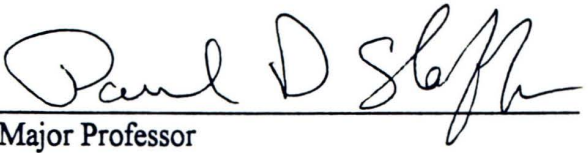


**THE AGENDA-BUILDING EFFECT OF THE SPORTS INFORMATION OFFICE
ON THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER**

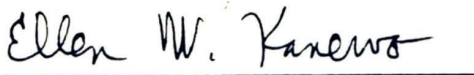
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THE AGENDA-BUILDING EFFECT OF THE SPORTS INFORMATION OFFICE
ON THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
Austin Peay State University

Darrell Orand

May 1996

ABSTRACT

This study investigates what effect the Sports Information Office at Austin Peay State University had on the university's sports coverage in the local daily newspaper, The Leaf-Chronicle in Clarksville, Tennessee. The study looked at who set the agenda for The Leaf-Chronicle's content concerning the Austin Peay State University athletic program. A content analysis was used as a comparison of the content of information released by the Sports Information Office and the stories published in The Leaf-Chronicle sports section concerning Austin Peay State University athletics.

A total of 45 items were printed during the four-week period of February 1, 1993 through February 28, 1993 in The Leaf-Chronicle concerning Austin Peay State University athletics, while a total of 18 press releases were produced by the Sports Information Office. That total includes information produced by press releases and used in pre-event sports. All releases from the Sports Information Department tried to reflect Austin Peay State University athletics in a positive manner. Other published stories came from direct-event coverage from the staff of The Leaf-Chronicle sports department. Negative reports by The Leaf-Chronicle sports department were depicted by the loss of an athletic event by the Austin Peay State University athletic teams.

The results indicate published reports based on press releases from the Sports Information Department had a favorable and positive influence on The Leaf-Chronicle's agenda concerning athletics at Austin Peay State University.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The idea of agenda-setting by the media has been researched many times since the late 1960s. For example, Shaw and McCombs (1977) identify agenda-setting as the impact the mass media have to effect cognitive change among individuals to structure their thinking. Lang and Lang (1981) had this idea of the agenda-setting function when they wrote, "They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about" (p. 232).

The mass media have the ability to determine what issues are thought and talked about by the public. In this study, the mass media outlet examined was the Clarksville, Tennessee The Leaf-Chronicle daily newspaper. Bernard Cohen (1963) stated agenda-setting may not be successful in telling people what to think, but is very successful in telling people what to think about. Severin and Tankard (1992) said agenda-setting is the idea the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about.

The reporters cover the events or stories, but the news editors have the final decision in what will be published. Shaw and McCombs (1977) found while reporters have some measure of power to determine what events they will write about, news editors have the power to determine what stories will be selected, where they will be displayed, and how long in time or space they will be carried.

These issues then become high on the priority list for the mass media. This will cause the issue to become prominent to the public. "The possible action of agenda-setting by the mass media brings attention to an issue causing that issue to be elevated in

importance to the public" (Severin & Tankard, 1992, p. 208). Shaw and McCombs (1977) state the idea of agenda-setting asserts that the priorities of the press to some degree become the priorities of the public.

On a larger scale, the process known as agenda-building, examines how a medium's agenda is formed. Since agenda-setting discusses the influence of a medium on an audience, the question becomes who sets the agenda for the medium?

In their study of agenda-setting, Lang and Lang (1981) found the original idea of agenda-setting needed to be expanded into agenda-building. The events and activities focused on by the media are linked to coverage and attention given to it by well-known and credible individuals beginning to speak out on events, activities and issues. The article states:

The concept of agenda building is more complicated than the original agenda-setting hypothesis. It suggests that the process of putting an issue on the public's agenda takes time and goes through several stages. It suggests that the way the media frame an issue and the code words they use to describe it can have an impact and that the role of well-known individuals commenting on the issue can be an important one. This causes the agenda-building process to be accelerated (p. 222).

The purpose of this study will look at what role the Sports Information Office has on building the agenda for the sports section of The Leaf-Chronicle. This study will look at the priority The Leaf-Chronicle places on the athletic activities at Austin Peay State

University. The priorities will be implemented as the editors interact with the Austin Peay State University Sports Information Department.

There are many events that cannot be covered by the local newspaper because there are not enough reporters to cover every event. Some businesses and organizations have departments that deal with public relations whose jobs are to present information to the media in a positive manner so the public will see their clients in a positive manner. In effect, these groups are attempting to build the agenda for the media in relation to their responsibilities.

Shaw and McCombs (1977) pointed to these groups when they wrote in a modern society, widely different groups often use the press as a guide for establishing their own agendas. Former Austin Peay student, Diane Rourke (1992), wrote as a closing remark in her thesis concerning agenda-setting:

Perhaps future studies could continue to research how effective the various industries, businesses, and groups with public relations departments influence and ultimately have an impact on setting the newspaper agenda for their particular organization (p. 32).

The APSU Sports Information Department is considered the public relations organization for the athletics department. This study will show the positive manner in which the Sports Information Department represents APSU athletics in a local mass medium, The Leaf-Chronicle.

These are the hypotheses set forth in this study:

1. Excluding game coverage and editorials, the information provided to The Leaf-Chronicle from the Sports Information Department can and will set the agenda concerning coverage of Austin Peay athletics.
2. Over half of the sports articles about Austin Peay athletics presented in The Leaf-Chronicle will come from information provided by the Sports Information Department.
3. At least 80% of the information released from the Sports Information Department will be published in some form in The Leaf-Chronicle.
4. Most of the articles concerning Austin Peay State University athletics printed in The Leaf-Chronicle will be positive.

This study will investigate what impact the Austin Peay State University Sports Information Office will have on the sports section of The Leaf-Chronicle. This study will also investigate the role Austin Peay's Sports Information Office has on building the agenda for the newspaper's sports section.

This study examined The Leaf-Chronicle for four consecutive weeks of February 1, 1993 through February 28, 1993 and concentrated on stories published on Austin Peay State University athletics. These stories covered men's and women's athletics, whether or not they are considered money-revenue athletics or not.

Definitions

There are several terms used in this study that should be defined:

The Leaf-Chronicle: Established in 1801, The Leaf-Chronicle is the daily newspaper of Clarksville, Tennessee, and is Tennessee's oldest newspaper. The editor of the paper is Gene Washer, and as of December, 1995, The Leaf-Chronicle had a daily circulation that includes rack sales of 22,000, and a weekend circulation including rack sales of 24,500.

Sports Information Office: The Sports Information Office gathers information concerning athletes and athletics and disseminates that information to the media. J. W. Graham (1989) looks at the Sports Information Office as an information science that teaches about gatekeepers, individuals whose task it is to learn and disseminate knowledge to those who need to know. The Sports Information Office at Austin Peay State University disseminated information to the local media through press releases, media guides and press conferences.

Content Analysis: The formal system used to draw the conclusions from observations of content will be the content analysis. A content analysis was used to research The Leaf-Chronicle for the month of February in 1993. Bernard Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as a research technique that gives a description of the manifest content of communication as objective, systematic and quantitative.

Agenda-Setting: Agenda-setting theory is stated by Yegade and Dozier (1990) that media coverage of an issue affects what we think about and what issues we consider important. The agenda-setting capacity of the mass media implies a connection between a sequence of events. First, news media makes a report and second, these presentations

influence perceptions of issue importance (Cook, Tyler, Goetz, Gordon, Protess, Leff, & Molotch, 1983).

Agenda Building: Weaver and Elliott (1985) describe agenda-building as the approach that is more concerned with how issues originate, or how subjects of news coverage become issues, than with the media-audience relationship studied so often by agenda-setting researchers. Berkowitz and Adams (1990) describe the agenda-building process as the overall process of creating mass media agendas.

Hypothesis: Defined in Webster's New World Dictionary as an unapproved theory, tentatively accepted to explain certain facts.

Information Subsidy: Gandy (1982) believed that through the provision of subsidies to and through the mass media that those with economic power are able to maintain their control over a capitalist society. He then goes on to define these information subsidies as an attempt to gain influence over the actions of others "by controlling their access to and use of information relevant to those actions" (p. 61). He then says the information is then characterized as a subsidy as the source of the information causes the information to become available at less than the cost a user would face in the absence of the subsidy.

Press Releases: Dunn (1969) describes press releases as handouts that are usually less than two pages in length. They are prepared by decision makers of agencies to transmit information to reporters. The release contains facts and positions from the agency. Dunn also says these releases give the writer greater control over the content of the message and provides opportunity for revision and assures uniformity of the

communications received by different reporters. The following chapter will review the literature that was used for this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature will concern the role the Sports Information Office plays in building the agenda for The Leaf-Chronicle sports section in covering athletics for Austin Peay State University. This review of literature was built around the hypotheses in Chapter 1.

Agenda-setting, and the relation it has on the public, has been written about by many authors. Shaw and McCombs (1977) state that heavy media emphasis on an issue or on a topic can move it above the threshold and into the top ranks of the personal agendas of the audience.

Cook, Tyler, Goetz, Gordon, Protess, Leff and Molotch (1983) wrote in their findings, that the agenda-setting capacity of the mass media implies a causal connection between a temporal sequence of events: first, news media reporting occurs, second, these presentations influence perceptions of issue importance.

Shaw and McCombs (1977) state the agenda-setting power of the press may be thought of as a process of consensus building between those who have access to the press, or whom the press regularly covers with news, the press itself, and the audience or society at large. They finish by saying agenda-setting represents social learning.

In their studies, Yegade and Dozier (1990) found the media agenda-setting theory states that media coverage of an issue affects what we think about and what issues we consider important. Severin and Tankard (1992) see agenda-setting as the idea the news media, by their display of news, come to determine the issues the public thinks about and talks about.

Littlejohn (1989) in his book, Theories of Communication, looked at the reason agenda-setting occurs. He states agenda-setting occurs because the press must be selective in reporting the news. The news outlets, as gatekeepers of information, make choices about what to report and how to report it. Littlejohn also adds, what the public knows about the state of affairs at any given time is largely due to media gatekeeping.

Shaw and McCombs (1977) looked at the idea of gatekeeping and found that each day editors and news directors, the gatekeepers, must decide which items to pass and which to reject. The items that pass are not treated equally when presented to the audience. Some are used at length, others are cut. Some are lead-off stories, others appear much later in the paper. Newspapers clearly state the value they place on the salience of an item through headline size and placement in the newspaper.

Weaver, Graber, McCombs and Eyal (1981) made this statement about the mass media from their studies:

Throughout their day-by-day selection and presentation of the news, the mass media influence our perceptions of what the important topics of the day are. This gives them a major role in setting the public agenda of thought and discussion (p. 4).

The issue of agenda-building comes from a larger scale of agenda-setting. Agenda-building is the process of forming the agenda for the media. In their research of the agenda-building theory, Weaver and Elliott (1985) found the agenda-building approach is more concerned with how issues originate, or how subjects of news coverage

become issued, than with the media-audience relationship studies so often studied by agenda-setting researchers.

To get a better understanding of the agenda-building function, the husband-wife team of Kanervo and Kanervo (1989) wanted to know the effort it took to set the agenda in the press as related to the extent of effort to influence the press content. They stated:

Since the media appear to play a pivotal role in building both public and government agendas, determining what forces influence the building of the press agenda becomes as important a research topic as mapping out what impact that agenda has on public policy and priorities and ultimately governmental policy (p. 308).

In regard to media agenda-building, the limited study of news source and media agendas suggests that a prominent news source can have a major influence on the subsequent media agendas. The selective processes and news judgments also play a significant part in shaping the agenda.

Tichernor, Donohue and Olien (1980) made this statement in their book,

Community Conflict and the Press:

The increasing number of purposive communicators (such as educators, public information and public relations specialists, and advertisers) illustrates not only the increased number of special interest groups, but also the interdependence of groups attempting to control both generation and dissemination of knowledge (p. 15).

Another description of the agenda-building process comes from Berkowitz and Adams (1990) as they say agenda-building is looking at the relationship between news sources and of creating mass media agendas. A related concept Berkowitz and Adams (1990) describe is that of information subsidies. This is the effort of news sources to intentionally shape the news agenda by reducing journalists costs of gathering information. The importance of the role of information subsidies assists the magnitude of news source power. Gandy (1982) defines an information subsidy as an attempt to produce influence over the actions of others by controlling their access and use of information relevant to those actions. Just as the theory of gate keeping that is done by journalists mentioned by Littlejohn (1989) earlier, the news sources releasing the information subsidies to the media can be termed as gatekeepers.

Graham (1989) says information science teaches about gatekeepers, or individuals whose task it is to learn and disseminate knowledge to those who need to know. He also says in college athletics a sports information director fills this role. Gilberg, Eyal, McCombs and Nicholas (1980) state, "The media agenda, to a great extent, is determined by various non-reality factors, such as gatekeepers who decide which available items to pass and which to reject" (p. 585).

Gandy (1982) went one step further in stating some institutions put pressure on the media.

The regularity in content is seen to be the result of the interplay of various pressures imposed on the media by various sources of power, including the authorities who issue licenses and administer the laws; the patrons who invest in or

subsidize the operation; organizations, institutions and loose aggregations of publics that require attention and cultivation; and the managements that set policies and supervise operations (p. 9).

Content is presented to the mass media by these institutions in the form of press releases. These releases give the gatekeeper, or the author of the releases, the opportunity to present only the information they would want released.

Dunn (1969) described these press releases as handouts. He stated these handouts are usually less than two pages in length, prepared by decision makers or state agencies to transmit information to reporters. These releases also contain facts and positions written in story form. The release gives authors a lot of freedom and the ability to express themselves in a more direct manner. Dunn (1969) stated:

The release permits the policy maker to be more concise than he might be verbally. It also allows him relatively greater control over the content of the message, provides opportunity for revision, and assures uniformity of the communications received by different reporters (p. 135).

In some pilot studies, information subsidy usage from news sources has been gathered. But the results have varied. Berkowitz and Adams (1990) describe information subsidy as the concerted efforts of news sources to intentionally shape the news agenda by reducing journalists' costs of gathering information. "The role of information subsidies in the agenda-building process is that it helps assess the magnitude of news source power" (p. 723).

Berkowitz and Adams (1990) found that newspapers use from five to ten percent of the news releases that organizations provided. Cutlip (1962) found in his studies that 35% of the content in newspapers was initiated by public relations practitioners. Kanervo and Kanervo (1989) found that 89% of mayors and city managers said they had suggested topics that were covered by the local newspapers. Rourke (1992) found in her thesis study that 62% of the total of non-athletic articles printed in the Clarksville, Tennessee, The Leaf-Chronicle concerning Austin Peay State University, were from the public relations office at Austin Peay. A total of 44 of 50 (89%) articles from the public relations office were used in the paper.

Related to this area, Gandy (1982) states, "It is the public relation specialists' job to generate publicity" (p. 64). He also suggested we go beyond agenda-setting "to determine who sets the media agenda, how, and for what purposes it is set, and with what impact on the distribution of power and values in society" (p. 14).

The following chapter will lay out the methodology and procedure used during the four-week study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The method of investigation used during this study was a content analysis. The analysis was conducted on the press releases from the Sports Information Office and the stories from The Leaf-Chronicle about Austin Peay athletics.

In this study, the Sports Information staff distributed information in the form of press releases, media guides, press conferences and other information about the university's athletic involvement, coaches, staff and athletes. This information was informative, credible, reliable and tried to portray the athletics department in a positive way.

This study did not include any information that might be included in an editorial or in game coverage. The Sports Information Office did not write editorials or send letters to the editor. The department did write game coverage releases for area media outlets. These releases were also sent to The Leaf-Chronicle, even though the paper had a reporter assigned to Austin Peay for game coverage.

A copy of every press release was provided by the Sports Information Office for this study. These press releases were also sent to The Leaf-Chronicle as they always have been.

No one, except the researcher, within the Sports Information Office knew of this study. No one with The Leaf-Chronicle was notified about the study. This was done to insure a natural order would still take place within the testing period. It was the researcher's belief if this test had been made public, then the natural order of events and/or specialized practices may have taken place to try to influence the study.

The time frame for the study was a four-week period that began on February 1, 1993 and ended on February 28, 1993. There were a total of 28 issues of The Leaf-Chronicle used for this study. Each article directed at Austin Peay athletics was kept for the study. This does not include game coverage and editorials. A distinction between editorials, game coverage and regular stories were determined and the editorials and game coverage stories were discarded.

There were four Sundays, four Mondays, four Mondays, four Tuesdays, four Wednesdays, four Thursdays, four Fridays, and four Saturdays involved during this time period. February was a good month to conduct the study since it had 28 days and each weekday was represented four times within the month. This gave each day an equal opportunity of being used in the study. Another reason this was a good month, was because of the diversity of athletic teams involved in competition during the month. Men's and women's basketball were winding down their seasons, as softball and baseball were just beginning. The outdoor track season for both men and women had started their seasons, as had the tennis teams.

Not included in this study were the use of any photographs or pictures that may have appeared in The Leaf-Chronicle's sports section concerning Austin Peay athletics or athletes. The Sports Information Department does not provide photographs for use in the newspaper from game coverage, so any photographs that appeared were taken by the newspaper photographer.

The content analysis used articles that were printed in The Leaf-Chronicle's sports section during the four-week period. The study focused on whether it could be shown

through content analysis that the Sports Information Office built the agenda for The Leaf-Chronicle sports section.

The items that were printed in The Leaf-Chronicle regarding athletics at Austin Peay State University were coded for analysis. The coding was performed by one individual.

Of the articles used, a comparison was made to determine which articles came from press releases provided from the Sports Information Department. A percentage was then figured from the total of releases sent to The Leaf-Chronicle and the articles actually printed in the paper using the information from the press releases.

A second person was asked to work with the researcher to check for intercoder reliability of the results of the study. This person was not affiliated with Austin Peay State University, Austin Peay athletics or The Leaf-Chronicle newspaper.

The content analysis was determined by making a comparison between the number of articles sent to The Leaf-Chronicle newspaper by the Sports Information Office and what percentage of these articles were printed in the newspaper during the four-week time frame. If an article concerning Austin Peay State University athletics appeared in The Leaf-Chronicle and contained information from a press release, the article was coded as from the Sports Information Office. If the article did not contain information releases from the Sports Information Office, it was coded as a staff written article.

The articles in The Leaf-Chronicle were also coded as positive and negative concerning Austin Peay State University athletes. The information that concerned any upcoming event or promotional event was coded as favorable, because it was an article

determined to promote special events and thus enhance the Austin Peay State University athletic department. There was not a code for neutrality. Articles that were coded as favorable were those which enhanced the reputation of the athletics department. These articles were positive, upbeat and affected the perception of the athletic department at Austin Peay State University in the area in a favorable way. An example of this type of press release would be the release of the names of student-athletes named to the academic honor roll. The articles that were coded negative, were those articles that were negative representations of the athletics department at Austin Peay State University.

This study examined the success of the Austin Peay State University Sports Information Office concerning their influence on The Leaf-Chronicle's media agenda. The study specifically examined and determined whether the information provided to The Leaf-Chronicle by the Sports Information Office was used in published articles.

There were from time to time, telephone interactions between the sports staff of The Leaf-Chronicle and the Sports Information Office regarding information. Also, during this time, a press conference was held every Thursday, with members of different coaching staffs speaking to the media, school faculty and staff and members of the community. This study, however, focused on the direct writing of articles by the Sports Information Department in relation to articles printed in The Leaf-Chronicle. The results of this study are reviewed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The results of this study and investigation were obtained upon the completion of the content analysis of 28 issues from The Leaf-Chronicle. The time frame came from the month of February during 1993.

A total of 18 press releases from Austin Peay State University Sports Information Office was sent to The Leaf-Chronicle's Sports Department during the four-week study. Information from 15 of the press releases from the Sports Information Office were used by The Leaf-Chronicle. Three press releases sent by the Sports Information Office to the newspaper were not used during the four-week time frame.

The Leaf-Chronicle sports staff did print four opinion columns and 26 stories from game events. The events covered were men's and women's basketball, baseball, tennis, softball, and track.

The first hypothesis stated the information provided to The Leaf-Chronicle from the Sports Information Office can and will build the agenda concerning coverage of Austin Peay State University athletics. This hypothesis was supported during the four-week study. The Leaf-Chronicle staff wrote 45 articles, but a total of 26 were on game coverages and opinion columns. Of the other 19 articles, 15 contained information generated from the Sports Information Office press releases. More of the articles that were printed in The Leaf-Chronicle concerning athletics at Austin Peay State University came from information disseminated by the Sports Information Office than developed by newspaper staff. The staff written articles, excluding game coverage and opinion columns,

totaled four, compared to 15 articles that contained information from the press releases from the Sports Information Office.

The second hypothesis stated over half of the sports articles about Austin Peay present in The Leaf-Chronicle will come from information provided by the Sports Information Office. A total of 18 press releases were sent to the newspaper by the Sports Information Office. There were a total of 19 articles concerning Austin Peay State University athletics printed in The Leaf-Chronicle. Of the 19 articles, 15 contained information generated by the Sports Information Office. There were a total of three releases that were not used by The Leaf-Chronicle during the study, but that does not mean they were not used at some point after this study had been completed.

The third hypothesis stated at least 80% of the information released from the Sports Information Department will be published in some form or fashion in published stories. During the four-week study, the total number of articles sent to The Leaf-Chronicle from the Austin Peay State University Sports Information Office was 18. Information from 15 of these ran in the newspaper. The newspaper printed in some forms information from 83% of the press released issued by Sports Information. Since the study looked only at four weeks of coverage, it is possible that it missed stories containing information from the remaining 17% of the press releases, which may have been published after that four-week period.

The fourth hypothesis stated that the articles published by The Leaf-Chronicle would represent the athletic department in a positive and favorable manner. The

information generated by the Sports Information Office represented Austin Peay State University athletics in a positive, favorable and upbeat manner.

This study indicates that the Sports Information Department was successful in setting the agenda of The Leaf-Chronicle in their presentation of Austin Peay State University in a positive and favorable manner.

During the study, the hypothesis was supported because all 18 of the press releases generated by the Sports Information Office were coded as positive. Of the 19 articles, that appeared in The Leaf-Chronicle, 18 were coded as positive. This included all 15 articles that were generated using the information from the Sports Information Office. There were several articles that were negative in nature due to the outcomes of several athletic contests. These articles were part of the opinion columns and game coverages not used in this study. The following chapter will review the analysis and conclusions from the study.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study supported, through a content analysis, that the Austin Peay Sports Information Office had an impact on the agenda of The Leaf-Chronicle's sports section during the four-week study concerning Austin Peay State University athletics department. Since the Sports Information Office represented the Austin Peay State University athletics program through press releases, the sports section in the Clarksville daily newspaper, The Leaf-Chronicle, covered the athletic department in a manner supported by the material obtained from the Sports Information Department. This research suggested the Sports Information Department could influence the sports section at The Leaf-Chronicle concerning the Austin Peay Athletic Department.

The first hypothesis was supported. The newspaper did use the interpretation of news and information released by the Sports Information Office in the sports section. This information as disseminated by the Sports Information Department rather than the newspaper staff. This type of coverage was easier for The Leaf-Chronicle because the news and information was made readily available on the current events concerning Austin Peay State University athletics.

This method was easier for the staff of The Leaf-Chronicle because information was readily available on current events and was sent to the paper on the same day each week, that way, the staff knew exactly when releases were sent and would arrive. Again, this information did not include editorials and game coverage.

Another reason this was easier for The Leaf-Chronicle staff was they did not have to research current news or events at the university since the information was delivered

quickly by the Sports Information Office press releases. This information was placed in an orderly form and written in the Associated Press style book of writing before it was mailed conveniently to the newspaper office. The press releases were written in the Associated Press writing style because this is the same style used by The Leaf-Chronicle.

The content analysis method that was used in this study gave the opportunity for the researcher to gather information and present it to the audience. By doing a content analysis of the newspaper, the researcher could make a determination if the newspaper medium was presenting the Athletics Department at Austin Peay State University to the readers in a positive or negative manner.

The second hypothesis was that over half of the Austin Peay State University Sports Information Department press releases would be presented in part or in whole in The Leaf-Chronicle published stories concerning athletics at Austin Peay State University. The newspaper took the information received in the press releases and incorporated it into the paper about the university instead of having a staff member from the sports department travel to the campus and look for information. There were 18 press releases sent to the paper, of that amount, 15 were used in part or in whole in published stories about Austin Peay State University athletics.

The information released to The Leaf-Chronicle seemed to easily flow from the Sports Information Office to the pages of the sports section. Austin Peay State University participated in Division-I athletics, which is the highest level of competition among the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) members. This seemed to give Austin Peay State University athletics an importance in coverage in the sports section. Therefore,

the information was free of any obstacles that would hinder the passing of the information to the readers.

The third hypothesis also was supported that at least 80% of the information released from the Sports Information Office will be published in part or in whole in published stories. During the four-week study, there were a total of 45 published stories concerning athletics at Austin Peay State University. This number includes editorials and game coverage. The Sports Information Office had a total of 18 releases during the study, and 15 of those releases were used in published stories. The information contained in the press releases was not changed, but was condensed to fit into the space available. The grammar, wording and meaning of the releases were not changed although they were condensed.

The fourth hypothesis was also supported, in that the articles in The Leaf-Chronicle concerning athletics at Austin Peay State University, were positive and favorable. The information used in these articles was indicative of the information released by the Sports Information Office. The releases always used wording and looked for positive actions from the athletes and athletic action to be sent to The Leaf-Chronicle.

The press has been used since the early days of radio as a messenger to the public. There are now studies being done, such as this one, to show how the messenger can indeed shape the message. The exact purpose of various organizations, businesses and groups with public relations or information departments is to promote their representatives as positively as possible. That would be done by building the agenda for the media. This

in turn would provide the message to the public as these organizations, businesses, and groups want. Further ways of expanding this study could look at the use of photographs to reinforce the article being written.

Another way of expanding the study would be to look at attendance at athletic events. Is attendance considered good or bad? The study could try to determine whether a strong attendance is due to athletic teams winning, or if coverage by the media can generate enough interest among the public to warrant their attendance at athletic events. The study could look at the attendance figures from the past. Attendance figures from times when the teams were successful and when they were not successful, and compare them to each other.

The use of information gathered from telephone conversations between sports information personnel and sports information personnel and sports reporters could be added to the study. Information given to the media could be coded as it is given and whether or not it is used in published articles concerning athletic events or not. The information given would probably be given to the media in reference to questions asked by the media. The questions could be coded as either by negative or positive, and along with the questions, the answers could be coded.

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