.

In the "men's only" focus group session in Great Falls, none of the men watched the midday news, although some said back in the days when "Norma Ashby did the Today show," they did watch the midday news. One woman said Norma Ashby "was professional, she had a lot on the ball, she had a lot of great topics." "She got really involved in things," and it was "apparent that she had lived here all her life," said another. "She just got everybody, the people, on her station there, and she got interesting topics.

The news portion of the midday news was for some a complete repeat of the night before, whereas others believed it was a way for people who worked in the evenings to get some local news. No participants used the midday news as their only source of news, however, and during the practice session in Missoula one participant complained there was not enough local news on the midday news. One person expressed sentiment that it is a good idea to include weather in the midday news, and another said "KPAX does a great job on their noon news statewide coverage. I think that's enough (statewide coverage)." A third person said the reporting out of Helena during the legislature was good, "We'll hear what our Senators are saying and our Congressmen. That's fine. Give it to us in one shot and let it be done. We're going to get it in the newspaper the next day anyway."

Minority Coverage.

"They don't have any," said the only Native American participant in the study, "You might see the tinsel, but you never see the hard luck or anything like
that. Some paraphrased ideas for coverage of news about minorities were as follows. What do Native Americans in Missoula feel about national news that affects them? What do the Asians do during the Christmas season since they do not practice Christianity? What are the old people up to? Just how "pathetic" are the conditions on our reservations, right here in Montana? What accomplishments have those in wheelchairs made this year? What are folks protesting about, in-depth?

One participant said, "All they cover are the parades and the protests. They never cover what else is going on. They never talk to the people, the ones who are doing the background organizing, or who are working in the community. All they are interested in are the ones that are out on the street."

A man in a wheelchair commented, "When people see us, they turn their heads. I guess the news doesn't think we're real people, but we have stories like anybody else."

An elderly man said, "We see these old people sitting around, and some of them have got good educations, but hey, nobody wants them because they're too old."

"They could go to the university and learn how to talk to minority people. It seems there's a stigma there where they don't know how to approach minority people," said the Native American participant. He pointed out that 2,300 Native Americans live in Missoula alone.

**The Way the Stations Promote Themselves.**

"I like the way KPAX says they're The News Station. I think that's real
good," said one participant. On the other hand, another said, "KPAX promotes itself a lot, but I think it's terrible. I don't like it. Like Julie Shepard-Lovell, I like her as a newscaster, but when she first came to town and they advertised her I got really sick of seeing that ad about her and whatever they were trying to make a big deal of that day." If it is necessary to launch a new personality the secret is "don't," states Bob Casazza, vice president for marketing at Washington's WJLA-TV. "Let the audience pass judgment for itself. Don't promise what an anchor is going to do," said Bill Brown, president of Dallas-based Media & Marketing, and never bring up where an anchor comes from, unless the anchor is returning home (Mankin, 1988).

Missoula written responses to a question about which station does the best job promoting itself were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does a the best job promoting itself</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KPAX</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>61%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KECI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>39%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Great Falls written responses to a question about which station does the best job promoting itself were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KTGF</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KFBB</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRTV</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

Discussion.

Overall Analysis of Results.

Did assertions made in the hypothesis prove true? Are viewers taking a less sympathetic view of local television news due to more choices in television? Do they expect more quality in local news broadcasts than has historically been the case? Would simple marketing strategies for news would be effective if quality news acted as a powerful draw for audiences? This chapter will address these assertions made in the initial hypothesis.

Participants were not demanding better local news coverage, but their beliefs had changed about what a local station can and should offer. The "sympathetic view" of local news had not disappeared entirely, as evidenced by statements like, "They probably don't have the budget," and, "You just have to take what you get." But the frequency of these statements was minimal in comparison to the number of statements expressing the need for better local news coverage.

"Sports coverage is terrible, awful."

"That station just doesn't seem to have much life."

"We're seeing people just reading the news, and I can do that myself."
"While I realize that this community may not have the resources to support a high quality, high-tech news station, I feel that Missoula's local news stations fall way behind those of other states, i.e., Spokane."

According to written results, local and statewide coverage ranked as the first reasons people tune in to local news. Viewers would like to see good broadcast journalism that accurately reflects the local region. In the first discussion one retired doctor summed it up, "I think the reason they don't have more local news is that they would have to hire more reporters to go out and get the stories. They don't have the reporters to get the stories, and they're cheating us."

A lady responded, "Well, they probably don't have the budget."

The retired doctor continued, "Well, they probably could get more people watching it if they'd have more local news. Then they could have more money because they'd have more advertising.... I want to know what's going on in this town, and they're not doing that. They're failing in telling us what's going on in this town. I'd like to see more local news, and Montana and regional, but get these stations off the national. I think both stations do about the same thing, and they're good competition for each other because they both do about the same thing. The only thing is, they're not doing enough. I think if one of the stations would come out with a lot of local news, then everybody would want to watch that one. If they want to compete, they should come out with local news, and they will run the other station out of business."

This theme repeated itself. A dentist in one session reiterated this point,
using the words of Erma Bombeck, "I'm really bored with reality, I live it every day and see it replayed every night on the six o'clock news. Call me crazy, but wouldn't it be nice if we saw a performer interviewed on television because he made great music, not because he just got out of the Betty Ford Clinic? How I hunger for the world with some style, some elegance, some sense of decorum and courtesy. Wouldn't it be wonderful to see a book of verses on the best-seller list that didn't have the word "satanic" in it, or a concert out of doors where the police didn't outnumber the audience? Every Sunday I drag in front of the TV in my bathrobe and quickly turn to the last few minutes of Charles Kuralt's Sunday morning show. All voices are silent as I listen to the rustling winds through the Everglades, birds patrolling the beach in North Carolina, or the symphony of a stream in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. For August, that's as close to reality as I want to get.' That's what I'd like to see more of on television," he said.

"It's Missoula, it's upbeat, these are our people, our kids, what they're doing. These can all be very interesting. I realize we like to see people with their heads chopped off, but if you build it right, positive can be so much stronger," said another participant.

"The local news, if they really told me what was happening locally, I would pay more attention," said one man. One Native American participant spoke about viewing habits of his Native Americans friends, "They watch the cable more than they watch what's going on here, because at least they find out what's going on."

"I would like to see Missoula news be local news," said one participant.
"The national news, we can get when it comes over the network. We don't have to have a repeat. You don't have to have cable to get a half-hour of national news."

"Maybe they could leave off some of the national news, and give us that that's affecting us," said another, "and there's periods when their statewide coverage could be better, at the expense of some of the national news."

"This is the main gripe," said one man to summarize the discussion he was involved in, "they're just not covering local issues." This research indicates a select audience will watch local news coverage regardless of its quality or breadth. But it also shows resoundingly that to earn high ratings stations must at the very least offer thorough coverage of both the negative and positive aspects of what is happening locally using high journalism standards in reporting done by people who are well-acquainted with the community.

These viewers want more positive news coverage. The question arises, what motivated newspapers and television stations to get so heavily into coverage of bad news, when we know that viewers particularly like news that is exciting, dramatic and filled with human interest appeals, including subjects such as health, consumerism, crime, taxes, politics, weather, sex, pets, children, sports and gossip? Consider the history of the press. Until the 1830's, American newspapers were written almost exclusively for well-to-do readers. They were largely devoted to politics or commercial advertising, both of which were primarily of interest to the propertied classes. Early papers were too expensive for ordinary citizens to afford. They were sold by subscription, and a year's subscription to a big-city daily would
cost the average laborer a full week's wages. As a result, they tended to reflect and reinforce the views of the wealthier elements of American society (Kronenwetter, 1987).

In 1833 newspapers started being sold individually for a penny a paper. Almost everyone could afford to read a newspaper and for the first time America had a truly popular press. The lower price meant more copies had to be sold in order to make a paper profitable and a new emphasis was placed on news reporting. In the days when papers had only come out every week or two, current news had not been considered of great importance. But with the daily papers, the first paper to appear with the news of an important event would sell more copies that day. The result was a fierce competition to get the news, and get it first. One side effect of the competition for news was the introduction of crime reports.

Crime, particularly petty crime, had not been considered either important enough or interesting enough to be printed in the newspapers before. After all, in the view of the prosperous readers of the early papers, the lower classes were always robbing, assaulting and murdering each other. Upper-class readers could hardly be expected to interest themselves in the sordid details of such behavior. To them, crime was an unpleasant fact, but not a particularly significant one. The New York Sun began running brief daily reports about such previously unreported events as robberies, sexual assaults, wife beatings, arrests for public drunkenness, prostitution and the like. Readers loved them. Before long, many other papers followed and crime news became a regular staple of the American press.
In the mad rush to gain readership, accuracy often counted for little. Stories were routinely embellished out of proportion. James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* expressed it best, saying to a young reporter, "Remember, son, many a good story had been ruined by over-verification." Hoaxes were devised by some papers which fooled people from all classes of society, even many scientists. When one famous hoax was revealed, the paper instigating it argued in print that the false stories actually were a kind of public service, "diverting the public mind" from such serious issues as the mounting controversy over slavery. But what was most interesting is that the public seemed more amused than angry about the deception. What all this means is that people had come to look to the popular press for more than news. They had come to look to it for entertainment (Kronenwetter, 1987).

Perhaps local broadcast news is going through many similar stages of evolvement as early newspapers went through as they tried to determine what best sold papers. Participants in this study complained of too much police blotter news, which is exactly the type of news strategy employed by early daily newspapers. According to these viewers a serious look at the lighter side of life is missing from local coverage and they are not speaking of chit-chat between anchors or contrived human interest appeals, but rather real stories that serve to entertain and uplift viewers. "They're not promoting the local and regional people. There's a lot of people in Missoula that are doing a lot of worthy things and are making great marks and we're not being told on the news stations. When somebody does a
robbery or something like that, they cover that, but when somebody does something good, we need to know about that. Accentuate more on the positive.

This is where both of the stations fall far short. They should get the stories of the people who are doing things for the community, also the organizations that are doing things.”

**Answers to Questions Asked by Station Managers.**

Concerns addressed for KPAX and KRTV were as follows. Minor issues at both stations were whether any station was seen as biased, who had the best sports coverage, what aspects of local news broadcasts were most important to viewers, and whether viewers preferred a separate weather person. General Manager Don Bradley of KRTV wanted to know why ratings within Great Falls city limits had gone down while ratings outside the city stayed high, and whether changes in the status of the Montana Television Network (*MTN*) had affected viewing habits of Great Falls viewers. General Manager Bill Sullivan of KPAX wanted to know whether the station's community-oriented image and "Time to Care" themes were effective and had the desired impact, and whether viewers were getting what they wanted in news.

**Minor Concerns at Both Stations.**

A minor concern at both station was whether viewers preferred having a weather person or whether having the anchorperson do the weather was adequate. Participants preferred a separate weather person, saying they generally knew more about the weather. If viewers were not accustomed to having a separate weather
person, there was not as clear a preference.

Participants who followed sports coverage wanted more coverage of less popular sports and sports figures, but seemed satisfied that current coverage was of good quality, especially when presented professionally and accurately. Perceptions of sports announcers intimately affected perceptions of sports coverage, and those who did not follow sports would be more interested in the sports segment of local news if more education about various aspects of the sports world was included. Too much orientation to mainline sports was a complaint. This was more common in Missoula than in Great Falls.

**Specific Concerns in Great Falls.**

The two specific concerns at KRTV in Great Falls were whether the status of the MTN network was still confusing viewers, and why ratings outside the city limits stayed high while those inside city limits fell. Research findings showed the status of the MTN network was confusing viewers, and that because viewers outside city limits had different needs than those in Great Falls proper, KRTV's news coverage was viewed more positively by them. More historical background about KRTV will shed light on the particulars of these findings.

Great Falls supports three television stations, KRTV, the CBS affiliate, KFBB, the ABC affiliate, and KTGF, the new NBC affiliate. Before KTGF came on the scene as the NBC affiliate, KFBB broadcast both ABC and NBC programming, whereas KRTV has broadcast strictly CBS programming throughout its history.
Montana broadcasting blossomed comparatively quickly, and perhaps the heyday for KRTV was when KRTV was headquarters of the Montana Television Network (MTN), a network of CBS affiliates and satellite stations in Great Falls, Billings, Butte and Missoula. From the early sixties until 1983, Joe Sample and the Gary Owens holding company owned all four Montana television stations. All four broadcast the "Montana Television Network News" out of KRTV in Great Falls. Throughout this zenith of KRTV's history, two broadcasters made their mark, Ed Coghlan and Norma Ashby. They both attracted an audience and earned reputations in the community. Coghlan was the news director and nightly news anchor for MTN, and Ashby was co-host of Today in Montana, a high profile public affairs noon-hour talk show covering events, people and issues of statewide interest. Although both Coghlan and Ashby were seen every weekday throughout Montana, their names were mentioned only at Great Falls focus group discussions.

In 1983, a corporation owned by George Lilley purchased Montana's four CBS affiliates and moved MTN's headquarters from Great Falls to Billings. Ed Coghlan's position as news director and anchorman for the MTN newscast out of Great Falls no longer existed, so to maintain an upward mobility in his career he took a position in Los Angeles. How did this affect KRTV's viewers, those accustomed to a statewide newscast originating in their home town with a familiar and trusted anchorman who had become a fixture in their community? According to participants, the loss of Coghlan and the sudden switch to news originating from Billings confused and disgruntled viewers.
Three years later, in 1986, Evening Post Publishing bought KRTV in Great Falls, KXLF in Butte and KPAX in Missoula; all the MTN stations but its headquarters in Billings. The MTN network came to an end. All Montana stations owned by Evening Post Publishing were upgraded with new equipment and more news staff to support individual local newscasts. At the time this study was done, KRTV was still networking with Missoula by broadcasting Missoula's weekend newscast with anchorwoman Julie Shepard-Lovell. That newscast accommodated a small segment of local news originating from Great Falls. This was done with no association to the MTN news concept, which had already seen its demise.

Results confirmed KRTV General Manager Don Bradley's hunch that people were confused about the status of the MTN network. Following are the statements made about the status of MTN and KRTV news on channel 3. "A lot of times they'll talk more about what's happened in Billings rather than what happened in Great Falls. Well, the people in Great Falls don't care what happens in Billings."

"I get the impression channel 3 is broadcast from Billings, maybe it's not."

"Well, it used to be, and that's why the ratings went way down. But now they've started saying, 'Now we're broadcasting from Great Falls.' But they only do it five times a week. On weekends it's always from Billings."

"On the weather, as a rule, that comes from Billings. There for a while, all the news came from Billings. It used to be here."

"That Julie Shepard..."

"She's from Missoula, isn't she? Well, here lately, on channel 3 it's been
coming in from Missoula."

"They've got that MTN in there everywhere but here. And I say, when I sit
down to watch the local news, I sit down to watch the local news. . . ."

". . . 3 and 5 aren't locally owned. Their interests aren't here. 16 is locally
owned and they've got to impress the locals, they don't have to impress the
network. They're more apt to give you what you want to know here. The rest don't
care. They've got to impress the guy that's their boss in Billings or in Salt Lake so
they impress him by giving him what he wants to see, not what the locals want to
see."

"I won't watch 3. . . . I quit watching it when it started coming out of
Billings, when Ed Coghlan left, who ran the news department and was also an
anchorperson."

"It used to be the most professional station."

"It lost credibility when it came out of Billings."

"Does 3 come out of Billings? My mother says they come out of Missoula,
but that might just be on weekends."

"I watched it all the time when Ed Coghlan was here, he was professional."

"I can remember years ago 3 was the top station in the whole country
probably. And they have slipped that much."

"A change in management."

"They changed owners, what, 2 or 3 times?"

Another facet of change that was implemented during the period between
1983 and 1986 when KRTV changed hands two times had to do with *Today in Montana*, founded and co-hosted by Norma Ashby with Dan Snyder. Norma Ashby spoke about her 26 years with *Today in Montana* in an interview. It began on February 19, 1962, during the "hey day" of live television. Ashby had a picture album with John F. Kennedy, Arnold Schwarzenagger in his early days, and other famous figures who had appeared as guests on her show. It was broadcast during the early morning hours from its inception in 1962 until 1983 when the station changed hands, at which point it was switched to a noon-hour time slot. "That was a real blow to me when they changed the time, a real shock after twenty-two years." After the second change in ownership in 1986, Ashby retired and *Today in Montana* lived on as only a semblance of what it had once been.

*Today in Montana* was a fast-paced program with news, weather, interviews, exercise, news, features and music. It went on the road to originate from different small Montana towns. Each time it was broadcast from a small town the show would be a salute to the noteworthy people in that town. "I didn't want any guest to get into a monologue. That's too boring. . . . We made ourselves available to the community. We saw our role as servants to the community. . . . This shows you how the medium can be used in a fun and effective way."

Participants in this study seemed to miss their own community and neighboring communities being highlighted and appreciated in this way. "Channel 3, I think, if I remember correctly, used to really have a lot of public input. I think channel 3 was a lot like what 16 is now."
"Ya. Years ago, channel 3 used to have *Today in Montana*, everything local, farm, agriculture reports. **Everything local, very important to people.** That thing started at 6:00 in the morning and go until 8:00. I can remember when I was a kid, they'd do all day long broadcasts at the state fair. That was important to people in those days. And now they seem more interested in money gains, advertising. They seem to have forgotten where KRTV's roots started in Great Falls, Montana. Now they're trying to be a big city station."

"They used to have one lady on there, she was interesting, Norma Ashby. The one they have on there now, she's boring."

"She [Ashby] was professional. She had a lot on the ball. She had a lot of great topics."

"She was really involved in things."

"Oh ya, she had lived here all her life."

"She just got everybody on her station there with her, and she just got interesting topics. I think she probably had more than one person at a time. Now they have the same program but just with a different person. The new person's just not as, she doesn't get excited, so how can anyone else get excited?"

The second specific concern in Great Falls was in 1989 KRTV's ratings were consistently higher outside the Great Falls city limits. One reason for this difference may be that KRTV had better statewide news coverage which drew a solid audience outside the city limits. The only indication that this might be the case was a statement by one participant who faithfully followed KRTV news,
saying it had "better statewide coverage."

Another possible rationale for this ratings difference was that viewers outside the city limits weren't as impressed or affected by efforts at KTGF to capture viewers. According to participants, KTGF gave the image it was more aggressively pursuing local news by being seen more frequently around town with the microwave truck, and by being on the scene "live," even if it was just for the weather report from a local art fair. This appeal may have had a greater impact inside city limits than outside city limits, thus attracting more city viewers to KTGF and away from KRTV.

A third possibility for the ratings difference may have been due to the impact of Coghlan leaving, of KRTV changing hands and the headquarters for the network being moved to Billings. Perhaps these and other changes had a greater impact on KRTV's relationship with city viewers than those outside the city limits because the latter may not have identified as strongly with the location of MTN's headquarters.

**Specific Concerns in Missoula.**

Specific concerns at KPAX were whether the station's community-oriented image and "Time to Care" themes were effective and had the desired impact, and whether viewers were getting what they wanted in news.

This research shows simple marketing strategies based on community orientation are not effective if viewers do not perceive the stations and on-air talent to be truly involved in the communities they serve. Some public service
announcements (PSA's) which the stations were hoping would be perceived as serving the community, had the opposite effect. Three people thought they were "a tricky way to advertise," and one woman said they made her think the station was "insincere." There was confusion about whether PSA's were ads for sponsors or for the sake of informing the public only. One participant perceived Jim Harmon's spots for Big Brothers and Sisters, to be "shallow and for show."

Participants did not perceive anchors as being involved members of the local community. Some said anchors were merely "talking heads" who they "set in front of the camera, give copy to, and they read it. They read the AP wires, they read whatever." One participant wrote, "many local items seem to have been taken verbatim from the Missoulian." Another said she thought of Lynn Hightower as "just a big Barbie doll."

This research indicates a core audience tunes in to local news regardless of its quality. For these viewers, the decision about whether to watch local news is based on a general expectation that it is the media's job to inform them. Their only real decision is which station to watch. Not every participant thought deeply about why they chose one station over another, but of those who did, anchor preference and news coverage were primary considerations. For example one man said he tuned in because of "the babe" who read the news, and another tuned in for the accuracy with which sports scores were read. A third made her choice because the anchor could "actually read" and did not stumble over her words. Only one viewer appeared to base his station choice on actual news content. Most other participants
thought the news on both channels was about the same.

**Service to Communities and Participative Management: Keys to Change.**

The second assertion in the research hypothesis was that if viewers got what they wanted in news, simple plans to market the news would be effective. It was hoped that the results of this research could be used to either develop a new marketing strategy or confirm the one already in use, namely, "The News Station" title and a community-oriented image. Participants seemed most engrossed in local news as an accurate, overall reflection of the community, so the community-oriented marketing strategy was confirmed, but results showed viewers were not getting what they wanted in news. Newscasts were not perceived to be adequately reflecting the community with its full spectrum of positive and negative left intact. In other words, people miss the "hey day of live television," with its friendly neighborhood approach and positive focus. News alone is not serving the needs of these viewers. Local viewers want balance, better quality and more local media coverage. Consequently, the community-oriented marketing strategy is falling short of its potential.

Viewers perceive the commitment to truly reflecting their community is shallow. Perhaps owners, managers and stockholders ought not overlook the fact that community involvement cannot be a surface commitment to impress viewers. It must be an overriding superordinate goal, part of the very fabric of the organizational structure of local television stations. If the perception that a station
excels in community involvement is to be effective in drawing a deep commitment from viewers, a real vortex of deep structure concerns within the community must be brought to light by broadcasters. If broadcast organizations could develop a vision for being servants of their communities once again, as Ashby perceived herself to be, far-reaching and fun, light-hearted goals could be attained through this powerful medium. In turn, community members' appreciation of this type of attention would make them committed supporters both with their money and their time. If one station or a network of stations could set a new standard in Montana news, or reset an old standard, undoubtedly people would become its committed viewers and ideally, more discerning citizens and more involved community members.

A key to success in this switch to more thoroughly interfacing with Montana communities would be a switch to participative management. Lew Koch, Operations Manager at WAAY-TV in Huntsville, Alabama says stations would function best using participative management. "So much has been written about this subject that I am amazed at the modern companies that do not practice it. It's just common sense to get people involved in the decision-making process, and thus become more committed to excellence." This is confirmed by Bill Taylor, co-founder of Audience Research and Development, a Dallas-based research and consulting firm. He said broadcasters must "rethink the way local television is created. That means challenging the tired methods of the past and present, organizing and staffing in efficient working units that might not fall along current
department lines and, most importantly, investing in the training and development of people" (Taylor, 1989). Broadcast news people work best in an atmosphere of freedom -- freedom to experiment and make mistakes (Warner, 1989).

Phil Tornabeny, owner and manager of Lake Group Australia, a marketing agency for Australian Mutual Provident (AMP), applies new marketing techniques to run his top marketing agency for the largest insurance company in Australia. In an interview, he pointed out that his agency markets the same exact product as every other agency in AMP, and recruits from the same pool of people, but his agency's sales are higher. Why? His people are better motivated, he rewards people, offers incentives, and makes sure people are having fun. In short, he uses participative management.

"In the United States business has been played for years by quarterly reports, to the detriment of long-range thinking. In Japan, long-range thinking pays off. They have the figures to prove it. In the United States businesses tend not to reinvest like they should, but with today's market the way it is, it's not worth it. They will be run out of business."

Tornabeny uses profit participation for all employees, which fosters a good attitude. "If your people do not have a good attitude, they'll lose your mail. They'll piss your clients off. You don't win if your people have a bad attitude. People will have no confidence in your product and that will run you right out of business."

The research presented here indicates it is time for small broadcast stations to shed their historical reputations of "churning people," or serving sacrificial
audiences whose primary role is to watch reporters just out of school make all their
mistakes and then move on to bigger, more competitive markets. According to
Tornabeny, "when people feel they belong they perform better. You can't win by
churning people. It may appear as if you're hiring them cheap, but in the long run,
the more you invest in people, the more productive they will be, and the better
bottom line you will have."

"You can lead by example," said Tornabeny. "When a fish stinks, it stinks
from the head down, not from the tail up. You've got to be out there with the
people. Organizations rot from within, not from without. Russia collapsed from
within, not from without.

Tornabeny does not manage his company. He hired a psychologist to do
that. He calls himself the "chief cheerleader." He has outlined 80 motivational talks
from current books on the subject and he has given these outlines to all the branch
managers to use at daily meetings. He himself hosts his own meeting every
morning, and he has his branch meetings start one-half hour earlier than his
meeting so he can personally make a long-distance call to every meeting and talk
at all the sales meetings over the speaker phone, motivating people and making
them a part of one overriding vortex of energy that is focused on particular
superordinate goals. The emphasis on daily meetings is important because "the sun
comes up every morning, not just on Mondays and Saturdays. If someone is in the
hospital in an oxygen tent, they don't turn the oxygen on and off. Famous sports
people train every day. People have emotions and they change every day. Every
Once a year, Tomabeny's agency takes its employees overseas. For the high
performers he offers free overseas trips for two. For the medium performers he
offers one free trip and one-half paid trip for the spouse. For low performers he
gives just one overseas trip, and the rest of the people get a chance in a draw.
"Everyone gets a chance, see? No one is left out. Everyone is rewarded." He also
has weekly and monthly giveaways. He said these regular company outings and
giveaways can be big budget or low budget. "The budget is not important, what is
important is that people have fun on a regular basis."

All Tomabeny's offices focus on having the right environment. In the
waiting room there is a welcome board like they have in hotels to say what guests
are there that day. The offices are decorated in modern colors and decor and they
pump good music through the speakers all the time.

What would Tomabeny do if he owned a media organization and wanted to
be perceived as being community-oriented? "They're still people, aren't they? News
personalities are still human. But in order to be well-known in the community
they've got to be seen doing community work. They don't have to be Dan Rather.
The station just has to have a history of their anchors doing community service.
They have to be seen doing things."

What if another station was seen around town more with their microwave
truck, and his station did not have one? "Put roof racks on all the employees' cars.
Then instead of having one or two news vehicles being seen around town, people
would see 30 or 40 vehicles!"

**The Marketing Perspective.**

Management decisions must be made through use of a set of priorities. What factors set these priorities? They are most affected by how profit is handled, whether it serves the personal and investment interests of owners, stockholders and managers, whether it gets refunneled into organizations by meeting employees needs personally and within organizations, or whether it is first and foremost invested in improving and upgrading the ultimate product offered by the organization.

Traditionally, stockholders came first, employees came second and customers were last priority. Between 1950 and 1970 managers began recognizing that if they treated their employees well the result was a better bottom line. Emphasis tended to shift toward treating employees well. Stockholders concerns then took second place and customers' concerns remained the last priority (Lavine and Wackman, 1988). After 1970 corporate executives discovered there was too often a discrepancy between what they thought the public *should* want and what the public actually wanted. Media firms began to identify and attempt to appeal to customers' needs and desires. This proved to be far more effective than other approaches had been. The "marketing perspective" was born and it meant that audience members' preferences were first understood through research, and then taken into serious account as news, entertainment and advertising were planned,
developed, promoted, produced and distributed (Lavine and Wackman, 1988).

The marketing perspective gains credibility as people reiterate that marketing is the name of the game for the 90s. "It's time to trade in the yellow pads, pencils and calculators for marketing savvy and technology tools" (Jones, 1989). "We think the 1990s will be the coming decade for marketing" (Mermigas, 1989). "By being our own market specialist who knows what our station can do and what each of the other stations is doing, we're in the best position to show advertisers exactly what we have that enables them to reach more viewers more efficiently" (Johnson, 1989).

This research was conducted in a corporate environment where consumers' or viewers' preferences are being taken more seriously. Bear in mind that Montana television stations started out as family owned businesses, not as corporate investments. Media mergers gained popularity in small towns a little over a decade ago, and when families owned Montana stations, they made little effort to market the local news. The news was first and foremost a service to the community. Family broadcasters, because they were-usually longstanding members of the communities they served, stayed in touch with what it meant to be service-oriented. For example when the smallest market in America, Glendive, Montana, got down to being a bare-bones operation with intense competition for viewers from the cable system, it continued to thrive mainly because it offered local news and public affairs programming uniquely tailored to Glendive (Buckman, 1988). Thus while the marketing perspective was not pursued per se by family broadcasters in that
they did not do research to find out viewers' preferences, real value was placed on community service and viewers' preferences because stations were owned and operated by community members.

When corporations bought small stations and used business strategies to help them turn a higher profit, one strategy was to market local news so it would attract more viewers and therefore more advertising dollars which translated into greater profit. As well, a substantial corporate investment was made to update production capabilities, news services and programming. But the question arises, was all that change implemented to benefit stockholders, employees or viewers?

Wage scales and labor-related expenditures remained low, so evidently corporate investment decisions were not made from the employees' perspective. Participants had definite negative perceptions that stemmed from the fact that labor-related expenditures remained low. "They don't have the reporters to get the stories and they're cheating us." Wage scales are so low in Montana television broadcasting that people like Ed Coghlan who love the area and who attract viewers, are forced to move on to use their talents elsewhere, creating a situation of high turnover. This decisively undercuts one of the primary strategies to keep viewers loyal to a station, namely, consistency at the anchor's desk. Coghlan and Ashby did not become legacies that viewers identified with, overnight.

If employees are not considered first in management decisions, perhaps viewers' concerns are first priority. According to participants in this study, much of the unique tailoring of local news to specific communities that used to exist when
stations were family owned was lost as corporations bought and sold Montana stations. "They've got to impress the guy that's their boss in Billings or Salt Lake. So they impress him by giving him what he wants to see, not what the locals want to see."

"I quit watching... when Ed Coghlan left, who ran the news department and was also an anchorperson."

"It used to be the most professional station."

"It lost credibility..."

"I watched it all the time when Ed Coghlan was here, he was professional."

"I can remember years ago 3 was the top station in the whole country probably. And they have slipped that much."

"A change in management."

"They changed owners, what, 2 or 3 times?"

"Channel 3, I think, if I remember correctly, used to really have a lot of public input."

"Now they seem more interested in money gains, advertising... Now they're trying to be a big city station."

If employees are not first priority and viewers don't perceive themselves as being first priority, then perhaps corporate owners and investors are the ones benefiting from these investments. This flies in the face of what corporate America was already supposed to have learned, which is that serving employees' interests serves the bottom line, and that viewers' preferences must be discovered through
research, and then taken into serious account as decisions are made.

In their enthusiastic effort to make local stations more profitable, have media corporations defeated their own purposes by refusing to continue offering services of real value to local communities? Is Evening Post Publishing's hands-off management style backed up with sufficient reinvestment in employees so they can truly serve their communities? Is the value of participative management being overlooked? Are new marketing ideas employed? Is there sufficient investment in motivating, training and paying employees? Is enough research being done to keep local newsteam adequately interfaced with the real issues in their communities? Is there sincere interest in seeing local television stations become vehicles for real community service?

Or is community involvement just a show that is designed to deceive viewers so a greater profit is reaped by a few at the top? Whose priorities really matter here? Has the evolvement that is supposed to have happened in corporate America with regard to the marketing perspective and serving employees' interests penetrated those corporations that buy and sell small local television stations? Do these corporations realize they are dealing in one of the greatest servants to the American people that exists in our time? Do they realize the marketing perspective in this case means really caring about the local communities these stations serve, in a real, dynamic, positive way, backed up with integrity and a value system that encompasses more than decent quarterly reports?

To this author the prime motive of these corporations which as stated earlier
was to buy small local television stations, upgrade them so they turned a higher profit and then sell them at a much higher price, passing along a huge debt to new buyers, has to a certain degree undermined the integrity of the free broadcast television industry. "Organizations rot from within, not from without. . . . A fish stinks from the head down, not from the tail up." Unfortunately, as Ralph Nader states about media mergers, "The more concentrated the power, the higher the prices, the less diversity and imagination, the more stagnating bureaucracies" (Ciabattari, 1989).

It is not wise for corporate investors to ignore the fact that the negative consequences of centralizing power in their media organizations is coming through loud and clear to viewers. The move toward bigness does not have to weaken links to local viewers if a concentrated effort is made to incorporate the value system presented by this research. Having said all that about truly implementing the marketing perspective where employees' concerns are held in high regard and stockholders bide their time with regard to reaping a large profit, here are the author's suggestions for a marketing strategy.

**Reflect Viewers' Preferences By Reflecting Their Culture.**

Part of serving the viewers means managers of media organizations must couch their services in a delivery style that reflects the society's values and culture (Lavine and Wackman, 1988). Coghlan said the fair, balanced and aggressive high profile public affairs approach is what long-time broadcasters in Montana know best, and the strongest news product is that which resonates the image and
provincialities of the native inhabitants of Montana's cities. "But the big thing is," said Coghlan, "you gotta have somebody who knows the town and the stories to cover. This is generally lacking."

Reporters could be educated about the town and the stories to cover. Participating in regular focus group discussions with viewers basis would be an ideal way to educate reporters and keep them in touch with issues in communities. Hiring, training and managing a conscientious team of interns to do tasks around the newsroom would help by freeing up reporters and photographers to cover more stories, more in-depth, with more follow-up. Interns could be trained and overseen to update a reference file of newspaper clippings, rewrite wire copy, conduct research for stories over the phone, and set appointments for reporters.

This study shed some light on the personalities of the cities and the types of stories to cover. Overall, the culture in Great Falls was different from the culture in Missoula. Viewers in Great Falls seemed to need more services to blend the provincialism of longtime Great Falls residents with the more upbeat, younger population. This could be done by covering more thoroughly the various diverse elements of the lifestyle in Great Falls, for example how weather affects the agriculture and thus the economy, and human interest stories about lifestyle of people living on the army base. In general, Great Falls participants seemed to prefer public affairs and provincialism more than creativity and diversity.

As proof of this, consider the ratings of the anchors at the three stations in Great Falls (Appendix G). JoMay Barker and Dick Pompa both got high ratings for
credibility, likability and professionalism, while Shannon Everts' ratings were average. The images portrayed by Barker and Pompa were more parochial than that of Everts. In the videotaped clip used as examples for the discussions, Barker wore a light pink wool suit, a high-collared blouse with cream-colored lace, and simple classic jewelry. She wore her dark hair tied back, had a deep voice and a serious manner. Pompa wore a suit and had neatly kept grey hair. Everts wore a dress with a large white collar, which some participants said looked like a party dress. Some commented that she wore low-necked dresses and one elderly man said when he watched her he paid more attention to her hair style than to her presentation because she had blonde hair that was worn in varying styles. This is referred to as a lack of "transparent style," meaning the speaker is the focus of attention and not the spoken word. Thus the conservative nature of Great Falls residents is reflected in the type of anchor people they prefer.

Generally speaking, professionalism and credibility played more important roles in determining popularity of anchors than did likability. If a person was rated high in professionalism and credibility, there tended to be a good general feeling about that person, unless there was something especially irritating or unappealing about their style. Participants would let their personal feelings about on-air talent take a back seat if they thought the person was professionally presenting credible information. A dynamic personality alone was not enough to impress participants, and unprofessional dress and mannerisms made definite negative impressions. Overall, the on-air talent who exuded their own personal dynamism in subtle ways
throughout their presentations without sacrificing credibility or professionalism, were best liked. Participants' comments indicated the following individuals were able to create this calibre of positive impression, Dick Pompa, Jo May Barker, Devan Swain and Mark Spears.

Participants in Missoula were less reserved, more creative and more adventurous than were Great Falls' participants. If news coverage reflected this by being exciting, diverse, creative and even off-beat if necessary, this would accurately express the culture of at least this cross-section of the population. Participants in Missoula said they had an interest in knowing about unique and interesting individuals in the area who pursue obscure sports like rock climbing, stage protests and represent a viewpoint different from the mainstream thinkers. Participants had a strong interest in the University of Montana which supports a vast array of interesting events and people. Participants indicated they would tune in to any unique story on local news as long as it was a sincere representation of something within the local culture.

If Montana broadcasters incorporated simple strategies to really get in touch with their viewers, they would avoid the image that they were "bought out by the big guys" who do not care about the local people. To reiterate Coghlan's viewpoint, "Ya gotta get out and fly the flag." In Great Falls, Norma Ashby exemplified this in her public affairs program. She resonated what Great Falls had to offer, and her longevity made a legacy out of her. This is the consistency that is warranted now, after more than a decade of turnover and change in Montana broadcasting.
This study indicates a passionate take on the local community would revive local broadcasting in these cities. "It's always a little bit here, a little bit there. It's never enough."

"They never talk to the people, the ones who are doing the background organizing, or who are working in the community."

"I tune in to maybe see someone I know on news or ads!"

Viewers are unlikely to be interested in one lone broadcaster who does not look at the camera much, talking to one lone community member about one event or issue. What about getting a team of assertive and vibrant but qualified reporters whose did a public affairs program, and give them sanction to do in-depth research and recruit panels of local community members including some opinionated ones to provide some cross fire and excitement? Why not set up some chairs in the studio and recruit credible community members who have opinions on the issues so they could participate as audience members and provide the feedback that is so sorely lacking in the pseudo-face-to-face communication of local broadcast television? Why not get clips of local figures making comments about community issues, and then have those clips responded to in the studio later by a panel of concerned and integrally involved community members? Why not use the dynamics of television to create more communication within the community, rather than just using it to cover the communication that already takes place? Often the homeless have no voice, and are never given an opportunity to respond to the local views about what their problems are. Give them a voice! Have the upstanding citizens taped, and
have the citizens who normally have no voice respond to these tapes.

This intimate medium could easily be used to break down barriers in communication. Rather than distancing viewers from coverage, get them intimately involved and capture their commitment by striking at the core of what is meaningful to them. The dynamics of this medium are such that its creative use could greatly enhance a sense of community and the cause of good in any of the communities it serves. Viewers love seeing themselves and people they know on television. For this, they might even pass up what the competition has to offer.

The Need for Further Research.

Conclusions of this research indicate broadcasters must be of greater service to local people, and it is up to management to convince owners and stockholders to use this very research as proof that a high profile public affairs strategy, planned out and implemented with a vigorous commitment to serving the communities involved, would be an appropriate business strategy. The key to success in this strategy would be participative management and continued research which would involve newsteam, designed to facilitate the effort to resonate the culture and values of local people, and become public servants in the greatest sense of the word. Ongoing research to make broadcasters more aware of what local people's concerns and interests are and what they identify and positively associate with, would be applicable. Also germane would be open forum discussions to formulate ideas of how local media could be of greater service to their communities.

Especially interesting to this author would be research on exactly how Norma
Ashby went about making *Today in Montana* such a success.

Other questions to consider when devising plans for future research are as follows. Being 75% of newsroom costs are labor-related (Shaw, 1988), is an adequate investment being made in employees, especially in light of the employee-oriented marketing strategies used by top marketing agent Phil Tornabeny? Is sufficient investment being made in motivation of sales force? Is production staff training adequate and ongoing to allow the greatest viable return on investment in production equipment? Is vigorous promotion of news the best overall strategy when those time slots could be used to increase revenue and consequently news product itself, thus potentially allowing for less promotion of news but greater commitment from viewers? Is enough value placed on quality of news and its role as a service to the community first and foremost, or is more attention paid to amount of revenue brought in by advertising during news? If ratings and therefore revenue brought in by advertising during news are lower than hoped, are the reasons assessed accurately? For example are hard looks taken at the following potential failings? Is there a lack of interest in local news in general, or is it simply that viewers are not getting what they want? Is it because production standards in commercials is low so advertisers shy away? Are low ratings ultimately due to lack of investment in labor-related expenses? Does the station have enough reporters? Is time invested in motivating news staff and helping them develop a realistic vision of what the community's media needs and potentialities are, especially with regard to their role as community servants? Is appearance being stressed over quality? Is
time spent helping staff be directly involved in community service, especially where high profile participation of news personalities might really aid the local community?

Focus groups studies offer a wealth of creative energy and their value should not be underestimated when considering future options in this field of research.
Appendix A

Age breakdowns according to 1980 Census.

Missoula County, Ages 20 and over.

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Cascade County, Ages 20 and over:

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Appendix B

Household income breakdowns according to 1980 Census.

Missoula County, Ages 20 and over.

TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS = 27547

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<tr>
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<td>$50,000 or more</td>
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Appendix B (continued)

Cascade County, Ages 20 and over.

TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS = 28195

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<td>$50,000 or more</td>
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## Appendix C

MISSOULA COUNTY CELL CHART

### Females

**Total household income**

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<td>Over $22,000</td>
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### Age

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<tbody>
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20-29

30-46

47+


Appendix C (continued)

MISSOULA COUNTY CELL CHART

Males

Total household income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>0 - $11,200</th>
<th>$11,300 - $22,000</th>
<th>Over $22,000</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-44</td>
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<tr>
<td>45+</td>
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</table>
## Appendix D

### CASCADE COUNTY CELL CHART

**Females**

**Total household income**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
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<th>$11,400 - $21,800</th>
<th>Over $21,800</th>
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</thead>
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<td>20-32</td>
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<td>33-52</td>
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<tr>
<td>53+</td>
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Appendix D (continued)

CASCADE COUNTY CELL CHART

Males

Total household income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 - $11,300</th>
<th>$11,400 - $21,800</th>
<th>Over $21,800</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td>50+</td>
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Appendix E

Jo York  
2412 Raymond  
Missoula, MT 59802  
1-721-1824

Thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in the University of Montana study, "Local Views about the Local News." This is a focus group study, which is different from a survey study. In this study only a few people will be gathered together to take an in-depth look at some issues concerning the local news in Great Falls. The interpersonal nature of this study lends itself to different findings than can be derived from a brief survey of a great number of people. We have selected a cross-section of people who represent the sex, age and income-level breakdown that exists in Cascade County. The expectation is that the insights of a few people can help get at things that would never be found using a standard question and answer format.

Your presence at the Great Falls Gas Company on Thursday, August 17 from about 6:45 to 9 p.m. will be greatly appreciated. The Gas Company is located between the Civic Center and the police station in the old Burlington Northern Depot by the river. If you park on the south side of the parking lot near the police station and walk around the left side of the Gas Co., you'll find the door to the meeting room propped open for you.

Don't worry about attempting to formulate particular viewpoints about the news before you come, because we are primarily interested in your off-the-cuff impressions of the things we present and the questions we ask. As well, your views undoubtedly represent the views of a certain number of other people who think like you do, so don't be hesitant to share your views during the session, even if they are different from those presented by other participants in the study.

As was mentioned, everyone participating in the study will be given $25.00 participation pay for their time. Please notify me as soon as possible at the above number or address if you will be unable to attend, as we will need to recruit someone else to take your place.

And last but not least, thank you so much for your time.

Thanks again!

Jo York
Appendix F

Jo York
2412 Raymond
Missoula, MT 59802
1-721-1824

Thank you for accepting our invitation to participate in the University of Montana study, "Local Views about the Local News." This is a focus group study, which is different from a survey study. In this study only a few people will be gathered together to take an in-depth look at some issues concerning the local news in Missoula. The interpersonal nature of this study lends itself to different findings than can be derived from a brief survey of a great number of people. We have selected a cross-section of people who represent the sex, age and income-level breakdown that exists in Cascade County. The expectation is that the insights of a few people can help get at things that would never be found using a standard question and answer format.

Your presence at the Southgate Mall Community Room on Tuesday, August 29 from about 6:45 to 9 p.m. will be greatly appreciated. The Community Room is located in the corridor that lies between Petland and The Foot Locker. This isn't too far from J.C. Penney and Co., so park near there if you wish.

Also, if you have time to catch the news between now and the night of the study, please do. Take note of the special features, their promotional strategies, the things they do and fail to do to serve and support the community and just how well you think they cover the local news, weather and sports. Note whether you have any suggestions for their improvement. Also see whether you think either station is biased and note your opinion about how professional and likeable you think the different announcers are. As was mentioned, everyone participating in the study will be given $20.00 participation pay for their time. Please notify me as soon as possible at the above number or address if you will be unable to attend, as we will need to recruit someone else to take your place. Thank you for your time, and feel free to call me if you have any questions about the meeting place or time.

Again, thank you!

Jo York
Appendix G

WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS
ABOUT WEEKNIGHT (M-F) NEWS ONLY

1. Which station do you watch the most for local news?
   11% KRTV 34% KFBB 55% KTGF

2. Which station does the best job promoting itself?
   66% KTGF 16% KRTV 18% KFBB

3. Which station in your town do you think is most involved in and supportive of the community? Which shows the most concern for the community's needs and problems?
   29% KFBB 55% KTGF 16% KRTV

4. Which station gives you the most complete sports coverage?
   22% KRTV 50% KFBB 28% KTGF

5. For sports coverage watchers: Rate the following for each station with #1 being what the station does best and #4 being what the station does least well.

   KFBB          KTGF          KRTV
   1.8 Scores    1.7 Scores    2.2 Scores
   1.8 Credibility 1.8 Credibility 2 Credibility
   2 Professionalism 2.4 Professionalism 2 Professionalism
   1.6 Up-to-date 1.7 Up-to-date 2.5 Up-to-date
   1.7 Thorough 1.75 Thorough 2.9 Thorough

6. Do you prefer to have the anchor person do the weather, or do you prefer having a separate weather person?
   5% Anchor is fine 95% Prefer special weather person
7. Why do you tune in to the local news? Please rate the following, with #1 being your first priority, and #13 being your last priority: (Note: The following order reflects the results of the study with the exact averages of all responses indicated in parentheses after each).

1. To find out what happened in Great Falls today -- daily local news coverage.  
   \( (1.875) \)

2. To find out what happened in Montana today -- daily statewide news coverage.  
   \( (3.625) \)

3. To find out what happened in the world today -- daily national and international news coverage.  
   \( (3.69) \)

4. For the weather forecast.  
   \( (4.19) \)

5. For promoted stories or certain stories I saw advertised.  
   \( (6.125) \)

6. For regular features, such as a health segment a community affairs segment, a regular sports feature, etc.  
   \( (6.625) \)

7. To find out what happened in Helena today -- daily news from the capital.  
   \( (7) \)

8. Because of a particular anchorperson who I like to see present the news.  
   \( (7.94) \)

9. For in-depth reports: i.e., on Montana's wilderness, tourism, etc.  
   \( (8) \)

10. For sports.  
    \( (8.5) \)

11. For special series: i.e., a 5-part series on gambling in Montana.  
    \( (8.75) \)
12. For special advertising promotions that work into news, like announcements about who won a sweepstakes or giveaway.

(9.875)

13. Other (fill in the blank)

(10.56)

Answers:

National sports, one person rated this #13;

Teacher's strike, #8;

Specials like "Crime-stoppers," #11;

Special interest, city government, #9;

Human interest, #4;

To better understand my environment, #10.
8. Do you perceive any of the stations to be one-sided or biased in their reporting?

78% No 22% Yes

If "yes," continue question:

Which station, and in what types of coverage:

Labor / Politics / News / Community service / Sports

**50% of those who said yes said KFBB was biased.

Exact answers were:
KFBB in politics;
KFBB in politics;
KFBB in labor and news.

**33% of those who said yes said KRTV was biased.

Exact answers were:
KRTV in politics -- primarily a Billings station;
KRTV in labor and politics.

**17% of those who said yes said KTGF was biased.

Exact answer was:
KTGF in Politics.

9. Rate these stations' overall news coverage:

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<tr>
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<td>53%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</table>
10. How could local news be improved all-around?

More Great Falls news;

More on upcoming events, 5 or 16 has started doing this;

Expand on news coverage they report on and use more details;

Cover positives, not just troubles;

Weekend newscasters need to improve reading skills;

Anchor people joke around too much are unprofessional overkill their points;

Stations don't stay on the air even during the simplest weather storms;

Follow up on news;

More live on-the-spot interviews -- get a greater variety of Great Falls population's opinions on all subjects;

More emphasis on local happenings, better prepared newscasters.
Rate the following

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<th>Excellent</th>
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<tbody>
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Appendix H

WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

WEEKNIGHT (M-F) NEWS ONLY

1. Which station do you watch the most for local news?
   
   35% KECI  65% KPAX

2. Which station does the best job promoting itself?
   
   39% KECI  61% KPAX

3. Which station do you think is most involved in and supportive of the community? Which shows the most concern for the community's needs and problems?
   
   44% KECI  56% KPAX

4. Which station gives you the most complete sports coverage?
   
   61% KECI  39% KPAX
   
   Reasons: Larry Frost does a real good job; KECI sports reporters have been in area longer, therefore are more familiar; KECI has more local coverage; Larry is involved; KPAX is out there to catch it live; Dave Tester has gotten more involved in the community; KPAX has more sports personality interviews.

5. For sports coverage watchers: Rate the following for each station with #1 being what the station does best and #4 being what the station does least well (Ranked according to results with exact averages in parentheses).

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6. Why do you tune in to the local news? Please rate the following, with #1 being your first priority, and #13 being your last priority: (Note: Exact averages in parentheses).

1. To find out what happened in Missoula today -- daily local news coverage.
   (2.55)

2. To find out what happened in Montana today -- daily statewide news coverage.
   (3.17)

3. To find out what happened in the world today -- daily national and international news coverage.
   (3.72)

4. For the weather forecast.
   (4.72)

5. To find out what happened in Helena today -- daily news from the capital.
   (6.24)

6. For promoted stories.
   (6.41)

7. For regular features, such as a health segment a community affairs segment, a regular sports feature, etc.
   (7.14)

8. For sports.
   (7.48)

9. For in-depth reports: i.e., on Montana’s wilderness, tourism, etc.
   (7.9)

10. For special series: i.e., a 5-part series on gambling in Montana.
    (7.97)

Optional: Any series you found especially interesting?

Logging caravan series; Legislative reporting.

11. Because of a particular anchorperson who I like to see present the news.
    (9.93)
12. For special advertising promotions that work into news, like announcements about who won a sweepstakes or giveaway. (10.31)

13. Other: Most convenient time for me to watch;

    News of the university;

    I appreciate being told when some of the staff are being transferred (Kevin Maki);

    KPAX has reporters that I like;

    I liked both reporters in Helena during session:

    Tobby Hatley on political arena;

    To keep in touch with what is going on in the community and surrounding area;

    Most human interest and non-fiction programs or series;

    To maybe see someone I know on news or ads!
7. Do you prefer to have the anchor person do the weather, or do you prefer having a separate weather person?

37% Anchor is fine  63% Prefer special weather person

8. Do you perceive any of the stations to be one-sided or biased in their reporting?

75% No  25% Yes

If "yes," continue question: Which station, and in what types of coverage:

Labor / Politics / News / Community service / Sports

**14% of those who said yes said both stations.

Exact answers were:
Both stations too business oriented;
Both stations afraid to risk any in-depth or controversial things.

**33% of those who said yes said KPAX was biased.

Exact answers were:
KPAX in labor, politics and sports;
KPAX in labor and sports;
KPAX in labor and sports;
KPAX in politics news and sports;
KPAX in labor and politics.

**53% of those who said yes said KECI was biased.

Exact answers were:
KECI in labor and sports;
KECI in labor and politics;
KECI in community service;
Some stories are omitted because of negative impact on prominent families;
In political arena KECI leans more and better coverage to liberal candidates;
I disagree with Jim Harmon's political views -- too liberal for me;
KECI in community coverage;
KECI in labor and community service.
9. Rate these stations' overall news coverage (Exact average of all responses in parentheses):

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<th>Very Good</th>
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10. Which station gives you the best statewide coverage?

42% KECE  58% KPAX
11. How could local news be improved all-around?

MORE COMMUNITY NEWS: Cover more Missoula news and news from smaller towns, more community events such as high school and college student activities and not as many political events. Concentrate on more community local news i.e., clubs, community functions and to let the local community know when functions are available to the public. More community stories, news that's happening locally. Cover more local interest items. More personal "positive" news items giving credit to individuals or groups who have done something exceptional to improve the city of Missoula and its inhabitants. More in-depth coverage of national news that affects our community. By having more in-depth reports on issues of concern to the community. Turn over some stories in local news reports -- Poke around for the unusual angles rather than the same bland superficial coverage. Less sensationalism -- many local items seem to have been taken verbatim from Missoulian.

DO MORE REPORTING and less reading of wire copy -- they are too predictable. While I realize that this community may not have the resources to support a high quality high-tech news station I feel that Missoula's local news stations fall way behind those of other states i.e., Spokane. Have fewer so-called "in-depth" reports where the reporters ask people off-the-wall questions that the interviewees are uncomfortable answering. This is especially true in "human interest" stories. Devote more time to "hard" news and less to "human interest" type news. Do better features -- interesting but informative and show us more of Missoula.

MORE FOLLOW-UP: Follow up on starters of news -- we know of some starters that we never heard about again. On KPAX a little more local news and follow-ups, for example the outcome on crime reports, more about service organizations.

IMPROVE ANCHORS: The anchors need to stop the local gossip between themselves. It makes the news look "small town." You don't see this in bigger cities. Get better anchors and have anchors familiar with Montana who don't appear to be reading copy. On KECI, have all be as professional as Jill Valley and the now departed Wendy Ninteman.

IMPROVE SPORTS COVERAGE: Have more sports coverage: cover different types of sports such as bowling swimming, etc., not just football and basketball. Abandon sports B.S. Both stations need to straighten their sports coverage.
MISCELLANEOUS: Improve sound, lighting and graphics. Some local advertising is pretty "sick." Some, however, very nicely done. Skip commercials and stop using the same video footage over and over for ongoing stories.
Rate the following

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**JILL VALLEY:** (7 people responded, vs. 29 on the rest)

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Appendix I
Questions

Talent:

What do you like and not like about these newscasters? sportscasters? weather people?

What do you like/don't you like in a local newscaster? sportscasters? weather person?

Who's your favorite anchor? sports announcer? weatherperson? Why?

Presentation:

Which station do you watch? Why?

How do you decide what newscast you'll watch at night?

Do you watch more than one? Why? Which ones, for what reasons?

Does the program just before or just after the news affect the channel you tune into for news?

What would another station have to do to get you to switch to it?

What do you think of statewide news coverage in this town?
Local coverage? Helena coverage? National and international coverage?

Which station does the best in covering the local news?

What in particular interests you about local news? What disappoints you about local news?

Is there any news you'd like to see covered that isn't?

Do you like the time slots that the news programs are scheduled?

What's your overall opinion of KRTV's news coverage?

What do you like/dislike?

(Repeat above questions for KFBB and KTGF.)
Which is the best station in the market? Why?

What do the letters MTN mean?

How could the stations improve their news services?

How could local stations orient themselves more effectively toward local people and keep in touch with what is going on?

Is any station more community oriented than the others?

What things make you believe a station cares about the community?

What about midday news, do you watch it? What do you think of it? Why?

I understand these stations in small towns in Montana have been bought and sold a lot in the past few years. Has that affected you viewing preferences? Does the news change noticeably when a station changes hands?

Do you notice the news sets on local news? Any comments?

Do promotions of particular stories cause you to tune in?

Do you like news teasers? For weather? For sports?

How often do you watch sports coverage? What type of sports coverage do you watch? What night is that on? What station does the best job in presenting the sports?

Do you like stories that are presented as series? Any examples of good or bad ones you've seen? Any ideas for series you'd like to see?

Do you like the way local weather is presented? What station does the best on this?

Do you think public service announcements are valuable? Does one station do better on these?

What would you like to see on public service announcements? Do public service announcements impress you that the station is doing a good job serving the community?

Overall, any suggestions for each of the stations?
REFERENCES


References (continued)


References (continued)


References (continued)


