

Abstract

News content is the product of multi-layered influences, including individual journalists, newsroom routines, organizational mechanisms, and social, economic, and ideological forces (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The judgments of newsworthiness by people at each level of influence (e.g., journalists, audiences, political censors) vary from one group to another based on group members' different roles, interests, and attitudes. Because journalists are the people directly involved in the news production process, all other groups exert their influence on news content through communication and interaction with journalists. As a result, journalists' news judgments involve not only their own professional and individual perspectives, but also perceptions of other groups' news preferences (Atwood, 1970; Dyer & Nayman, 1977; Gladney, 1996; Lassahn, 1967; Martin, O'Keefe, & Nayman, 1972). The final news coverage in a newspaper reflects the struggle of different forces inside and outside news organizations (Gans, 1979).

This study investigates how news content is shaped by individual, organizational, political, and market forces. Four groups of people are identified— news staffers, media executives, political censors, and audiences— each, respectively, representing these four forces. A comparison of people's assessments of newsworthiness and news coverage can provide an idea of how news content is shaped by different forces. It can also demonstrate whether and how the four groups correspond to each other in their perceptions of newsworthiness. As journalists are the people who actually produce news content, this study further explores how journalists' news judgments are influenced by their personal characteristics, perceptions of internal and

external pressures, and news characteristics.

Data were collected from both content analysis and surveys. A Chinese newspaper, *Chong Qing Morning Post*, was chosen as the sample. News items were derived from content analysis of one issue of the newspaper and were used for ranking in surveys of four groups of people in Chong Qing: news staffers, media executives, political censors, and audiences.

The results indicate that news staffers are the persons who decide the way news is covered, while media executives, political censors, and audiences do not affect news coverage directly. The findings also suggest that media executives and political censors share similar news perceptions that deviate from actual news coverage. Among the four-level forces on news content, individual forces have the strongest influences, followed by organizational and market forces, in that order. However, it is hard to tell whether the political-level forces are stronger or weaker than organizational and market forces in shaping news content. In terms of the strengths of correlation between journalists and non-journalists, media executives are more susceptible to being influenced by political censors' news perceptions than by audiences', while news staffers are more concerned about audiences' news judgments. Also, political censors are more close to executives than to audiences in news assessments. Hence, it can be concluded that there is strong agreement of news perceptions between media executives and political censors while audiences are more close to news staffers.

Regarding the influences on journalists' news judgments, multi-level analysis has been applied since the predictors of journalists' news judgments involve both news-level and journalist-level variables. Six news-level