

ABSTRACT:

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Editorial policy: On the goals and directions of Swedish daily newspapers.

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This dissertation examines the editorial policies of Swedish daily newspapers during the 1990's. It aims to identify the extent and content of such policies, both in terms of the newspapers' basic editorial values and as a means of gaining insight into internal power relations.

The study was conducted in three stages: 1) a survey sent to all Swedish daily newspapers addressing editorial policy on the coverage of issues relating to politics, labor unions, the local community, equality, etc. The survey also made it possible to map the existence of written editorial policies for general news coverage among Swedish newspapers. 2) a content analysis of written editorial policies submitted by the newspapers for analysis. 3) special case studies of the editorial policies of four archetypal papers.

The survey responses reveal that the editorial leadership of many newspapers aim to promote certain issues through the choice of topics and the slant of the article. In terms of the overall presence of policy documents, the survey shows that most were introduced in the 1990's and they tend to be more common among the larger papers.

The content analysis is based on a study of 45 policy documents. With the help of document statements on the paper's official political stance and the relationship between the news staff and owners, the papers were first divided into the categories of those dominated by an ownership ideology versus those characterized by a desire for the news staff to be independent of owner influence. With the help of statements pertaining to policy content, both categories were further subdivided into an 'active' versus a 'mirror' style of journalism. Based on statements in the policy documents, each of the papers has been placed into one of the following four categories: journalist-dominated active papers, which emphasize general watchdog reporting; owner-dominated active papers, which emphasize investigative journalism and promote a political agenda; journalist-dominated mirror papers, which place great emphasis on linguistic and factual correctness; and owner-dominated mirror papers, which emphasize the reader, information sources and to some extent even advertisers. Policies written during the first half of the 1990's display a certain surplus of journalist-dominated papers and an active style of journalism. In the case studies, however, it was shown that a change occurred in the latter 1990's whereby the influence of owners increased and papers started to place more emphasis on local material and express more concern about the economic aspects of newspaper circulation. The results suggest an increasing trend toward owner-dominated, mirror journalism. At the same time, however, the mere occurrence of a written editorial policy reflects an attempt by publicists to increase their influence. Certain ideological overtones in the policy documents support this claim.

KEY WORDS: policy, journalism, newspapers, Sweden, power, influence, editors.