UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
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NEWS DETERMINANTS IN COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC RADIO STATIONS: A
STUDY OF JOY F.M AND UNIIQ F.M.

BY

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DECLARATION
I do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research, undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. This work has not been presented by anyone in part or whole for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God, without whom I could never have made it, and to my parents, Rev. and Mrs. Agodzo, for your incomparable support to me over the years.
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ABSTRACT

“What is news?” How do journalists as producers and purveyors of news determine what news is? This study sought answers to these age-old questions by examining newsroom practices in a commercial and public radio station in Ghana, that is, Joy FM and Uniiq FM respectively. Underpinned by the theories of gatekeeping, ownership and news values, the study sought to interrogate the continuing relevance of traditional hegemonic views about news determinants. This study argued that these views needed to be examined in the Ghanaian context, given the fact that contexts differ historically, culturally and in terms of prevailing social needs. For instance, Ghana’s media environment has encountered changes in re-democratisation, pluralism and technological advancements which may not be synonymous to those in other contexts. The study also sought to establish whether ownership was a determinant of news. An ethnographic study which combined in-depth interviews, document analysis and participant observation was used to explore new ideas about news determinants. The study found that some news values adopted by the public station, Uniiq F.M, were not in line with traditional definitions of news. Also, ownership was not found to be a determinant of news in both stations. The study concluded that there are no universal determinants with regards to what makes news, since this may vary according to context.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The question “What is news?” and how journalists as producers and purveyors of news determine what news is, has been central to debates in the field of professional journalism and in academia globally. These debates are still relevant considering that news and its determinants are a core component of journalism practice. Across the globe, news has been the most influential source of information, opinions and ideas for most people. The Global Media Monitoring Project considers news as “a key element of the public and private space in which people, nations and societies live” (GMMP, 2010, p.6). Therefore, how news is produced and factors that determine what make news as well as the production process is a subject of interest and significance. It is important for instance, to note that although many events occur every day, not every one of these events qualifies to be published as news.

Studies that have delved into the question have offered extensive definitions of what news is. Many of such studies have been undertaken largely in Western countries (Dunaway & Lawrence, 2015; Iosifidis, 2010) and have chartered the path for what has become conventionally accepted as news. In this regard, taxonomies have been proposed to pinpoint certain factors that determine what news is, and journalistic jargons such as “if it bleeds, it leads”, are used to suggest that what journalists consider newsworthy is largely based on fatalities (Miller & Albert, 2015).
Over the years, scholars have created templates of news determinants that define news in Western contexts. However, it must not be assumed that these taxonomies would be relevant in every context, considering that backgrounds and existing circumstances differ from one setting to another. In the face of insufficient empirical evidence expounding news determinants in non-Western settings, questions arise as to whether traditional taxonomies and concepts are operational in other contexts such as Ghana.

The traditional definitions of what makes news have been contested even in Western cultures from where they originated, and arguments have been raised about their universality and continuing relevance particularly in the face of challenges and opportunities brought about by technology (Harcup & O’Neill, 2017). Early in the 1980s, Murphy and Scotton (1987) argued about the appropriateness of what is considered the standard approach to determining news and called on developing countries to consider alternative news values. This call for alternative news values was particularly relevant in the context of Africa’s media history of state monopoly and technological deficiencies.

In the light of these reconsiderations about what makes news, the question then arises as to whether Western standards or traditional approaches are applicable in the African context, particularly in Ghana where media liberalisation and technological changes have contributed to a new face of broadcast journalism in Ghana (Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2015). Therefore, this study sought to interrogate news determinants in Ghana, focusing on a commercial and a public radio station, Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M respectively. Before explaining the reasons for the choice of
these stations, it is first necessary to look at the history of journalism and the status of radio and news in Ghana.

1.2 Radio Journalism Practice in Ghana

Radio broadcasting began in the colonial period in Ghana (formerly called the Gold Coast) as a mouthpiece to propagate the regime’s agenda. For years before independence, radio was an instrument steered and controlled by the dictates of colonialism, as with most African countries at the time (Karikari, 2007). News was produced from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), based on its own values and ideologies, and then directly relayed to audiences in the Gold Coast by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), formerly Station ZOY. The BBC news relays were complemented with local news produced by personnel from the Information Services Department (Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2015). With no training in journalism, news determinants were based on the formats and news values of the BBC. In 1956, a year before Ghana’s independence, GBC, the national broadcaster, set up its own news department with its reporters assigned to cover news (Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2015).

After Ghana’s independence in 1957, the colonial legacy of state control of broadcasting was handed down to post-colonial governments, and the GBC, like many other media organisations in Africa, operated as a state-owned institution. Particularly in the first post-colonial government led by Nkrumah, state control was influenced by his nationalist ideas. At the time, broadcast journalism practice was generally patterned after nationalist ideologies that emphasised national development, integration and national cohesion; these ensured that broadcasting functioned as a mechanism for nation-building (Karikari, 2007), as journalists
selected the news with these key concepts in mind. Furthermore, the concept of freedom of expression, associated with a liberal media environment, had not yet been introduced; thus, state control of broadcasting served as a check to ensure that journalists propagated information devoid of criticisms or contrary opinions to government policies and actions.

Social and political reforms that triggered the need for democratic governance, as a matter of course, ultimately led to the end of government monopoly of the media and the birth of a pluralistic media environment in the 1990’s (Boateng, 2009). Along with re-democratisation came the deregulation of the media, as “the lifting of restrictions on the media was a prerequisite for Ghana’s transition back to democracy in 1993” (Gadzekpo, 2007, p.89).

This turn of events in Ghana’s democracy brought about the rapid multiplication of radio stations, and news production was transferred out of the reins of the GBC and into the domain of budding commercial media organisations – GBC was no longer the sole producer of radio news in Ghana, as liberalisation of the airwaves created a competitive broadcast news environment.

1.3 Radio Journalism after Media Liberalisation

Since the 1990’s, the Ghanaian media landscape has been flooded with different news items, and radio listeners have been at the receiving end of an infinite supply of news from a diversity of radio stations. The National Media Commission recommends that broadcast organisations incorporate news in their broadcast schedules as a way of encouraging diversity (NMC
Broadcasting Guidelines, 1999); Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015, p. 46) has noted that news and current affairs have become staples on most radio stations’ programming in Ghana. She states:

Most radio stations, particularly those based in Accra, air news (local and foreign) of between one and four hours daily… some stations rely on syndicated news generated by stations outside their locations to which they are affiliated.

As at the second quarter of 2017, the National Communications Authority, the organisation responsible for the licensing of radio stations in Ghana, reported that the total number of authorised radio stations in Ghana numbered up to 505 (National Communications Authority, 2017). Out of this, 392 were operational, with 31 registered as public radio stations, five as public (foreign) radio stations, 81 as community radio stations, 22 as campus radio stations, and 366 as commercial radio stations. The radio stations broadcast news both in English and Ghanaian languages, underscoring the popularity of radio news among different categories of people with varying linguistic competencies. Recent studies have shown that radio has not only become an important part of people’s everyday lives but also a dominant source of news for majority of audiences in Ghana (Afrobarometer survey, 2018).

What does the new face of journalism look like as far as news content is concerned? With media pluralism, what role would ownership play in determining news values? Scholarship which has focused on the news output of various media organisations, has indicated that there may be differences in content produced in public and commercial media organisations by virtue of their ownership statuses. For instance, Soroka (2012) points out that media routines which theoretically speak to gatekeeping functions are expected to systematically differ
between public and commercial media, considering that journalistic norms, ownership, organisational routines and media competition are factors that play a role in gatekeeping.

This study examined the news values and gatekeeping practices of a commercial and public radio station, specifically *Joy F.M* and *Uniiq F.M* respectively, and sought to ascertain what similarities and differences may exist as far as these practices were concerned. The study also examined the role of technology in news selection and gatekeeping practices of the stations.

1.4 Choice of radio stations

*Joy F.M* was selected for the study because it is the first commercial radio station to have been set up after the liberalisation of the airwaves in the 1990’s. *Uniiq F.M* is also the oldest public radio station that operates under the GBC, thus the study considered it suitable to use these two stations as points of comparison. Given their history, it was expected that both stations would have well-established and conventional news selection and production processes.

Again, studies show that *Joy F.M* and *Uniiq F.M* are among other Accra-based stations that serve as syndicate sources of news for many stations outside Accra, most of which are affiliated to them (GMSIP, as cited in Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2015). As standard stations for affiliate media organisations, it is important to examine their gatekeeping practices.

*Joy F.M* received its authorisation to operate the airwaves in 1995. Located in Kokomlemle, a suburb of Accra, Ghana, *Joy F.M* forms part of a parent media organisation known as the Multimedia Group Limited (MGL). The station operates under the Group’s vision to become a
world class African media organisation thus its aim to include quality news and current affairs in its format (Multimedia Group, 2017).

*Uniiq F.M* is classified under the National Communications Authority (2016) as a public radio station. Due to its status as a public broadcaster, the station operates upon the public service broadcasting philosophy, which seeks to defend the ordinary citizen and to speak for national unity and democratic values. Until the liberalisation of the airwaves in the 1990s, the station was the primary source of news for Ghanaians.

*Uniiq F.M* forms part of the former state broadcaster, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, which has now been transformed into a public service broadcaster as stated in Section 5 of the corporation’s Editorial policy (2017). Also, the National Media Policy (n.d.) states that the 1968 Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Decree converted the station into a public corporation.

1.5 Problem Statement

It is argued that traditional news determinants as defined largely by Western scholarship may not be applicable in Ghana today, as in many other African countries, due partly to historical and cultural differences as well as different social needs and media contexts. Even in the context of Ghana, such determinants may vary for each media organisation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the advent of broadcast pluralism in Ghana in the early 1990’s was hailed as refreshing, based on the expectation that news content of new radio stations would vary from what the GBC had hitherto provided as a state organisation for several decades. In a plural media environment therefore, what would then make news, and what news values would
determine news in the different radio stations, particularly in the commercial and public radio stations?

On the basis that every context is distinguished by its own idiosyncrasies, an empirical study within the Ghanaian context best answers the question of what makes news in Ghana. Moreover, literature largely fails to clarify the determinants of news in commercial and public radio in the Ghanaian context. This study therefore took a critical look at the gatekeeping and newsroom culture of news production in a commercial and public radio station in Ghana. It was based on the fact that Ghana’s cultural needs, journalistic history and changes in the practice of journalism, which have significantly marked the Ghanaian media environment, could set a different definition of what news is in Ghana.

1.6 Research objectives

The overall goal of this study was to examine the news operations of two popular radio stations in Ghana to ascertain their news determinants. The following were the study’s objectives:

- To explore the newsroom routines, newsgathering and news selection processes in Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M.
- To find out the dominant news values in Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M.
- To determine the role of technology in the newsgathering and news selection processes of the two stations.
- To identify factors, apart from news values, that determine news selection.
- To determine whether ownership dictates what should be included as newsworthy items for Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M.
• To examine the differences and similarities, if any, in editors' priorities in selecting certain news stories over others.

1.7 Research questions

These research questions served as guidelines for data gathering and gave a clearer understanding of the study:

1. What are the news values for Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M?
2. Does ownership determine the gatekeeping process for Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M?
3. What role does technology play in newsgathering and the selection of certain news items?
4. What factors, apart from news values, determine the selection of certain news items?
5. What news items are considered priorities for news selection by editors and journalists of each radio type?
6. What similarities and differences exist in news selection, news gathering processes and newsroom routines of the two stations?

1.8 Significance of study

The study revisits old questions about journalism and newsroom practices regarding news determinants as defined in the Ghanaian context. It contributes to the field of journalism by providing insight into newsroom practices and what constitutes news in a commercial and public radio station, specifically pertaining to the determinants of news and production processes.
Previous studies have explored news values and determinants of different forms of media, that is, radio, television and print in different contexts. A recent study conducted in the context of Ghana focused only on a state-owned media organization (Avorgbedor, 2009). However, besides examining the newsroom practices of the two radio stations, this study also highlights the role ownership plays in determining what makes news. This is particularly important given Ghana’s plural media environment.

1.9 Operational definitions

Below is a list of key terms employed in this study. Due to the fact that their meanings may differ in other situations, these definitions have been suited specifically to fit the context of this study:

- **Commercial radio station**: in reference to the Ghana National Media Policy (n.d.), which categorises the media into public, commercial and community media, *Joy F.M* falls under the category of a commercial radio station.

- **Joy F.M**: may be used interchangeably with Joy newsroom.

- **Joy editorial policy**: may be used interchangeably with Multimedia editorial policy.

- **Newsroom culture/newsroom routines**: procedures and routines that are established and accepted as norms in news gathering, pre-production of news, and news production either within *Joy F.M* or *Uniiq F.M*.

- **News determinants**: refer to all factors that impinge on what makes news. These include, but are not limited to the unique newsroom cultures and news values within various news contexts. “News determinants” is interchangeably used with the phrases “what makes news” and “what is news”.

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• **New face of journalism**: journalism/journalistic practices in the modern era.

• **News operations**: practices specific to each radio station established to bring about a desired output.

• **Newsworthiness**: the quality/attribute of an event that renders it important enough to be broadcast as news.

• **Public radio station**: in reference to the Ghana National Media Policy (n.d.), which categorises the media into public, commercial and community media, and further classifies the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) as a public media organisation (under section 6.2.1), the GBC’s radio station, *Uniiq F.M.*, falls under the category of a public radio station.

• **Technology**: encompasses devices and machinery used in news work, as well as new media technology and information communication technology (ICT).

• **Uniiq F.M**: may be used interchangeably with Uniiq newsroom.

• **Uniiq editorial policy**: may be used interchangeably with GBC editorial policy.

### 1.10 Summary

This chapter served as the background to this study by presenting an exposition on the past and present Ghanaian media environment, highlighting some changes that have evolved following the era of media liberalisation in Ghana. It emphasised that different prevailing perspectives which exist with regards to standard news values and news determinants focus mainly on Western contexts. It also noted that an examination of gatekeeping practices of commercial, vis-à-vis public radio stations in Ghana, is largely lacking in literature. The chapter presented
the study’s problem statement, objectives, research questions and significance, and also gave an outline of operational definitions as used in the study.
CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This study was grounded on three theories – the Gatekeeping, News Values and Ownership theories. This chapter discusses these theories and what they hypothesise, in order to give a more in-depth understanding about the study on news determinants.

2.2 The Gatekeeping theory

The gatekeeping theory explains the process of news selection in journalism. McQuail (1992, p. 213) defines gatekeeping as “a process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions on whether or not to admit a particular news story to pass through the gates of a news medium”. According to Barzillai-Nahon (2009, p.1), “Gatekeeping refers broadly to the process of controlling information as it moves through a gate or filter and is associated with exercising different types of power, for example, selecting news”.

The term “Gatekeeping” was first used by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin to describe a breadwinner as “the person who decides which food ends up on the family's dinner table” (Lewin, 1947, p. 145). However, he acknowledged that this theory “holds not only for food channels but also for the travelling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group” (Lewin, 1947, p. 145). The Gatekeeping theory as developed by Kurt Lewin in 1947, is founded upon the fundamental point that there are “forces” or pressures that can either impede or allow the uninhibited flow of news items through the media, or "gates" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In 1950, the theory was adapted into communication studies by David Manning.
White, a journalism professor at Boston University, to explain how a countless number of news items available to the gatekeeper are selected, such that only a few items make it through to the dissemination stage.

Indeed, apart from news selection, gatekeeping is crucial in almost all communication planning roles in the media (Nunoo, 2016). Scholars affirm that gatekeeping consists of many more processes that go beyond the selection of items. For instance, Shoemaker et al. (2001, p.233) say that “gatekeeping in mass communication can be seen as the overall process through which social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed, and is not just a series of ‘in’ and ‘out’ decisions”.

The field of Communication analyses Gatekeeping as a process and an important news routine, but it also considers the factors involved in the process. Alowo (2010) noted:

The factors, which are dotted throughout Gatekeeping literature on news, include the economic constraints on news gathering and production, the personal and professional characteristics of the journalists, the ideologies of those in power and the media routines which include assessing the news worthiness of stories among others (p. 16).

Other factors that impinge on gatekeeping include personal ideologies, beliefs and values of the gatekeeper (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Also, gatekeeping tends to influence what is selected and aired as news. It helps newsrooms sift out information from a wide availability of options, especially since not all news stories can be presented or contained at the same time.
and within the same space. The gate-keeping function of news media has been examined by media practitioners and researchers since the 1950s, to explain why some issues and events become newsworthy while others remain obscure (Braun, 2009).

Researchers such as Clausen (2004; p.7) believe that the choice of news in newsrooms is the result of “a conscious cultural effort”, where cultures strive to compete with each other for the media space. Thus, he argues that news reflects a cultural element that makes it specific to unique contexts. Strömbäck, Karlsson and Hopmann (2012) also state that the use of digital media and online journalism have emphasised the fact that media technologies play an increasingly important role in news production and that the type of news an organisation would be capable of selecting and producing would depend on the kind of technology it is empowered with.

In the Ghanaian context, Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015) outlines the advancements in journalism that exist because of the role of technology in newsrooms, emphasising noticeable changes associated with newsgathering activities such as sound gathering and editing. This belabors the point that new tools used in radio journalism have the ability to impact newsgathering and news selection practices. Akrofi-Quarcoo (2015) also notes that multi-tasking in carrying out newsroom activities is a key development that impinges on gatekeeping.

Colistra (2008, p. 45) posits that media content may be determined by “the very place in which it is created, that is, the media organisation itself”. Thus, it is argued that the organisation itself determines what is selected as news, and not the individuals who work in it. O’Neill and
Harcup (2009, p. 168) also state that news selection is based on external functions including “occupational routines and constraints and ideology” of the organisation and media environment, and not only on inherent characteristics of events. Westerstähl and Johansson (1994, p.71), on the other hand, conclude that it is the gatekeeper’s motives that guide them in news selection process. They distinguish between these two types of motives, namely “the assumed taste or interest of the audience and the intention to influence the audience”. These perspectives suggest that media gatekeeping may result from an interplay of factors that include news values, input structure and organisational routines.

The gatekeeping practices of journalists and editors also affect audience’s perception of the importance or otherwise of a particular news item. McCombs and Shaw (1972) studied the effects of gatekeepers' decisions in the 1970’s, and observed that an audience’s appreciation of a news item was premised on the degree of prominence given to it by the media (agenda setting). Thus, audiences attach levels of importance to news items depending on how often media organisations select and present these items as news.

The Gatekeeping theory demonstrates that news items made available for the consumption of audiences are only a percentage of a great number of items submitted for production in a newsroom. This theory helps in this study to explore the processes news editors and journalists carry out to filter through a vast availability of items, as well as the factors that determine the daily selection of these news items.
2.3 The News values theory

This theory proposes that “there is a systematic and stable connection between the qualities attributable to an event (news factors) and the news value assigned to the respective news item by journalists” (Scheufele, 2006, as cited in Maier & Ruhrmann, 2008, p. 199). In other words, the properties of an event give it a greater likelihood of being selected as news. In 1965, Galtung and Ruge (1965) published a seminal article that described the most newsworthy properties of an event in a taxonomy of 12 news values. The taxonomy comprised of frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite people, personification, and reference to something negative. A breakdown of the new values is as follows:

Frequency places emphasis on sudden events and pre-determines that these events are more likely to be reported than those that occur gradually or over a long period, for example, a fire outbreak would be preferred over a social trend. Threshold involves the tendency to select a news story if it has more impact or intensity, if it affects more people, or if there is a significant or drastic effect that it presents. Stories that have greater intensity are selected over others.

With regards to the factor of unambiguity, events which have clearer, unambiguous meanings are more likely to be selected for news than those that are open to subjective interpretations or which require that the audience first have a basic understanding of the complex background of the event. Meaningfulness relates to the proximity and relevance of a news item to a particular culture. It refers to the degree to which the audience identifies with the topic, for example, news stories about people who are of the same nationality as the audience, or who speak the
same language and share other commonalities. Stories with this property receive more coverage than those without it.

The factor of consonance causes the media to be prompt in reporting an item because they have prepared for or anticipated it. Stories which are considered up to standard or which meet expectation are covered more easily, unlike those that do not fit into the media's expectations.

Unexpectedness influences gatekeepers to choose an event on the basis of its extraordinariness, rather than selecting an everyday occurrence. Continuity refers to the property of reporting a news story which has already been in the news for some time. Sometimes, this occurs because news teams are already familiar with the story, and also because the audience has prior knowledge about the event.

Composition involves placing a story as news because the editor judges it as more appropriate not because it is inherently newsworthy, but because it helps to balance out other news items. For example, if all or most news items for a particular day are foreign, an editor may choose to include a domestic news item to balance the stories out.

Reference to elite nations involves selecting stories centered around more influential nations whose actions have greater implications on the rest of the world. The definition of an influential or elite nation is culturally relative and thus may differ from one country or media organisation to another. It also deals with cultural proximity in the sense that nations which share similar cultures are more likely to receive coverage.
Reference to elite persons places more attention and coverage on the elite, famous and important people in the society. Hence, the President of Ghana is likely to receive more coverage than the Assembly man of a Ghanaian constituency. The factor of personification places emphasis on news items that feature people, especially someone who is well-known. It also focuses on human-interest stories.

Reference to something negative refers to the likelihood of selecting stories centred on death, damage, natural disasters and other adverse conditions, and rating them above more positive stories. Also, stories with the element of negativity are more likely to rate highly on other news values such as threshold and unexpectedness.

The Galtung and Ruge (1965) taxonomy, the pioneering traditional definition of what makes news, became the most cited work on news values in academic circles (Caple and Bednarek, 2013). The universality of the Galtung and Ruge (1956) framework has however been questioned, leading scholars to conclude that it is “the foundation study of news values” (Bell, 1991, p. 155) rather than the standard of news. This taxonomy has also been examined in different contexts to ascertain whether it is universally applicable.

Harcup and O’Neill (2017, p.1482), for instance, have re-examined the Galtung and Ruge (1965) framework and they conclude on a contemporary taxonomy of 15 news values comprising of the elements of “magnitude, exclusivity, good news, bad news, the power elite, celebrity, conflict, surprise, audio-visuals, news organisation’s agenda, shareability,
entertainment, drama, follow-up and relevance”. Harcup and O’Neill (2017) also suggest that the more an event fulfils the news criteria, the more likely it will be considered for selection.

Other studies and taxonomies, however, have not considered the Galtung and Ruge (1965) model of news, but have based their news values on their own contexts. For instance, Hetherington (1985) gives the list of news values as consisting of elements of drama, sex, surprise, personalities, scandal, crime, numbers, proximity and significance, while Schlesinger (1987) states that logistics is a key news value in news selection. In other words, the ability to deploy and control production and reporting staff, and functionality of technical resources can determine whether a story is covered, although this has been eased by the availability of global communications even from remote regions. Bell (1991), however, postulates that news is selected based on the predictability criterium, which means an event has a higher probability of being selected if it has been scheduled by the media organisation prior to its occurrence.

In line with Harrison’s (2006, p. 136) definition of a news value as the “property of an event which increases its chance of becoming news”, Conley and Lamble (2006, p. 42) have noted that “news values will determine whether stories are to be pursued. They will determine whether, if pursued, they will then be published, and then, if published, they will determine where the stories will be placed in news presentation. Having been placed, news values will determine to what extent the public will read them”. Again, Lippmann (1997, cited in Eilders, 2006) mentions five news values that determine the news, namely sensationalism, proximity, relevance, unambiguity and facticity. Herbert (2000, p.17) also states that stories which contain
proximity, timeliness, prominence, action, human interest, novelty, sex and humour are more likely to be selected as news.

The numerous scholarly perspectives and frameworks given on news values substantiate the assertion by Ryan (1991, p. 7) that “there is no end to the lists of news criteria”, as different news values considered in news selection evolve in response to external changes. The study thus sought to examine whether news values in the context of Ghana also vary, given its different historical background, cultural setting and social needs.

As noted by Harcup and O'Neill (2001) that identifying the news values used in the practice of journalism cannot provide a complete explanation of the journalistic process, the news values theory was employed in this study as a complement to the gatekeeping theory. It was also employed because the news values theory points out the exact qualities that media workers look out for in considering whether a story is newsworthy or otherwise, while the gatekeeping theory helps explain the process of news selection.

2.4 Ownership theory

This theory echoes a popular saying that “He who pays the piper calls the tune”. Djankov et al. (2003, p. 345) identify ownership as a determinant of media output, noting that “ownership bestows control”. Croteau and Hoynes (2003), on one hand, have noted that many scholars associate media ownership with the assertion that the content of media is largely controlled by the media owners. Thus, a group of people wield the power as owners of media corporations, and by their decisions, are able to dictate what the public is served with. This control over the
media extends even to the point of exerting political influence and projecting personal interests in media content. On the other hand, Croteau and Hoynes (2003) observe that the ownership structure of an organisation does not directly determine news output.

Scholars like Altschull (1984) argue that those who finance the press incorporate their own interests such that it reflects in the content produced by the press. This projects the perspective that those who have the financial control of the press are the ones who determine what should be considered as news, and not necessarily those who gather and produce the news as professionals.

In line with Altschull (1984) that financiers of the media are also the controllers, August (2009) notes that a key objective of profit-oriented or commercial media organisations is to attract as much income from advertisers as possible. Thus, key advertisers pull the strings of these organisations, and “because the media depends on advertising, news that might be offensive to important advertisers is unlikely to be broadcast” (August, 2009, p.3).

Again, as a result of their mandates associated with ownership, commercial media have been known to operate with a profit motive in their news production, while public media are not predisposed to the dictates of profit-making but are focused on serving the public interest (Banerjee & Seneviratne, 2005; Croteau, 2005). These differing ownership statuses that the media hold may unvaryingly determine the factors they consider in news selection.
This theory is helpful in understanding whether the differences in news values, news gathering and news selection practices of the two media organisations, Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M, are as a result of their different ownership statuses.

2.5 Summary

The study was underpinned by the Gatekeeping, News Values and Ownership theories. A combination of these three theories was necessary as none of these, on their own, provides a complete explanation of what news is. Rather, they complement each other in determining what makes news.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews both pioneering and contemporary research into news values, ownership and gatekeeping, and this gives a firm grounding and serves as a guide to the study.

3.2 Related studies

Related Studies on New values

Harcup and O’Neill (2001) adapted Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) concept of news values in content analysing three national newspapers in the United Kingdom. The study examined whether these news values were still relevant in the news selection process and whether, in addition to these news values, there were other factors influencing news production, considering changes in the media industry in the context of the United Kingdom. Findings were that the news values of unambiguity, reference to elite people, frequency, reference to something negative and reference to persons ranked higher across the three newspapers than the news values of continuity, unexpectedness, meaningfulness (cultural proximity), reference to elite nations, threshold, consonance and composition. This indicated that there could be possible trends in journalism and news production. Furthermore, other news values that had not been listed by Galtung and Ruge (1965) were identified, namely, entertainment (interesting stories were broadcast simply to amuse audiences, reference to animals, reference to sex, humour, showbiz or television); reference to something positive, reference to elite organisations or institutions, and agendas, promotions and campaigns. The study concluded that many of Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) factors may still be relevant today but were not
exhaustive of the likely news values that could be considered in news production as carried out in different contexts. Thus, there was the need to explore news values as applicable in various contexts. The current study therefore sought to explore news values as relevant to the Ghanaian context.

Sixteen years later, Harcup and O’Neill (2017) content analysed ten newspapers circulated within the United Kingdom, in order to re-examine the revised Galtung and Ruge (1965) taxonomy. The researchers devised an updated set of fifteen news values – exclusivity, bad news, conflict, surprise, audio-visuals, shareability, entertainment, drama, follow-up, the power elite, relevance, magnitude, celebrity, good news and the organisation’s agenda. Harcup and O’Neill (2017) however recommended that further studies be conducted, as no taxonomy could ever serve as the final explanation on news determinants. They also stressed on the importance of further investigations into what makes news, as news selection may be governed by context-specific factors. On the basis of this recommendation, and recognising that the Harcup and O’Neill (2017) taxonomy only answers the question of news values within the Western context, the current study sought to explore news values in the Ghanaian context.

Using the research technique of discriminant analysis, Chang, Shoemaker and Brendlinger (1987) conducted a study on the determinants of international news in the United States. This study sought to identify the factors that went into the selection of international news items. Findings showed that the U.S media were more concerned about covering events that were contrary to, or normatively deviant from the norms of the United States. Also taken into consideration were factors such as the event’s potential to spearhead or contribute to social
change, geographical distance, that is, the gatekeeper’s perception of how far away the event was from the nation, and the event’s relevance to the United States, that is, whether the event was related to the nation, especially with regards to activities associated with diplomacy. Other less important factors that were considered in news selection were the degree of press freedom and immunity from governmental influence in broadcasting particular issues, language affinity, and the economic affiliation between the United States and other countries. This study therefore identified a taxonomy defined as relevant to its context, which did not necessarily align to definitions of news in other contexts. Thus, taxonomies defined were relevant only within the context of the United States and could not be generalised.

Strömbäck et al. (2012) studied news values and news selection practices through a national survey of Swedish journalists against the background that only a small proportion of news items becomes news, out of the large number of potential news items available to editors and gatekeepers. Strömbäck et al. (2012) acknowledged Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news values and stated that news values and criteria of newsworthiness refer to cognitive and normative concepts that reflect what journalists believe should constitute the news, while the concepts of news and news selection refer to the selection of news actually published. Among the events that were considered important for news coverage were unexpected and sensational events, dramatic and thrilling events, exclusive news stories, events that involved conflicts, events that were inexpensive to cover and those that had official and reliable sources. Other findings of the study were that news determinants included differences in production factors, that is, whether a good press release was available, as well as the substance of an event, that is, whether important persons or organisations were involved. For journalists working for commercial
media, it was important to select events that involved famous personalities or organisations. Also, the availability of good quality pictures was an important determinant of news selection. Journalists from public broadcast stations, however, did not place much priority on these determinants. The news values found in the Strömbäck et al. (2012) study were however relevant to only to a specific context and were not applicable in other contexts. Therefore, the current study explored the news determinants applicable within the Ghanaian context, focusing on a commercial and public radio station in Ghana.

In an ethnographic study, Shoemaker (2006) compared the news determinants of media in autocratic and democratic societies. Underpinned by the Gatekeeping concept, the study found that the media within democratic settings were guided by a policy of reporting news to find solutions to existing problems. Positive and routine events were rarely covered as news stories. News production was shaped by people in the society, as well as by interest groups and advertisers. In autocratic societies, the media and their Gatekeeping role was described as a function of the people in power, such as government personnel, who used the news as a tool of the state by deciding which societal problems should be highlighted as news. Sometimes, influential gatekeepers highlighted problems only when they did not have a negative implication on the political system or on those at the higher levels of government. However, the media in both societies shared the news value of public interest, although the level of relevance for this news value was higher in democratic than in autocratic societies.

Gupta (2012) content analysed three English newspapers in India to examine their determinants of international news coverage. The study found that the newspapers focused
heavily on matters that reflected national security and sovereignty, infrastructure, wars and conflicts, religious, linguistic and cultural affinity, as well as negative news about the countries with which India had weak ties. Again, greater coverage was given to news items related to science and technology, as well as stories on nations with which the country shared strong cultural similarities. Contrarily, issues concerning the country’s population and commercial activities were given little attention in news selection and production. This study found that what made the news varied in the Indian context, and that news determinants varied from those proposed by the West, such as the Harcup and O’Neill (2017) model. The study therefore called for the need to ask new questions about news determinants in different contexts; Upon this, the current study found a basis for exploring what makes news in the Ghanaian context.

**Related Studies on Ownership**

Kiwanuka-Tondo, Albada and Payton (2012) studied whether ownership determined the news in print media by content analysing the press coverage of HIV/AIDS in Uganda’s government and commercial newspapers. The study hypothesised that ownership affected news values and journalistic practices. Findings were that ownership determined the news, and that commercial newspapers generally did not identify stories on the pandemic as newsworthy items and as stories that would attract profit. In covering news items on the pandemic, commercial newspapers also gathered news from a variety of news sources and did not depend solely on the government as a source of news. Public newspapers, on the other hand, were characterised by strict governmental control and therefore depended on government as an official source for news. They also published fewer stories on the pandemic, suggesting that they sought to
project a positive outlook of the country. They also sought to publish news stories with the aim of finding solutions to the pandemic.

Baum and Zhukov (2018) studied ownership as a determinant of international news. They content-analysed news coverage of international conflict (on US-led military operations) as published in over 2000 newspapers in 116 countries. The study found that generally, ownership played a role in what made news, and that independent newspapers focused more on hard news stories, specifically those that reflected policy and military issues; they were also more likely to focus on crisis stories. Media outlets that operated as part of bigger corporations were skewed towards soft news stories, which generally comprised human interest stories and stories that featured prominent personalities.

Using mixed methods of in-depth interviews and content analysis, Chernov (2010) studied commercial and public television stations in Canada, including stations affiliated to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CTV Television Network and the Global Television Network. English-language stations in eight markets were randomly sampled and 75 of their news casts were content-analysed. The objective of the study was to examine media organisations’ incorporation of commercial messages in their news broadcasts, and the study hypothesised that commercial stations would be more prone to the phenomenon. Commercial messages were defined as those that were crafted as news broadcasts, but were actually guises of organisations to advertise their businesses, services or products. The study found that these types of messages included news values of relevance, visible impartiality and immediacy.
Findings were that commercial television stations were more likely to air commercial messages than public stations.

Cho, Kong and Lin (2004) carried out a study on ownership as a news determinant on newspaper production, content analysing stories in four newspapers in the United States of America. They found that ownership determined the content of these newspapers and that the lead sources of news stories differed based on the ownership structures of the newspapers. For instance, some newspapers were dependent on their parent companies for news stories. Some also relied on the government as news sources, while others relied more heavily on individual sources of information. With regards to news values, the study found that some newspapers focused more on human interest and political issues while others leaned more towards business and social issues. This study was however, centred on the determinants of print media in the light of changes in the Western media context. The study acknowledged that there was no general consensus on whether ownership had a direct impact on the news, and recommended further studies to examine other contexts. Thus, the current research explored radio in Ghana to determine whether ownership indeed had a key role to play in news gathering, news routines and news content.

Related Studies on Gatekeeping

Using the ethnographic approach and the Gatekeeping theory, Hammond (2004) studied the newsroom practices of the Evening News, a state-owned daily newspaper produced in Ghana. The study found that the newspaper adopted rather unconventional routines in news production. Technological gadgets and modern equipment were barely used, and the newsroom
did not have a sub-desk. Also, editing and planning were poor, and this complicated the news production process and led to ineffective use of time, as staff had no laid-down procedures to follow and had to keep going back and forth in carrying out simple tasks. Also, staff faced a major challenge with transportation and this affected their newsgathering duties. The study found that the availability of resources significantly influenced the news production practices of the newsroom. For example, there was only one telephone line available to all the reporters, and this slowed the work down considerably. Also, there was only one dictionary that could be readily accessed in the newsroom, and one vehicle assigned to the staff for their assignments, but which was often at the disposal of the news editor. Thus, journalists were constrained in their newsgathering activities, and work was done depending on available resources. Also, news items that were produced were usually those that could be conveniently accessed.

Ryfe (2009) conducted an ethnographic study to observe the practices of The Daily Times, an American newspaper. The study was done to determine how newsroom routines and practices influenced news production. The researcher realised during the study that, the news editor, who had just been made the head of the news team, placed a high value on hard news. He made efforts to change the newsgathering and production routines of the newsroom, and his intention was to bring The Daily Times news production to a competitive advantage. He insisted that the reporters refrain from gathering news items from their regular beats which included courthouses and other government departments, but rather focus news coverage on what he termed “high-impact” stories. However, it was difficult for the journalists to accept and adapt to these alterations, and they questioned the change because it was not in accordance with the newsgathering and production practices they were accustomed to, and also because it would
affect their ability to gather newsworthy items. Ultimately, they ignored the new guidelines and chose to operate according to the newsroom’s conventional routine. The study found that newsroom practices were conservatively preserved and highly resistant to change. Findings also showed that economic pressures were often an influence in newsrooms and ultimately in news production. This study mainly indicated the importance, in some newsrooms, of maintaining professionalism and adhering to traditional newsroom practices.

Avorgbedor (2009) carried out an ethnographic study in the newsroom of Radio Ghana, a Ghanaian media organisation, to find out its gatekeeping routines. The study was grounded on the gatekeeping and newsworthiness theories and it found that the key concern for staff was to uphold professional journalistic standards and to ensure that stories selected were done on the basis of objectivity, accuracy and fairness. In line with the station’s obligation to promote the peace of the nation and to safeguard national interest in news production, the newsroom practices ensured that selected stories did not have the tendency to incite conflicts among the general public. Rather, news stories were expected to promote national peace and development. The gatekeepers (editors and journalists) also considered factors such as cultural influences, prominence (stories involving important people and places) and regional balance (stories that covered other regions in Ghana, considering that Radio Ghana was a national broadcast station). As much as possible, staff made efforts to exclude their personal beliefs and political affiliations in selecting stories. This study focused on the newsroom routines of a state media organisation. However, the current study questioned the relevance of Western taxonomies considering changes in the Ghanaian media setting, exploring what makes news in a commercial and public radio station in Ghana.
Moehler and Naunihal (2011) employed a multilevel analysis of the African media landscape, specifically in sixteen countries – Kenya, Benin, Cape Verde, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia. Findings were that, private media organisations deliberately refrained from including controversial and political issues as part of their news items. Rather, they were conservative in their reporting and were more inclined towards producing entertainment-related items. The public media organisations were generally thought of as the mouthpiece of the ruling government and were, on the average, less critical of the government than were the private media organisations.

Vandendaele and Jacobs (2014) carried out an ethnographic study comparing two newsrooms – one in the Netherlands and the other in Belgium– to study the similarities and differences in their newsroom organisations. One of the backgrounds to the study was that journalistic practices had been neglected in some newsrooms, and this tended to reflect on the role of the gatekeepers who worked there. Both newsrooms were termed “sister newsrooms” and had implemented a common operational system which allowed the journalists, sub-editors and editor-in-chief to manage and monitor the selection and production process of the newspapers from the editing and review stages through to the printing stage. This also enabled both newsrooms to work together to exchange information. Both newsrooms observed a rigid division of labour routine termed the In/Out system, because it was believed this would encourage creativity and facilitate workflow. Sub-editors were also conscious about time and clarity in submitting news stories. However, the Dutch newsroom was more successful than the Belgian newsroom in implementing the In/Out system, in demonstrating effective sub-editing
practices and in beating deadlines. These disparities were attributed to differences in the newsroom layout, distribution of workload and sub-editors profiles of both newsrooms. Therefore, even though both newsrooms adopted the same journalistic principles, there were still significant differences in their operations.

Wendelin, Engelmann and Neubarth (2015) compared news values and gatekeeping processes in print media, using the Gatekeeping theory and content analysis research method to compare two German newspapers. The analysis revealed that, in spite of selecting news on the basis of similar news values, newsrooms in different media outlets considered the respective economic situations their organisations faced, as well as their audiences’ preferences in news selection. Also, in news production, there were similar news values but differences in journalistic routines and goals of the different media organisations. However, there were also differences in the levels of relevance in news values pertaining to different media organisations, for example, news values such as impact (effect), reach (how widespread), national involvement and unexpectedness were shared across media organisations, but their levels of significance were not the same across board. Wendelin et al. (2015) also noted that the newsrooms created online outlets to monitor customer preferences and to use this as a basis to align their news selection to their customers’ preferences.

Nunoo (2016) studied news determinants in print media using the Daily Graphic, one of the most widely circulating newspapers in Ghana. The study examined the factors that would cause news editors to select a particular news item over others. Surveys, content analysis and in-depth interviews were used, and the News values and Gatekeeping theories underpinned the
study. Findings were that the most common news values for the editors of the newspaper included prominence, status of location, action and personality. Stories that were centred on issues such as politics and economy were selected more often, while stories that included elements of aggression and demonstration featured less regularly as news. Governmental pressures were not listed as part of the determinants of news, however, the editorial policy of the organisation was a key influence in news selection. Public interest, the styles and policies of the news organisation, the agenda for national development and in some cases, the time or day of publication were also noted as instrumental factors in news selection. However, issues of gender, sex, entertainment and celebrity lifestyles were not considered as priority news items except in extraordinary situations. The study also found that the organisation did not have a specific document stating what should influence news selection, but that stories were selected based on journalists’ discretion. There was however an editorial policy that dictated which stories would finally be selected and presented as news. The study was focused on print media, however this current study focused on broadcast media and questioned the applicability of traditional hegemonic views of what news is in a changing media context in Ghana.

3.3 Summary
This chapter presented literature from related studies on newsroom production, as conducted in different settings. The review was centred on earlier studies that explored news values, operational guidelines and production policies, specific gatekeeping routines and general newsroom practices. As is evident from the related literature, findings related to news have mainly been those relevant within Western contexts. Conversely, limited literature exists on news determinants in the broadcast media in Ghana, and largely absent from scholarship are
empirical studies to compare news determinants in commercial and public radio. This study therefore set out to contribute to scholarship in the field of journalism by exploring the factors that determine the news in a commercial and public radio station in Ghana.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction
The chapter presents and explains the approach used by the researcher to gather the necessary data for the study. It discusses the research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection and data analysis methods employed in the study.

4.2 Research design
According to Deacon, Fenton and Bryman (1999), carrying out studies within the discipline of mass communication involves employing a number of methods. Therefore, this study was conducted using the qualitative methodology, which comprised the research methods of in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis. These approaches were considered appropriate given the theoretical and practical focus of the study.

The qualitative research methodology was employed for this study because, according to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), measuring the qualitative attributes of media content is difficult, but it often reveals many more details than quantitative data does. Also, journalism research into news values employs qualitative methods such as ethnographic approaches, in-depth interviewing and newsroom observations (Caple and Bednarek, 2013). Again, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), quantitative research has been extensively criticised for failing to truly reflect social phenomena and human behaviour. However, Cramer and McDevitt (2004) stress that a research approach such as the ethnographic study is suitable for understanding practices and characteristics related to particular social groups. The research adopted these
methods as it was focused on thoroughly understanding the news determinants and routines of each radio station under study.

**Population**

The population for this study was all the editors and journalists of *Joy F.M* and *Uniiq F.M*.

**Sampling technique**

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting respondents for this study. The purposive sample “includes respondents, subjects, or elements selected for specific characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 94). The researcher sampled respondents who were extensively knowledgeable about the news operations and news determinants in both newsrooms.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), the sampling process, particularly for ethnographic work, can be more efficiently executed by using key informants, that is, members of the group who are extensively knowledgeable about the group’s activities, routines and patterns of communication, often acquired by virtue of their many years of membership in that group.

**Sample**

Four editors and three journalists of each radio station were interviewed. The Managing news editors of both stations were also spoken to.
Unit of analysis

The units of analysis were the gatekeeping routines, news selection processes, editorial policies of each newsroom, as well as the newsrooms within which the ethnography was conducted.

Data Collection Methods

These consisted of in-depth interviews, document analysis and observation, as explained below:

4.2.1 In-depth interviews

According to Newing (2011, p. 98), in-depth interviews are “two-way conversations, with discussions and follow-up questions on each point”, while Wimmer and Dominick (2011) state that in-depth interviews are a key technique in ethnographic research. On this basis, in-depth interviews were used to gather first-hand information on news routines as carried out by those directly involved, that is, the news editors and journalists of both media houses.

Interview guides were designed according to the roles of the respondents, and these were used as data collection tools to retrieve responses. The interview guides generally addressed the news values, news gathering and selection processes and respondents’ knowledge of the professional guidelines in journalism.

Interviews lasted between thirty minutes to an hour and thirty minutes, and notes were taken to facilitate subsequent reference to information and data analysis. Voice recorders were especially useful because they helped record long and winding responses which the researcher
could not speedily and accurately capture through note taking. However, the researcher ensured that respondents had been informed that they would be recorded, had been assured of confidentiality and had given their consent prior to taking any voice recording.

The researcher was able to ask more probing questions based on responses, because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews. She was also able to go back to respondents after the interviews had been conducted in order to clarify aspects of the observation or pieces of information previously given. This was in line with Wimmer and Dominick’s (2011) affirmation that questions formed in in-depth interviews may be as a result of respondents’ answers and may consist of multiple interview sessions.

Also in line with Wimmer and Dominick’s (2011) assertion that the interview climate can influence in-depth interviews, not all interviews were carried out in the newsrooms; some were conducted at different locations within each media organisation, such as in recording booths and outdoor areas. This was done especially at peak times when there was much activity and distraction in the newsrooms as bulletins were being prepared for broadcast.

**Interview Respondents**

As earlier mentioned, the respondents were purposively sampled in line with Wimmer and Dominick’s (2011) guideline for sampling in an ethnographic study. Two senior editors, two sub-editors and three journalists, some of whom also read the news, were interviewed in each radio station. This sample was chosen to represent the different roles within the newsrooms.
As suggested by Newing (2011) that the researcher should seek to build good relationships with informants, the researcher was involved in some activities in the news production process. She also participated in editorial meetings, and this helped her cultivate acquaintances with her respondents so she could freely engage them and request for interviews.

The interview respondents were helpful in guiding the researcher as to what to specifically look out for and at what times of the day, what behaviours to critically observe, which documents and related sources of information would be most appropriate to examine, and which other persons would be helpful to interview or would be generally instrumental in the research.

4.2.2 Document Analysis

According to Bowen (2009, p. 27), “document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet transmitted) material”.

The Ghana Journalists’ Association (GJA) Code of ethics and the editorial policies of Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M were reviewed. Both editorial policies were however reviewed on the condition that they would not be taken outside of the newsrooms. The GJA code of ethics was introduced into the profession of journalism in Ghana in 1994 to recognise and eliminate any ethical breaches associated with journalism, to ensure the existence of a standard set of principles that would serve as guidelines in the era of media plurality and a democratic media environment, and to enforce accountability in the practice of journalism.

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The GBC editorial policy, under which *Uniq F.M* operates, was a 44-page document that was introduced on the 8th of April, 2017 to guide the newsroom in its daily routines and general operations. The policy was endorsed on each page by the Chairman of the Board of Directors and the Acting Director General of the Corporation.

The editorial policy for the Multimedia Group Limited (MGL), under which *Joy F.M* operates, was established in August 2016 under the MGL’s values of leadership, integrity and community, to ensure delivery of the highest ethical and professional standards in its programmes and services. At the end of the policy was a section where staff were expected to append a signature as a sign of allegiance and affirmation to the stated guidelines.

The reviewed documents significantly aided in the research by providing additional information to complement and confirm data gathered from the in-depth interviews and observation. Supplementary questions were also developed and clarifications made based on information gathered from the documents. This helped increase understanding into the routine practices in both newsrooms.

### 4.2.3 Observation

Newing (2011, p. 11) defines this method of research as:

> A relatively unstructured interactive method for studying people as they go about their daily routines and activities. The researcher accompanies one or more people both to observe what they do and say, and also to participate, to varying degrees, in the activities being studied.
This section outlines the procedures by which the researcher gained access to the field of study, and how the observation was done.

**Procedure**

In order to carry out systematic observation, the researcher followed the sequence of procedures for ethnographic research outlined by LeCompte and Schensul (1999, as cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) and Shagrir (2017). The stages were as follows: the researcher accurately defined the problem to be studied and based the research questions on the defined problem. The researcher then identified the field sites where the study would be carried out, and access to the field site was obtained, after which conclusions were made on what phenomena to examine, the key informants to address, as well as the necessary documents to analyse. After clearly drawing out the sample, field work began. The details of these steps as undertaken in the study are subsequently outlined.

After approval to carry out the study had been obtained from the Department of Communication Studies, the researcher sought access into the Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M newsrooms. This was done by submitting letters of introduction from the department to both radio stations. After several follow-ups and negotiations, the researcher eventually obtained permission to conduct the study at both radio stations.

**4.3 The Field Study**

The researcher was required to be present in the newsrooms of Uniiq F.M and Joy F.M. This was helpful for gathering primary and secondary data, as well as first-hand information on
news routines. In addition, it was a means of facilitating understanding of the news selection and production processes of both stations. According to Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013), observation helps the researcher examine human interactions or the lack of it, notice people’s movements and their verbal and non-verbal language, take note of the tones they use, listen to informal and formal conversations and distinguish between gestures and behaviours. Also, Reeves, Kuper and Hodges (2008) have noted that ethnographical research has the potential of discovering that the actions of people contradict what they say.

In line with Emerson, Fretz and Shaw’s (1995, as cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:146) guideline on taking field notes in an ethnographic research, “condensed accounts” were made for subsequent analysis. This involved taking copious notes highlighting the most important elements in the observation and interviews for subsequent interpretation and analysis.

Observation also had to be done to study firsthand the routines involved in news selection and production. Additionally, the hidden reasons behind the actions of the media professionals, as well as the elements of news selection process which could not easily be explained, were revealed and made more comprehensible through observation; detailed clarifications of observations were established through in-depth interviews, for instance, why particular stories were included or excluded by gatekeepers. Likewise, details that the in-depth interviews could not adequately cover or explain were made clearer through keen and consistent observations of the news production process.
This study specifically employed the micro-ethnographic research method (Berg 1997, as cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2011), a type of ethnographic approach targeted at smaller units of analysis and commonly used in mass communication research, as against the macro-ethnographic approach which is used for larger units of analysis. According to Lincoln and Denzin (1994), this method of research does not necessarily seek to test hypothesis about the characteristic of a particular social phenomena, but rather, to explore it. In this study’s exploration, the researcher was guided by the research objectives – this informed what to observe and what to exclude, as suggested by Alpert (2006). The researcher also created an observation guide centred on exploring news gathering, news selection and gatekeeping practices in both newsrooms.

The study was conducted for three weeks each at Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M, from February 27th, 2018 to March 10th, 2018. This was because in the month of January, some of the staff in both newsrooms had taken their leave in addition to the 2017 end of year festivities and holidays. Therefore, the researcher anticipated that the newsrooms would have a “full house” by the month of February, and with that, much more activity to observe. After the three-week period, however, the researcher was at liberty to visit both newsrooms whenever additional information was needed.

In both newsrooms, the researcher was an overt participant observer, as categorised by Wimmer and Dominick (2011). It was known to the members of both newsroom teams that she was a researcher, and she was allowed to take part in the daily activities in the newsroom, such
as pitching stories during editorial meetings, doing voiceovers, making and receiving telephone
calls, booking appointments with resource persons, rearranging bulletins and running general
errands to facilitate the news production process. The researcher accompanied some journalists
on their assignments and assisted in writing and editing news stories after assignments had
been completed. She also contributed ideas and assisted in the production and broadcast of
major news bulletins in the Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M studios.

4.4 Data analysis and interpretation

Voice recordings were typed out into transcriptions which were reviewed at least thrice, and
then thematically categorised. In cases where respondents included other languages apart from
English, translations were done in addition to original texts prior to thematic analysis. A
preliminary list of major themes and patterns was created, namely, news values, news routines,
resources, newsroom organisation and ownership, after which additional themes were
identified. Data was further categorised into thematic areas of news gathering and news
selection. Generated codes were carefully compared across observational data, interview
transcripts and reviewed documents in order to identify general patterns that emerged across
the data. In line with Bowen (2009), paragraph segments, lines, phrases and sentences in each
document were reviewed and coded according to the key themes.

The content and interpretations of thematic categories were based on the research questions,
theories and objectives of the study: data gathered was analysed with these as guidelines, to
identify any relationships, commonalities or patterns. Relationships were drawn between the
themes and developed into a report. The findings were also compared with literature to identify
which areas were consistent with previously conducted research and which areas did not support literature.

4.4.1 Validity

In line with Bowen’s (2009) techniques in qualitative research, a ‘thick’ description of the observed phenomena was done to ensure that the research process was clearly outlined and could be replicated and verified.

The researcher also ensured validity through the triangulation of data sources as suggested by Bowen (2009), and this consisted of in-depth interviews, document analysis and observation, such that the methods and respective findings complemented each other. For instance, observational data were substantiated by information obtained from in-depth interviews, and vice versa. This also reduced the impact of potential limitations posed by employing a particular method, for example, carrying out document analysis to complement the method of observation eliminated problems of reactivity.

The problem of reactivity was controlled by adhering to Matthews and Ross’s (2010) suggestion that an ethnographic research should be designed to cover a number of weeks, so that data can consistently be observed for a period of time.

Daymon and Holloway (2002, as cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2011) recommend that quality ethnographic study should combine the emic (insider) and etic (outsider) perspectives, that is, the account of those within the culture the researcher is studying, in addition to the
researcher’s own perspective about the culture being investigated. Adhering to this recommendation brought about a balance in the research findings, as the study assigned meaning on the basis of informants’ perspectives about news routines (emic approach), and also employed theoretical explanations and concepts (etic approach) in making meaning out of data gathered.

Also, member checking (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) was done to ensure the credibility, reliability and validity of the study. This involved going back to interview respondents, as well as to the heads of each newsroom, for correction and clarification of ambiguous information especially with regards to the reasons for which particular news items were selected over others.

In conformity with Maykut and Morehouse’s (1994, cited in Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) suggestion, the researcher went through a necessary preparation process of being aware of and removing possible biases, prejudices or opinions that might affect analysis. This process, termed as epoche, was done prior to data collection and analysis. As a result, the researcher treated both stations objectively, impartially and systematically, carrying out the same processes in collecting and analysing data.

4.5 Summary
This chapter presented the research design and the methods employed in carrying out the study, as well as the justifications for the methodology employed. In addressing the research problem, the study was conducted using the qualitative approach – specifically, the methods of
observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis, which were discussed in the chapter. The population, sampling technique, sample, unit of analysis, data collection methods and data analysis were also discussed.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from data gathered through interviews, document analysis and observation, based on the study’s objectives and questions. Details on the newsroom organisation, administrative layout, work settings and editorial policies of Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M, as well as the news gathering and news selection processes in both newsrooms are presented.

5.2 Newsroom and staff profiles

Joy F.M

Joy F.M broadcast within the Greater Accra region and operated on the frequency of 99.7 megahertz. It aired its news in English and also had an online platform (www.myjoyonline.com) for audiences who preferred to stay informed via the internet. Its news bulletins were also broadcast on some of its sister stations such as Luv F.M and Nhyira F.M in Kumasi. Joy F.M targeted the youth, middle to upper class listeners, and generally, Ghanaians living within and outside the country.

On the average, the minimum academic qualification for the Joy F.M journalist or editor was a first degree in Communication Studies, Journalism or other disciplines. Although staff with backgrounds in other disciplines such as Psychology and Political Science were also employed, most had obtained at least a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in Journalism or other related studies.
Some of Joy F.M’s staff had been beneficiaries of national and international awards such as the 2017 Engineering Excellence Awards, the Ghana Environmental Excellence Awards and the 2016 GJA Best Journalist Award in news reporting.

The radio newsroom was located on the first floor of the Multimedia Group building. It was a rectangular-shaped room with a side office on the immediate right of the entrance, which served as the office of senior editors and sub-editors; this office was next to a restroom, two mini-sized recording booths where voice-overs, interviews and news reports were recorded, and another office on the extreme right side of the room, which seated the Head of Joy News. On the right side of the room was a constituency map of Ghana indicating potential hot spots for news. Next to this were two notice boards – one on which assignments for reporters were posted, and the other on which announcements, news schedules and duty rosters for news presentation were displayed.

In the middle of the newsroom was a large, long rectangular table around which journalists and editors worked on news scripts or sat at during editorial meetings. There were also fourteen small desks set up against the left side of the wall, as well as a telephone, a small printer and about ten desk top computers. There were seven television sets attached to the walls at arm’s length, on which news bulletins from different television stations were viewed simultaneously. Sometimes, journalists and editors picked up story ideas and determined which news items to follow up on by monitoring the bulletins.
News bulletins were prepared in the newsroom and presented in the studios of another Multimedia building directly opposite the radio newsroom building.

**Uniiq F.M**

*Uniiq F.M* operated on the frequency of 95.7 megahertz and broadcast its news in English as well as in the major Ghanaian local languages – Nzema, Ga, Ewe, Dagbani and Akan. According to the staff, its primary audiences were the elite who appreciated the value of news, the student population and the Ghanaian government, as the government sought to know whether its policies were being given nationwide publicity. Its secondary audiences were those with an appetite for local news and who did not properly understand the English language.

Staff of the radio station had varied educational backgrounds. More emphasis was placed on training on the job. According to one editor:

> In this work, there’s a difference between theory at school and practical work, so when you look at the school only, you may not get the right people to work with. Some may not have any journalism background. We can still employ them. This kind of work is more practical than theoretical, so you can be a medical doctor and come here, you’ll learn on the job.

Academic qualifications of staff varied from courses in the field of science to the fine arts. The lowest academic qualification was a diploma in Journalism, usually obtained from the Ghana Institute of Journalism. Some staff also signed up for courses at the GBC Training School. These trainings spanned over a period of six months to a year, depending on how consistent the
student was in pursuing the course. The station took pride in its capacity to identify staff with raw talent and to develop them into skilled, well trained professionals.

The Uniiq newsroom was located in Kanda, Accra, on the second floor of a building within the GBC premises known as The Beast. The Beast was named after a building in the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) that houses the BBC newsrooms. In the radio newsroom were two circular tables partitioned into six sections, each with a computer. There was a small table on the right side of the room, on which journalists usually sat to write their news stories. Next to this was a rectangular table with computers for sound editing. There was also a telephone, a clock, an old Oxford dictionary, a printer and a photocopier on which bulletins and other documents were processed. Also in the newsroom was a radio set which was always on during working hours so journalists and editors could monitor the running news bulletins of Uniiq F.M as well as those of other radio stations. Three desks were reserved for the senior editors, and next to these was a small room which had previously served as an editing suite but was no longer used for editing. Instead, it doubled as a restroom and storage room, with an archive of news bulletins from previous years, a monitor, four keyboards, three central processing units, two wooden tables and about ten chairs.

Displayed on a notice board was the GJA Code of Ethics and the station’s corporate vision, that is, “to be the authentic and trustworthy voice of Ghana”, as well as its mission statement: “to lead the broadcasting and communications industry through quality programming which promote the developmental and cultural aspirations of Ghana”. On another notice board was the work roster for the various teams, welfare announcements and business advertisements of
staff members. Also pasted was a list of words and their correct pronunciations as commonly used in news bulletins.

**Organisational Structure: Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M**

In the *Joy F.M* newsroom, the organisational structure started with the Managing news editor, who was responsible for the day to day administration of the newsroom and was ultimately responsible for news items that were broadcast. He oversaw the daily editorial meetings and discharged roles to the various members of the team. The Managing news editor was directly followed by the editors, who were responsible for news content – assisted by the assistant news editors, they decided what went on air and what did not; they also supervised the various working teams and facilitated editorial meetings. Beneath the assisting news editors were senior broadcast journalists, who investigated or followed up the bigger stories which involved high profile interviews and documentaries. Directly beneath the senior broadcast journalists were the broadcast journalists, also called reporters, who went round on daily assignments. They also conducted interviews, booked and confirmed appointments, edited sound bites and news stories, and assisted in production.

The *Uniiq F.M* newsroom was directed by the Head of News, who performed similar functions as the *Joy F.M* Managing news editor. He also took reports and updates from supervisors, developed new and more effective procedures for carrying out news work, oversaw the operations of the newsroom, developed and implemented new policies and assigned roles to staff.
Directly under the Head of News was the head of services, who was in charge of newsroom operations, interactions with external parties, and ensuring that service policies were adhered to; Next in rank was the head of news presentation, who handled schedules and staff for news reading. Under these were the supervisors, who handled specific areas such as business, health, and were also in charge of assigning reporters to news stories; the coordinators, who played a supervisory role but acted as a sub-desk to the supervisors, the editors or shift leaders and assistant editors, who edited news bulletins and were in charge of the various teams, and reporters, who covered stories and performed other news gathering functions.

In addition to regular staff, temporary staff consisting of interns and national service persons constituted the make-up of both newsrooms.
Newsroom schedules

In the Joy newsroom, journalists and editors were grouped into morning and evening teams on a rotational basis. The morning team reported to work by 4:00 a.m to produce the 6:00 a.m.
news. They closed by 4:00pm, while the evening team reported to work by 12:00 p.m. to work on the evening bulletin and closed by 8:00pm. On a regular day, Joy F.M had an average of three editors, five assistant editors and ten journalists constituting a team.

At Uniiq F.M, there were three teams: the dawn team, which reported from 4:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., the day team (branded as “normal”) which worked from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and the evening team which was on duty from 3:00 p.m. to 10 p.m. About twelve journalists, five editors and two assistant editors made up a team on a normal working day.

In both newsrooms, team members sometimes stayed overtime to finish up on assignments and to fulfil other obligations related to their news work. Also, shift leaders and team members were assigned to work over the weekends and on holidays. On these days however, fewer team members were assigned to work, therefore the newsrooms were not as busy on weekends as they were on weekdays. Work schedules on weekdays and holidays were rotated weekly or fortnightly.

**News Bulletins**

*Joy F.M* broadcast ten news bulletins daily. These consisted of two major news bulletins – the *Joy Midday News* from 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m., and *News Night* from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

There were also news briefs of major news stories and headlines at different intervals of the day, namely, *Joy News* from 6:00 a.m. to 6:10 a.m, *Joy Headline News* from 10 a.m. to 10:05 a.m., 11:00 a.m. to 11:05 a.m., at 4:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. to 8:05 p.m., 9:00 p.m. to 9:05 p.m. and from 10:00 p.m. to 10:05 p.m.
*Uniiq F.M.*, on the other hand, broadcast fourteen bulletins comprising two major news bulletins from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The radio station also broadcast daily news briefs at regular intervals, including the *News* from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 a.m., 7:00 a.m. to 7:15 a.m., *News Brief* at 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m., 4:00 p.m., 5:00 p.m., the Home News bulletin at 8:00 p.m., and News Brief at 9:00 p.m. At 10:00 p.m., a bulletin branded as *News Highlights* presented updates on the major news stories that had featured throughout the day.

The 1 o’clock and the 6 o’clock news bulletins had segments called the News Commentary section, which gave audiences the opportunity to submit their contributions on trending issues. These usually came in the form of write-ups on opinions, suggestions or concerns about a particular subject.

**News Sources**

*Joy F.M* primarily obtained news stories from people they physically interacted with who volunteered information, such as contacts and resource persons. Indeed, Article 1.18 of its editorial policy acknowledged that interactivity with its audiences was an important platform for the creation of content. Invitations to cover events were also extended to the newsroom. The station relied on story ideas generated at editorial meetings, the internet, social media sites such as Facebook, and news correspondents across the country. Stories were also obtained from news beats that particular reporters are assigned to, such as parliament, the courts and the presidency. Foreign news stories were selected from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Cable News Network (CNN).
Secondary sources of news, especially useful for conducting extensive research prior to broadcasting a news story, included published research works, journals and the internet. Stories covered by other radio stations including Citi F.M, Class F.M and Starr F.M were also followed up after staff had taken note of what these stations presented in their news bulletins. These were reported at the daily editorial meetings, and the team initiated its own investigations where necessary. Joy F.M also employed stringers, that is, journalists in the different regions who were not regular staff, but were paid according to the number of stories they could file. Freelancers were not regularly patronised except in situations where the radio station considered their content as relevant.

Like Joy F.M, Uniq F.M assigned reporters to specific beats in parliament, the presidency and the courts. The station once had a correspondent assigned to the national airport in Accra, but due to certain challenges, this was no longer existent.

For Uniq F.M, primary sources of news included story ideas and follow-ups suggested in editorial meetings, emergencies and unexpected situations, and follow-ups from stories aired by other media organisations.

Sources of foreign news for the station included the BBC, News 24, Voice of America (VOA), Reuters, GBC 24, Aljazeera and CNN. Stories were selected from these websites, then rewritten and edited according to the GBC house style, taking into consideration factors such as language, choice of words and time constraints. Local news stories were also retrieved from the Ghana News Agency (GNA), a trusted source of information for the radio station. The
GBC editorial policy also mentioned a number of non-journalistic sources of news: recordings by amateurs, security services, businesses, political organisations, governments, non-governmental organisations and other entities.

5.3 Newsroom routines – Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M

Editorial meetings

Both newsrooms were characterised by editorial meetings, a necessary routine in news work. According to an editor at *Uniiq F.M*, “Editorial meetings are important because this is where we access the news stories and the news presentation to see if things went well or if there’s anything we need to work on or improve on”.

Editorial meetings gave team members the opportunity to express ideas and contribute to shaping news production and presentation. The meetings were a platform for the discussion of proposed ideas, which sometimes led to heated debates as team members articulated diverse opinions concerning an issue. In an editorial meeting at *Joy F.M*, a discussion ensued, centred on a reporter’s inclusion of his opinion in reporting an event, in which he stated that he “found the situation intriguing”. This led to a heated argument among members of the team as they debated on whether or not it was professional for a reporter to incorporate his personal feelings in reporting a story, because this had not been clearly stated in the station’s editorial policy. The Managing news editor finally drew the matter to a close, concluding that the reporter’s mode of news reporting had been unprofessional, although the reporter was reluctant to accept this.
At Joy F.M, editorial meetings were held in the mornings, afternoons and evenings. The first meeting began at 7:15 a.m., after the 6:00 a.m. news. Individuals took turns in presenting story ideas and steering discussions on news items monitored on other radio stations. After this, a telephone call was placed to the Joy News correspondent in Kumasi (after Accra, Kumasi is the next largest hub under the Multimedia Group) to gather more stories from the region. An editor then compiled these for subsequent assigning and follow up by the team. The pattern continued at the next editorial meeting, held around 12:45 p.m. after the Midday News, and also at the evening meeting which began around 7 p.m., at the end of the evening news.

At Uniiq F.M, the first editorial meeting was held at 9 a.m. after the dawn team had closed, and by which time the next team was expected to have reported for work; The second took place at 2 p.m. after the major news. Meetings began with a team member reading out the day’s schedule as well as the reporters assigned to each event. If no reporter had been assigned to a particular assignment, it was indicated and brought to the assignment editor’s attention – he then ensured the slot was duly filled. The team leader usually moderated the meetings and called for story ideas. Interns and national service persons were obligated to contribute story ideas, unlike editors and senior staff, who usually volunteered their ideas earlier, and more assuredly. This was likely because over time, the latter had gained experience in the profession and were less doubtful about the possibility of their story ideas being rejected by the team.

Regularly, there were follow ups which required resending a reporter to a particular location for updates on a breaking news story. For example, during a swine flu outbreak that affected some secondary schools in the country, follow ups were done to investigate measures put in
place to control the outbreak, and progress made so far. Also, in a story that reached the newsroom about a strike action undertaken by Pantang Hospital staff, a reporter was assigned to find out proceedings and implications for the hospital and government. In the same vein, conclusions on steps to take for stories were finalised as points of action – it was important that these were clearly stated by the rapporteur for the editorial meeting, as they were handed over to the incoming team to work on for the next news bulletin. The points of action also served as guides for scheduled interviews, so journalists could ask the relevant questions.

Figure 3: Work flow in Joy F.M. and Uniq F.M. newsrooms

Model adapted from Opare-Henaku (2016).
Trainings

Section 5.9 of the Ghana National Media Policy (n.d.) states that “there is the need for continuing training and re-training across the board, given the multi-faceted roles of media personnel as brokers of information, purveyors of culture and agents of change”.

The researcher observed that in accordance with this policy, the Joy newsroom organised regular trainings for staff on Fridays to hone their journalistic skills, keep them updated on current trends and familiarise interns with the newsroom practices. Staff were taken through training in critical areas such as the professional and organisational standards of journalism and ethics in news reporting, especially in covering extremely sensitive cases that required interviewing victims of sexual abuse and armed robberies. Trainings also addressed the art of writing professional news stories, ensuring correctness in grammar, spelling, punctuation, constructing sentences in a logical sequence and editing. Live reporting and interviewing skills, news presentation, investigative reporting and maximising the use of social media to the organisation’s advantage were explored. Most importantly, trainings were centred on how to take advantage of a digitised environment to broadcast news to a wider audience base.

Trainings at Joy F.M were usually held after the afternoon editorial meetings for a maximum of two hours. It was facilitated by a senior editor who had extensive knowledge and expertise in the subject of discussion. On few occasions, other experts in the journalism field were invited to facilitate the trainings. Team members were expected to be present and were required to approach trainings with the same level of seriousness as they would attach in
performing their duties. They were encouraged to articulate their uncertainties, contributions and questions for a richer and more comprehensive training experience.

The researcher participated in in-house trainings within the period of the ethnographic study. She observed that practical exercises were sometimes undertaken, in which journalists were asked to crosscheck the spelling of words in the dictionary. Also, pronunciations were debated on and conclusions made on the most accurate ones to prevent news presenters from mispronouncing words on air. Usually, when there was confusion as to whether to use the American or British spelling and pronunciation of words, the newsroom settled on the British pronunciation, because, according to the Head of News, “We were colonised by the British”.

The researcher also observed that the team brainstormed on how audience patronage and participation could be increased, by attempting to identify the kind of information audiences preferred through opinion polls and surveys (as these methods generated findings that guided in producing news items to attract audience’s interest).

Journalists also indicated that external training opportunities were exploited by staff, who participated in training programmes in countries such as South Africa, Germany and Israel for a number of weeks or months. These external trainings were seen as opportunities to gain exposure and insights into journalistic practices in foreign contexts.

Again, in accordance with Section 5.9 of the Ghana National Media Policy (n.d.) as earlier stated, trainings were held for staff of Uniíq F.M at the GBC Training School, also known as...
the Broadcasting College. Some sessions addressed subjects such as journalistic reporting during elections; steps to take in a devastating situation such as a fire or disease outbreak, or in a conflict situation (such as a violent demonstration), for example, ensuring one’s security by collaborating with the police and other security agents. Some of these trainings were facilitated by officials of the national security agencies, who covered the minutest details on security tips, including appropriate attire to wear in emergencies. Two journalists at Uniiq F.M said:

There are some situations where you as a reporter, you know you’re a threat…when the people see you’re a threat to them, you become their target, so when you go to such places to report, the police become your friend. You move with the police. I remember I attended a counter terrorism military exercise -the military trained us on when you’re reporting on such issues. You don’t need to walk alone. You have to be in the midst of the military or police.

When it’s election time and you’re reporting, you know the losing party always becomes very aggressive towards the media, so you have to be careful. At times, we’re told to take two T-shirts. You’ll be given the branded one for the media house, and it’s advisable to take another ordinary shirt, so when you sense any danger, you can easily take the media one off and change.

Unlike Joy F.M, which often had generalised trainings where all team members were present, some of Uniiq F.M’s training sessions were specialised, that is, targeted toward a specific set of people. For instance, some trainings were organised only for news readers, technicians or reporters. The sessions were also platforms by which the station identified people who could be trained for radio news presentation.

One area that was critically addressed in trainings was pronunciation – this included phonetics and using the right accent in news reporting and presentation. Accenting even informed which people were selected to read the news, as explained by a journalist:

...some of us, someone like me, I don’t read. I have that problem because they tell me my accent or my pronunciation and all…a whole lot. Some of us don’t read. We only report,
until they train you and you become used to the phonetics. They want…you know… the British English.

**Cross-checking facts**

Editors at both stations explained that because the stations served as sources of news for other media organisations, crosschecking stories obtained from sources was indispensable in ensuring excellent delivery. In both stations, local stories were crosschecked mainly through follow ups and verification from sources. Foreign stories were crosschecked across websites since the distance did not allow broadcasters to directly verify these stories.

As a result of *Joy F.M*’s competitive inclination, editors admitted that stories were crosschecked and covered with a greater sense of urgency as the station strove to be the first to air a breaking news story. A journalist in the Joy newsroom admitted that “in going out to cover stories, if the station misses a big story and the competitor has access to it before we do, it has implications for our competitive edge”. Another journalist at *Joy F.M* explained:

> For us, news is business, so you’ll find a certain sense of urgency here that is different from the public organisations…so we get the story and we promptly do it. We’re working with competition so urgency is key. We’ve been on the field for stories where we broadcast that day, and Uniiq did the same story three days later.

*Uniiq F.M* was not as competitive in broadcasting news stories, thus it was more methodical in fact checking and obtaining the full details of a story, as much as possible, before broadcast. A senior editor at the Uniiq newsroom said that news stories were not always aired immediately because as a public broadcaster, other stations depended on it for their news and therefore it could not afford to be inaccurate in its delivery. He added that the public sometimes chastised
the station for producing dead stories (news items that had already made the airwaves), however it took these measures to avoid being lambasted by the public and to avoid issuing rejoinders.

5.4 Dominant News Values – Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M

Below are the news values generally prioritised by gatekeepers of the radio stations.

The dominant news values for Joy F.M were:

Conflict

One of the station’s primary selections for news were events that were controversial or conflicting in nature. According to a senior news editor at the radio station:

If there’s a story about maternal mortality, and the people are dying because there’re no proper hospitals to take care of pregnant women, you’re looking at the fact that people are dying… and authorities are not fixing the problem, so there’s a conflict between victims and those we have equipped with the authority to fix their problem, so for us, we’re going to stress on this.

One advantage of broadcasting stories that projected the news value of conflict was that these had the propensity to generate aggressive public discourse. In the course of this discourse, solutions to problems were sought and eventually generated. An added advantage of this news value for the radio station was that, in the course of these discussions, audiences made reference to the station as being their source of news, thus, more people were likely to tune in and this would eventually increase audience patronage.
Interest

In an attempt to increase its audience base, Joy F.M considered news stories that would capture and sustain the interest of listeners.

According to a journalist:

The business is about getting listeners, so the first question you should ask yourself is what is interesting about this story? The question we ask ourselves each time we think of a news item is “Will someone at home be interested in listening to this?”

Another journalist said:

Today, someone did some story on sizes of boobs...I can’t say that boobs story is not necessary. It’s more of the principle. Is it something that’s interesting? I think it may not be relevant but it’s interesting. Someone is there, he’ll say “Ei they’re talking about boobs”. He’ll raise the head quickly and listen.

With this news value in mind, Joy F.M also looked out for new angles in a story that might further provoke listeners’ interests. For example, in reporting about an increase in the occurrence of armed robberies over a particular period, journalists were assigned to speak to stakeholders such as members of parliament and investigative committees as a means of gathering more interesting facts to keep their audiences involved in the progress of the story.

Relevance

Editors at Joy F.M described relevance as the property of the story that relates to audiences, causes them to feel it is important to them and pushes them to be concerned about the details of the story. Relevance was also related to the particular period within which the news event occurred, as explained by a journalist:

Assuming someone is holding a press conference today on who’s the founder of Ghana, you see, there’s no relevance today, but assuming it’s Independence Day and someone
is holding that, it’s relevant because of the times and the period within which it is happening.

Magnitude

The station focused on news events that affected a large number of people, as explained by a senior editor:

We know we’re national, and sometimes we cross borders... Ghanaians abroad also listen to us so we want to do stories that can satisfy almost every Ghanaian...those every Ghanaian can identify with, first, before we look at community. In fact, what happens to a small community can affect others, but the first thing is to select what every Ghanaian will be able to appreciate.

Another editor at Joy F.M said:

Yesterday there was this story about cocoa farmers ... I was making the point that it’s not national enough for news. Today, there’s a story about international women’s day and how there’s a push for extension of maternity leave, and the passage of the affirmative action law, which parliament is looking at... We started with that story because it affects most lives. It affects more lives than any other story.

During the period of observation for instance, there were many reported cases of armed robberies throughout Accra. Though the events occurred only within Accra, the editors paid close attention to these cases because this breakout of hostilities was an issue that affected the entire nation, and also because there was a growing concern that the robberies could spread to other regions and affect others.
Novelty

At Joy F.M, rare, new and extraordinary events were primarily selected as news. The uniqueness and originality of a news story gave it a greater chance of making it into the news bulletin. Regarding this, a senior news editor at the newsroom explained:

We look at something that is rare. It satisfies the news values that we’re looking for, for example, there’s a story we did about a farming community where they were using some mobile technology to buy seeds ... I mean, it’s not something you’ll find in Ghana. It’s a very remote community...no electricity, nothing...and they have that mobile technology to move crops around. That’s a novelty within our context, so that will pass...we’ll do it. They’re people in the midst of their poverty ...and they’ve found ingenious ways to survive.

Timeliness

Stories that were not submitted before the reporter’s deadline, as determined by the team leader, were not selected. The researcher recalls that at a particular time during the study, the editors refused to use a news story because it had not been submitted at the expected time, although the reporter rendered an apology and suggested that the story be included in a subsequent bulletin. A news editor explained that this could not be done because simple instructions pertaining to keeping to time had not been followed.

Expectedness

Events that were expected to occur were more likely to be selected as news. An editor said, “for example, if we’re all expecting electricity tariffs to go down by 12 percent and it actually happens, people are excited, and we want to speak to them... to get their views”. The station also focused on covering stories that its audiences had already anticipated would occur.
**Unexpectedness/surprise**

Unforeseen events or stories that were shocking or surprising in nature were considered newsworthy. A senior journalist explained, “If we’re not expecting the president to sack some minister, and all of a sudden, he sacks, that’s news”.

At one of the editorial meetings, a story involving a 20-year old who was sentenced to 10 years in prison for stealing an Infinix phone was immediately selected because it was a shocking story, as editors and journalists debated as to why the culprit had been given such a harsh punishment for a seemingly petty crime. At another meeting, there was a report from one of the station’s regional correspondents that a woman had been swallowed by a python. An editor argued that this was not surprising enough to be newsworthy, and that “When a python swallows a man, that’s not news, but when a man swallows a python, that’s news”. This is similar to the popular saying in journalism circles that “when a dog bites a man, that’s not news, but when a man bites a dog, that’s news”.

*Uniiq F.M* employed the following primary news values in its news selection:

**Non-conflict stories**

*Uniiq F.M* took into consideration stories that did not contain the element of conflict. This was explained by an editor:

> Things that would create conflict, like these chieftaincy issues, as much as possible, we’ll avoid it, because if you’re not careful, you’ll let feuding factions clash and it’ll create problems; communal violence, religious violence, et ce tera.
An aspect of such a story was only reported if it could be presented from an angle of public interest, that is, a story angle that would benefit the society. Also, such a story would go through selection if gatekeepers could ascertain that it would not inflame passions or create strife within the public space. Concerning the element of conflict, another editor explained that the station usually preferred to leave these types of situations for the police or other law enforcement agencies to handle:

If we’re not sure of the implications...we may interview one faction and they may say something that’ll create strife, so as much as possible, we avoid it and leave it for the security agencies to handle.

**National interest**

*Uniiq F.M* paid close attention to stories that concerned everyone in the nation, such that the welfare of citizens was of interest. At the same time, gatekeepers strove to ensure that these stories were inclined towards promoting the interest of the public on individual, societal and national fronts. According to a senior editor at the radio station, the station upheld this as its highest obligation as a public broadcaster. He said:

Our work is to lead the people in nation building- building national consensus and national cohesion...galvanising and bringing the people together to achieve national unity... oneness of mind and attitude... all towards the bigger project called nation building, and we also have as the biggest onus, to promote peace and security of this country. That is what influences and shapes what our news coverage is.

**Regional balance**

The station made efforts to craft its bulletin in such a way that it reflected issues and included stories representative of each region in Ghana. For this reason, news bulletins were also
translated and broadcast in the major Ghanaian languages. The organisation’s editorial policy similarly outlined that ensuring regional balance was to be a key factor in selecting and reporting stories. An editor of the radio station explained that this was part of the station’s duties as a public broadcaster:

We’re doing what other stations will not do – They’re some that say “oh Uniiq’s news is boring, their news is so and so”. We have a statutory obligation to package our news in that way… in my bulletin, there must be news from Northern region, Upper west, Upper East, Eastern region, Brong Ahafo, Volta, Central, Greater Accra, because it makes it national in character. We cannot just package news about Accra alone in our bulletin. No, it’s supposed to be representative of the country.

**Personality/ Celebrity**

The station took an interest in stories featuring the president, ministers, members of parliament and other key stakeholders in the country simply because it saw this as part of its duties as a public broadcaster. An editor explained that, “If the president is going to Navrongo right now, we would have to follow him there because we’re obliged to”.

**Simple language**

Another criterion for news selection was that stories must require little or no effort to be comprehended by listeners. A journalist explained the reason for adopting this news value, saying: “We select stories with simple, not-too technical language, so that our audiences will not be lost when they’re listening. If the language is too complex, then we’ll have to exclude it or simplify it”. Editors also explained that it was important to recognise that the language of radio must be simple because the medium was patronised by a diverse audience consisting of the elite and the unschooled. Above all, the station was mandated to satisfy these different categories of people as part of its public service duty.
5.5 Ownership and gatekeeping – Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M

The Joy F.M editorial policy clearly stated that decisions made in the selection and broadcast of news stories were not to be influenced by commercial or political pressures. Also, gatekeepers of Uniiq F.M were enjoined by the organisation’s editorial policy to be cautious in the selection of stories sourced from external bodies such as funders or sponsors.

Concerning whether or not Uniiq F.M’s story selection was based on the dictates of its sponsors, a senior editor at the newsroom said:

It’s a public broadcasting system, and in the 1992 constitution, we’re insulated. It’s the only media that a whole chapter has been devoted to in the constitution, so that tells you the position we hold in Ghana. Ours is a law governed operation, unlike any other media house.

Another editor at Uniiq F.M pointed out that the station only reported the facts of events that occurred, whether or not they were in favour of the government. He admitted that there were a number of times the station had covered stories that did not favour the government:

We’re not under the control, beck and call of the government. If we go on assignment and we see that the government has built something, we come and report it as it is. If there’s a corruption allegation... and others are asked to step aside, we’ll report as it is.

To confirm this in practice, the researcher observed whether stories that featured the government were treated specially or differently from other stories and found that no attempts were made to stifle stories that contained negative news about the government, as long as these stories had been crosschecked and verified. No extraordinary treatment was given in the selection of stories about the government, except when press releases had been issued out to all
media houses to publish information on government policies such as insurance schemes and tax amendments.

It was observed that the Joy F.M editorial policy did not categorically state the position gatekeepers were expected to take in situations which presented a conflict of commercial interests – where publishing a negative news story about a sponsor or financier was fully backed by the written policy. Editors at Joy F.M acknowledged that this was an issue that must be addressed in subsequent revisions of the policy, so that gatekeepers could have a clear point of reference when exercising editorial independence in such situations. Concerning this, a Joy F.M senior editor said:

If there’s any important review that’s required of the editorial policy, it should reflect how we are dealing clearly!...and that’s not being dealt with... with commercial interests and its impact on the work, so I can fully report even if it’s against sponsors, without having to worry, like I do with politicians. It should be a system support, not just individual support. When you establish a system support like that, you’re better off. People will not fear at all.

An editor at the Joy newsroom recounted some of his experiences:

I have done stories in which our advertisers’ business were affected. Stories that were going to pull commercial money from this station...big money! I was even afraid, because I didn’t think the impact would be that huge. ...and yes, we lost money through the process... This place, you don’t have to look over your shoulder, that your bosses will step on the story especially when they know it’s true. That’s the only confidence it gives me, so I can speak freely. I can do the story from within my conscience and go to sleep.

The Managing News editor confirmed that the station occasionally had to broadcast news stories that had negative implications on the station’s sponsors. Once the facts were
established, the story was aired even if it implied that the organisation would lose funds. An editor explained:

We’re mostly objective. I only know of a situation where, because we’re a private entity, if for example you have a story about Coca Cola, and Coca Cola advertises with you, you are even more careful to do such a story. You have to get the side of Coca Cola, otherwise they may pull the advert. Sometimes, you have some pressure there, in going to do the story because the people sponsor you, but we go ahead and we do it. So we give the people the opportunity to respond, and then we fire the story.

As a result of its commercial status, *Joy F.M* was also driven by profit-generation and competition. This informed the types of news stories selected for broadcast, as encapsulated in a statement made by a senior editor in the newsroom:

The bottom line is all that we’re doing is to generate content that is compelling so much so that it attracts people to our radio...now, the number of people that you have listening to you at any point is what will influence advertisers to decide whether they bring the adverts to you or to another station...so we make sure we do things that concern the people, so we have a lot of them listening to us, then at the end of the day, it will bring money...somebody invested their money into it, so they must make profit. Those of us who work here, we need salaries, you know...

To confirm *Joy F.M*’s inclination towards selecting stories based on its profit-orientation and commercial interests, another editor at *Joy F.M* stated:

We’ll not do a story about the president commissioning some building in some place, or commissioning some kvip or something... We won’t do that. We’re not obliged to... unless it’s a big launch that affects most lives...okay, so the president is launching planting for food and jobs...millions of farmers and their children in Ghana will be affected...we’ll cover it...but if it’s some assignment about some president launching some kvip or something like that, we’ll not cover it. We’re a private company, owned by a private person, so ours is to cover the sort of stories that will attract the most audience.
While *Joy F.M* was uninterested in covering a story about the commissioning of a kvip, *Uniiq F.M* considered it part of its duty as a public service station, to cover this kind of news story because it was obliged to primarily serve the interests of the public by informing them about any aspect of national development. According to a senior editor at the Uniiq newsroom, the station was owned by the public of Ghana, therefore it had to work in favour of what the public needed to know.

Though *Uniiq F.M*’s primary objective was to serve the public interest, its gatekeepers also considered stories that would favour its commercial interests. According to a senior editor at *Uniiq F.M*:

> We can’t continue to be doing public service without making money. We need money to run our services. That’s why if University of Ghana, for example...the School of Performing arts or School of Journalism is inviting us, we know it’s an educational event, not a commercial one, so we don’t charge them, but if Ashfoam, Guinness Ghana Ltd, GTP is launching a product and they invite us, it’s a commercial assignment so they pay. That doesn’t change the focus at all, because we also need money to run the corporation.

### 5.6 Technology in news work

Both stations made use of technology in news gathering to facilitate the transfer of information. Apart from websites and emails, through which communication among team members and audiences was done, the teams made use of social media and messaging applications, especially WhatsApp, due to its easy access that came with the use of the mobile phone. WhatsApp pages served as a common discussion platform for journalists and editors, on which story ideas were commonly discussed. Also, in the event that a journalist went out on an assignment and was unable to return before the next news bulletin, the news story and
soundbites that were retrieved could be sent via the platform for inclusion in the news. Following that, however, journalists were required to write the story on their return to the newsroom, so that it could be properly recorded in the news archives.

*Joy F.M* was very particular about the use of the internet and technology, had a very active social media presence and encouraged the use of mobile phones, tablets, notepad computers and other electronic devices in obtaining and sending information. Apart from desktop machines, some staff were given personal computers to facilitate the news work. Nonetheless, there was still a limited supply of machines since some were out of use. This made it quite challenging to process scripts and sound files on time, as staff had to depend on the few available machines in good working condition. This led to instances where a journalist was interrupted in the course of using a machine, because another team member urgently needed to access information, write a news script or use the internet. Thus, the limited access to electronic devices made it more challenging for journalists to beat deadlines in their news work.

*Joy F.M* run a very effective paperless system introduced about five years ago; this entailed the transmission of information via a software system known as “News Air”. News scripts were also drafted and edited on the News Air platform. Thus, the use of paper was brought to the barest minimum. In news production for instance, news items were developed, edited and arranged digitally, after which they were transferred unto a screen and teleprompter to be read by the news presenter. This significantly reduced the turn-around time in processing and
printing news bulletins, and served as an advantage in implementing last minute changes to the bulletins. One editor said:

We realised we were wasting a lot of paper, so we decided that “Why don’t we rather put one computer in the studio and read the story from it...all from the screen. So that was the reason for introducing the paperless, and it’s been good so far.

In the Uniiq newsroom, work was facilitated by the use of computers, a phone dedicated to the station’s WhatsApp platform, an office telephone, 24-hour internet service, printers and photocopiers and a software system named “Q Series”, on which scripts were written and edited.

Observations made were that, unlike the Joy newsroom, the Uniiq newsroom did not aggressively maximise the use of new technology and social media in their work. Despite this, workers were able to meet the daily demands of work. Since the newsroom relied heavily on paper, news bulletins were labelled and stored in files, but because these became bulky over time, retrieval of bulletins mostly proved to be a challenge, unlike in the Joy newsroom where data was stored in computers.

In both newsrooms, the quality of gadgets for recording impinged on news selection. For instance, if the quality of recorded sound bites accompanying a news item was poor, the news item was not selected unless a suitable soundbite was accessed from a different source. The researcher found that sound quality of a news item was an essential value for both stations, and because radio served as a medium for the human auditory system, the availability of quality sound was greatly considered in news selection, and determined whether or not a story would
be broadcast. Also, if telephone lines were faulty and a reporter could not be reached for a live report, the news item would be shelved and carried over into the next news bulletin.

News workers at both radio stations confirmed that technology played a role in news selection and coverage. For instance, because *Joy F.M* had the technical equipment it needed to report news immediately, it was able to work in line with its news value of timeliness. In the same vein, news gathering was limited by the unavailability of relevant resources.

### 5.7 Other prevailing factors in news work

**Incentives and logistics for news gathering**

In both newsrooms, there was the opportunity to apply for funding to cover news stories, such as those that required travelling over long distances. In the Joy newsroom, the process for obtaining funding to cover these kinds of stories were relatively faster and less cumbersome. However, in the Uniiq newsroom, the application and approval process sometimes delayed and this affected the immediacy element of story. The journalists noted that a story sometimes went unpublished because of lack of immediate access to funds. Reporters sometimes had to depend on their personal funds to cover a story or give up the pursuit if the amount of money they had was insufficient. At one of the editorial meetings, for instance, a journalist in the Uniiq newsroom submitted a story idea that required a number of trips to the Northern region of Ghana. The newsroom did not have the necessary financial support for this investigative project, therefore the story was dropped.
It was observed that news work in both newsrooms was hampered by the limited availability of vehicles to transport reporters for their assignments. This also caused undue delays in reporters’ efforts to beat deadlines in the coverage of a story.

The form of motivation given to staff also played a direct role in inspiring them to produce quality news stories. Verbal commendations given to team members who were outstanding in their news delivery or who produced extraordinary news stories propelled them to gather stories in the most efficient way. At Joy F.M for instance, outstanding staff sometimes received calls, awards, citations and public validation from superiors including personnel within management, such as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or the Chief Operating Officer (COO). Motivation also came in the form of promotions and selections for partial or full sponsorships to participate in training programmes outside the country. Moreover, a general source of motivation was the awareness that the organisation was operating within a competitive market and had to strive to maintain its brand by gathering and producing the best news stories.

At Uniq F.M, incentives came in the form of promotions given to diligent staff. For purposes of public commendation, there was a notice board on which the names of excelling staff were published. Some journalists and editors were however dissatisfied with the level of motivation and admitted that it needed to be given further attention in order to discourage complacency in carrying out news work.
Editor’s personal ideologies

The personal ideologies of the editors played a key role in news selection in both radio stations. Although some editors in both stations initially denied that personal preferences could inadvertently determine the news, and that selection was purely based on professional standards, further interviews and observation proved otherwise. A senior editor at Joy F.M said:

I have said I’m socialist. I am ideologically inclined in a socialist way. Socialism requires me to put people first, so if I have an option, even it’s a pro-business story as against a human interest story, in the same way, even a political story, I’m more likely to favour the human interest story because of my orientation.

In one of the editorial meetings at Joy F.M, a senior editor insisted on selecting a particular story about the reactions of Ghanaians to the president because, as he kept exclaiming, “I’m interested in this story!”

On one of the days in the Uniiq newsroom, a journalist was in the middle of writing a news story about a UN rapporteur who had suggested that gayism be legalised in Ghana. Immediately the Head of news got to know this, he vehemently opposed it and instructed the journalist not to proceed with the story. When the researcher asked him why he had stopped the journalist from writing the story, in addition to explaining that it was against the station’s editorial policy, he said “It’s my personal policy as the Head of news. They can do that (gayism) in their country but we’re not going to allow that. I have a strong repulsion to it”.

In another interview with one of the senior editors at Uniiq F.M, he admitted that his personal interest was sometimes a factor in his selection of news stories. He explained:
I’m interested in environment, agriculture, politics, education...almost everything, but because I’m a farmer, I’m interested more in agricultural stories, so if there’s any assignment from the Ministry of Agriculture, I cover it.

**Hierarchy and the editor’s dictates**

The researcher observed that the Uniiq newsroom placed more emphasis on hierarchy and according respect based on titles. For instance, in the Uniiq newsroom, senior journalists and editors were addressed with the titles ‘Mr.’, ‘Uncle’ and ‘Aunty’. Seats and desks were reserved for senior staff, while journalists, interns and national service persons surrounded the ‘round tables’. The team ensured that staff who had just been employed (such as national service persons) understood and respected the clearly set out designations. During editorial meetings, the team leader usually sat in front of the team, where he/she could easily be identified as the person leading the discussions. In addition, certain tasks, considered basic, were reserved for the lower ranking staff. For instance, minutes of editorial meetings were recorded by an intern, a national service person or a junior journalist.

The researcher recalls that during an interview with a senior editor in the Uniiq newsroom, she was directed by another editor (who had been absent on leave and did not know she was conducting a study) to vacate the seat she was using, as it was reserved for senior staff. This nearly resulted in a heated argument between the interview respondent, who was also a senior staff, and the editor who had just issued the instruction, as he insisted the researcher was not entitled to that seat. Eventually, tempers cooled when the interview respondent ordered the researcher to remain seated and explained to the other editor that the researcher was there to carry out an academic assignment.
The high level of respect accorded to the seniors in the *Uniiq* newsroom was translated into the selection of stories at editorial meetings. Usually, when the Head of News or a senior editor proposed the inclusion of a particular news story, the team settled on it without much debate. Often, members of a team who expressed any uncertainties or contrary opinions were also senior staff.

In the Joy newsroom, team members were mostly addressed by their first names, and some even objected to being addressed with titles. Also, no particular attention was given to which person could occupy a specific seat in the newsroom even during editorial meetings. In the Joy newsroom, it was common to observe junior and senior staff engaged in debates over which news items to select. Also, categorisations of tasks such as recording minutes of editorial meetings were not as strictly outlined in the Joy newsroom, such that minutes could be recorded by any team members including the senior editors.

**The gatekeeper’s conscience**

This also played a role in determining the kinds of news items that were selected. A *Joy F.M* editor mentioned that in selecting stories, the news worker’s conscience was the principal factor, and took precedence over any written policy. He said:

> I’ve always said that my conscience is more important. I think, to be able to do this job properly, you should feel for people. So sometimes, it’s even emotional. Why is this not being done? Why are children having to suffer this way? Why is the education system on this particular level? Why are there so many poor people?... your conscience is a factor.

To buttress the point about conscience being a determining factor, a journalist at the Uniiq newsroom said:
Even your conscience should guide you in ensuring that whatever news you’re gathering or packaging does not contain any insidious elements that will disturb the peace and cohesion of the country. I am guided by public sensitivity and our culture. I will not write graphic things.

**Reporter’s safety**

For both stations, news items were not selected if coverage would jeopardise the reporter’s safety and if their lives would be endangered. Gatekeepers often realised that they needed to take this decision in situations such as tribal feuds, clashes, conflicts or violent demonstrations, and life-threatening fire outbreaks. A journalist at *Uniiq F.M* explained:

> It’s better not to get a story than to lose your life. The editors always tell you that when you see your safety isn’t guaranteed, you have to withdraw…because when they kill you, can you get a story? No!”

**Guidelines in news selection**

Editors explained that some stories were selected or dropped in accordance with the guidelines of their editorial policies. Senior editors of both stations were confident in their knowledge of what the policies entailed, therefore they had little or no contact with the policies except in situations when the policies had to be revised. They also said that the policies usually served as points of reference in situations when it was unclear which editorial decision to take.

The study found, on one hand, that in both newsrooms, few reporters in both newsrooms were aware of the existence of a newsroom policy. However, they had never seen or read it. On the other hand, most reporters, especially the junior journalists and interns, were not aware that a newsroom policy existed. Rather, they reverted to their senior colleagues for guidance when
they were unsure of which editorial decisions to make. However, the editors in both newsrooms had knowledge of the existing newsroom policies.

Another interesting phenomenon in the Uniiq newsroom was that, although the GJA Code of Ethics was boldly pasted on a notice board, only a few of the journalists knew the ethical expectations and the prohibitions stated therein.

The GJA Code of Ethics

This document outlined the expected professional approach by which the profession of journalism in Ghana must be practiced. It stated unethical practices such as giving and receiving bribes in the course of duty, publishing conflict-inducing material, plagiarising information and refusing to issue an appropriate rejoinder to correct mistakes. The document pointed out that to be ethical and professional, a journalist was required to always report the truth, ensure that public interest is not sidelined and that the public’s right to information was constantly upheld. Among other requirements, journalists were expected to ensure the accuracy of all information before broadcast, avoid unnecessary exaggerations in reporting the news, protect confidential sources and desist from identifying abused individuals.

It was necessary to review this document because the editorial policies, which guided news workers of both newsrooms in their routines, were mostly crafted in line with the guidelines as stated in the GJA code of ethics.
The Joy F.M Editorial Policy

Typically, the policy addressed the editorial standards by which the organisation was expected to operate, that is, the set of values and procedures that producers, journalists and editors were required to adopt in providing programmes and services to their audiences. The editorial policy addressed principles such as ensuring truth and accuracy in disseminating information, allowing fairness, impartiality and diversity of opinion, respect for people’s privacy, issuing rejoinders to correct mistakes where necessary and upholding and serving the public interest at all times. The policy was however careful to set the distinction between fulfilling the public’s right to information and publishing content that may be harmful and that would eventually work against the public interest.

It also placed emphasis on the station being transparent and accountable to the public, avoiding political bias or the semblance of it, safeguarding the interests of children and protecting the vulnerable in society. It mentioned behaviours the organisation considered unethical and unacceptable, such as receiving of bribes for favours (known in journalism circles as ‘soli’), publishing sensitive information without crosschecking the facts, denigrating racial, ethnic or religious groups, and publishing promotional material in its news content, especially because this would compromise the organisation’s editorial independence.

Uniiq F.M Editorial Policy

The policy offered a frame of reference to guide gatekeepers in making difficult editorial decisions and to ensure that the organisation applied the strictest professional standards in discharging its mandate, so that its operational values were not undermined.
The editorial policy covered the organisation’s philosophy, journalistic policies, production standards, information processing, online policies and personnel standards. It placed emphasis on *Uniiq FM’s* duty to lead the public in contributing to nation building, which also explained the station’s interest in covering stories to generate public discourse and to reflect national cohesion and regional balance.

The policy re-echoed some journalistic principles as enshrined in the constitution of Ghana and the GJA Code of ethics, such as accuracy, respect for privacy and human dignity, balance, fairness and integrity, admitting and correcting errors, and upholding public interest, all of which were expected to reflect in its news broadcasts. It stated that news and current affairs programmes should be balanced, especially in controversial matters, to avoid promoting particular opinions, interest groups, individuals or events. The policy also stated that staff should avoid situations in which they would be politically, ideologically, socially or culturally biased.

The policy stated elements to be avoided in news broadcasts, such as propaganda and hate speech, ethical and unethical journalistic practices, principles for the coverage of conflict situations and sensibility to national and local values and norms. It also stated that selecting a news item should be based on the importance of the event and not necessarily on the sounds and images it provides.

Other principles outlined included ensuring listeners’ access to information and to the main points of all issues of importance, as instructed in Article 21 (1) of the 1992 constitution that
states that “All persons shall have the right to information subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary in a democratic society”.

The policy established the organisation’s editorial independence from external interference, as drawn from Article 167 of the 1992 constitution, which instructs the Media Commission to insulate the institution from external control in all its output, news content being inclusive. It also conferred the ultimate editorial power and responsibility to the Director-General of the organisation, that is, the Editor-in-Chief.

5.8 Priorities in news selection – Joy F.M

“If it bleeds, it leads”

At Joy F.M, negative stories, including those that involved death, bloodshed and accidents were prioritised as news. This is in line with a popular journalistic principle that says that “if it bleeds, it leads”. A news editor at Joy F.M said, “if it’s a sad story, it’s a more sensational story, it’s one of those stories that is bloody… it’s a good news story. I mean, bad news sells. Bad news is good news”.

A journalist explained that there were instances in which he submitted a story to the news team, and the critical question of how many people died was directed at him. Where there were no casualties, the story was dropped. Another editor added:

If there’s a major press conference anywhere, about government announcement of new policies, and there’s a fire outbreak somewhere, we’ll abandon the major press conference and go for the fire outbreak. If there’s been armed robbery somewhere and someone’s been shot dead, it would lead the story because it is bleeding. Lives have been
lost in the process, and lives are more important than government’s “we will do, we may do, we can do or we can’t do”. Who’s interested in a press conference when there’s a robbery attack?

**Action-inducing stories**

Stories aimed at inducing authorities to take a necessary action, especially one that was considered long overdue, were considered priorities for news selection in the Joy newsroom. Indeed, the researcher observed that, following a news story involving an armed robbery, the murder of an elderly man and the near rape of his daughter in Accra, the Managing news editor issued a directive that the story should remain on air for the entire week. In his own words, “something has to be done about this”. A Joy F.M journalist said:

> We’re deliberately running stories on the robbery situation. We ended the news bulletin by playing the robbery sound of the victim. I mean, there are times that neutrality doesn’t mean just airing the story and going. It means you have to go a step further and get some action, taken by whoever is in authority. So in terms of those issues that we think of the interest of the state more, we tend to prioritise it and give it much attention. So if it’s seen as maybe being biased towards that agenda, if it’s positive, it’s fine...once we get some results.

**Stories consisting of many news values**

News stories reflecting a considerable number of news values were also considered priorities especially if there was a wide range of stories to choose from. A senior news editor at Joy F.M said:

> We’ll prioritise the one that satisfies most of the values with which we judge our news. So if the story has proximity, but there’s no conflict, no impact, no relevance, there’s nothing...there’s no way we’re going to do that, so the more the news values in a story...the more news values we tick when we pick a story, the higher the probability that that story will be done, or be prioritised.
Time-bound events

Stories that could not be set aside for use in subsequent news bulletins were prioritised in news selection. A Joy F.M journalist explained:

There’re some news items that are time-bound, so… the minister has come to parliament to talk or the speaker said something. It’s a news story that if you don’t do it today, you can’t do it tomorrow. But assuming I have a special report – maybe I’ve done investigations into how people are cutting down the trees... if I have that story, I have a 30 minute - bulletin, and I have too many stories that happened today, I can shelve that story. If the news is not time-bound, you can hold on to it. You need to consider whether the news is very important such that if you don’t give it priority today, it may not be significant tomorrow.

5.9 Priorities in news selection – Uniiq F.M

Development stories

In line with its aim of promoting nation building, stories that reflected national development were considered priorities for selection in the Uniiq newsroom. Stories related to growth in areas such as the nation’s economy, infrastructure, education as well as stories that involved policies to improve the state of the country, were prioritised. According to an editor:

The president yesterday increased the road safety fund to curb road carnage, which is another key thing. We see that people are dying- just this weekend, about 50 people died through road accidents, so the fund has been increased to intensify education. I think it’s a very good story that will be chosen first.

Health stories

Uniiq F.M prioritised stories involving human health or mortality. A journalist explained that the news team was always interested in the death ratio and whether there were any casualties in because that information made the story more newsworthy. In an instance where there were two stories, one regarding child trafficking and the other on the state of roads in the country, a Uniiq F.M editor selected the child trafficking story because it was related to human health. At
another time, an editor placed the priority of selection on a story about the Ghana Standards Authority and the Food and Drugs Authority’s collaboration to rid shops off substandard products. He explained that this was important because most people unknowingly patronised inferior products and eventually contracted sicknesses and other health complications, therefore it was necessary to use the news as a platform to create awareness so people could protect their health.

**Human-interest stories**

Events that reflected the most immediate effect on human lives were given the priority in news selection. Gatekeepers at *Uniiq F.M* also considered accident stories as human-interest stories since they were directly related to audiences and people around them. A journalist further explained: “we take the stories that affect human beings much, for example, when someone dies now, you’ll see the pain and what people feel”.

**Similarities in news selection—*Joy F.M* and *Uniiq F.M***

**Trending stories**

In both the Joy and the Uniiq newsrooms, the most widely circulating stories in the media at any given period were prioritised. In relation to this, a journalist at the Joy newsroom said that on a regular day, some stories would usually be ignored, however, if the events occurred at a time when related issues were making the news, they would be selected. He cited an example:

I think a woman has been stabbed somewhere...one woman, stabbed. On a normal day, if it was not for the trending issues, we would not have done that story. After all, what’s news about one person being stabbed? This time around, there’s a wave of armed robbery that’s why any little incident is reported, but when it dies down, it doesn’t work. This is why they’re a lot of accidents many times, but you don’t hear it in the news.
Another journalist at Joy F.M further explained:

We ask, what is relevant in that period? Right now, there’s a rise in robbery cases, so if we have...let’s say, medical related stories, business stories...and we have robbery-related stories, of course, the robbery related ones must lead, and then if there’s time, we can add the other stories.

At Uniiq F.M, the researcher observed that in an editorial meeting, two stories were suggested – one on the state of the economy and the other on child streetism. The former was chosen because the state of the economy was a topic that had been circulating on the airwaves and featuring in the news bulletins at the time.

**Agenda setting**

Both stations selected stories to fulfil an agenda setting role and to drive conversation among listeners and the society as a whole. An editor at Uniiq F.M stated:

Agenda setting at certain levels is a conscious thing done by any media house or anyone who wants to send information somewhere. It is important to us...how we can skew or direct a section of society to think along a certain pattern or to follow a certain trend of arguments.

A Joy F.M reporter also affirmed that stories were selected with the aim of setting an agenda for the stations’ listeners and generating public discourse. Through social media, the stations monitored these discussions and assessed whether it had led to a desired social change.

Regarding a rape story that had been broadcast for a week in Joy F.M’s news, a journalist said:

We want it to drive conversation. We want it to be the most talked about issue, so this story that the minister came to talk about ...the rape...it was a story that JoyNews did. The reporter went to the Central region and did the story, and there was a massive conversation. The story was even done in the BBC. It was done across all the media platforms.
An editor at *Uniiq F.M* said:

Agenda setting is important to us. We as media people or journalists look at what seriously impacts our society, so we can lead the society to discuss matters and the way forward. Agenda setting is a conscious effort or deliberate strategy we use to “skew” or lead the meaning, thinking or perception of society over a certain subject in a certain line… to think along a certain pattern or to follow a certain trend of arguments.

**‘Paid-for’/ commercial stories**

Both newsrooms prioritised the selection and coverage of stories which had been paid for. A *Joy F.M* journalist explained that business-related assignments in particular were not covered unless they had been paid for ahead of time, and that these measures were put in place to cover the organisation’s expenses. *Uniiq F.M* also covered commercial stories as a means of augmenting its income, since it could not survive wholly on subventions it received from the state.

**Public interest stories**

In line with the requirements of the National Media Commission and the Ghana Journalists Association, both radio stations looked out for public interest in the selection of their news stories. As a public service broadcaster, *Uniiq F.M* particularly placed emphasis on its obligation to promote national unity as a key element of public interest. In explaining the station’s criteria for news selection, an editor at the Uniiq newsroom explained that a professional gatekeeper was always required by law and by the profession to select the angle of a story on the basis of that which will be beneficial to society. Likewise, a news editor of *Joy F.M* said, “Something may be good, it may be right in everything, but you have to consider what effect it will have on the society at the end of the day”.

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Stories excluded in news selection

Promotional stories

Both radio stations guarded against stories used as guises for public relations strategies of individuals or organisations. These decisions were in line with the GJA Code of Ethics as well as the stations’ editorial policies. Concerning promotional material, Article 1.14 of the Multimedia editorial policy stated:

We must select and cover stories for our own independent editorial reasons. We must be on our guard for "spin" from outside bodies and commercial companies who may also try and place stories across our services in a short space of time. We must ensure that when a product, service or organisation is named in a news report or factual content it is clearly editorially justified.

Likewise, Article 2.6 of the Uniiq F.M policy stated that:

News and current affairs programmes must present a balanced overall view of …matters, to avoid promoting particular opinions or being manipulated into doing so by interest groups, individuals or events.

In line with their policies, both newsrooms put in stringent measures, such as subjecting a story to strict editorial checks, to ensure that the news items did not give audiences the perception that particular products, individuals or organisations were being promoted by the stations.

Entertainment stories

The study’s observations found that both stations did not include entertainment stories in their major news bulletins. Rather, there were separate programmes that covered entertainment, therefore major bulletins were reserved for hard news.


**Ambiguous news items**

Information which was unclear and could not be readily verified were excluded in news selection in both newsrooms. This was in accordance with Section 5 of the NMC guidelines that states that “statements or information that could be ambiguous or misleading should be avoided”.

**Speculative news items**

News items considered speculative, outrageous and unverifiable were mostly excluded in line with Section 16 of the NMC guidelines which states that “All transmissions intended to supply information and help form public opinion should be thoroughly researched and assertions of fact should be verifiable”. In line with Article 2.8.5 of the Uniiq editorial policy which stated that fact should be separated from opinion and conjecture, unconfirmed news items which went through news selection, were reported with verbs such as ‘may’, ‘could’ and ‘would’, and not with definite verbs such as ‘did’ or ‘was’.

Article 1.1 of the *Joy F.M* editorial policy also instructed that the organisation be open and honest about what is unknown, and avoid unfounded speculation.

**Ordinary events**

Both stations found ordinary events to be of no news value and avoided these because they did not want audiences to perceive their news bulletins as boring. Additionally, the editorial policies of both radio stations pointed out that news content that contains profane language, sex
and nudity, grief and suffering, violence and children, were sensitive subjects which needed to be broadcast with discretion.

5.10 Differences in news selection - Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M

Sensational stories

For Uniiq F.M, sensational stories were not considered newsworthy, in line with Article 4.5 of its editorial policy that stated that there should not be a dramatised portrayal of people or events. Gatekeepers at Uniiq F.M generally agreed that sensationalism was an element that must be completely avoided in news selection and production. Conversely, some editors at Joy F.M considered the element in news selection. The researcher observed that sometimes, during editorial meetings, a debate would ensue between those who argued that sensational stories were ideal because they captured listeners’ interests, and those who felt that sensationalism was not professional in news. A Joy news editor said:

We don’t do it deliberately, but we tend to give a lot of credence to what’s like... commercial news, so the sensational part of it might be predominant, but I’m always minded of that, so when I sit in the editorial meetings...in fact, there’ll be a huge debate on the table; some will be saying, “NO NO No...it will not hit them! It doesn’t have any sensational element!” then I tell them, “No, what’s the point we’re making?

Another editor disclosed that the station’s gatekeepers needed to consciously guard against publishing sensational stories in their quest to select and publish commercial news (that is, news that sells).
Anticipated events

Joy F.M, in its news reports, avoided selecting and reporting events that were yet to occur, because according to editors, these items could not be crosschecked. Rather, the station preferred reporting events that had already occurred. An editor in the Joy newsroom said:

One of the principles that we have here in our news is that, generally, if it happens, we’ll report it...so, promises of “we will do, we will do”, we don’t really like in our news. All of the details must be intact. We can’t report that government will want to do this and that...no, we’re not merely the conduit for information to be relayed...we want the details and the substance.

Uniiq F.M, on the other hand, included as part of its news packages, events that were expected to happen in the future, and an editor explained that these could also form part of important information that the public needed to know.

Donation stories

Joy F.M did not select or cover stories involving donations as part of their news package. A journalist at the newsroom said that the station did not place significance on these events because its gatekeepers had the perception that donations could be done by any person and were therefore not extraordinary or weighty enough to be captured in the station’s news bulletins. A news editor explained further:

Donations are not stories. Those stories have no conflict in them. Take, for example, that somebody comes and is stating the obvious… some doctor says that he’s warning against people contracting kidney disease because when you have kidney disease, it affects your life or something like that… I mean, everybody can say that…and it’s not news, so we’ll not cover it. Anything that articulates the obvious isn’t newsworthy enough for us.

However, in keeping with its public service orientation, Uniiq F.M selected and covered events such as donations. In one instance, Uniiq F.M broadcast a story about the Ministry of University of Ghana http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh
Information donating vehicle tyres and laptops to its Information Services department. Whereas editors at *Uniiq F.M* found this story newsworthy because of its “national development” element, editors at *Joy F.M* insisted that it was not news, because it was the minister’s duty to provide these items for the department, thus, he was only fulfilling an obligation that did not merit inclusion in a news bulletin.

**Press conferences**

*Uniiq F.M* was obliged to cover entire proceedings of press conferences. An editor explained this:

> When there’s “Meet the Press”, Uniiq will take all its gadgets and go there and do live reporting with the Meet the Press and the minister and technocrats all there. When there’s budget reading in parliament, all the media people are there but Uniiq will have to cover it live…from the beginning to the end, and we don’t charge for this.

*Joy F.M*, on the other hand, did not place premium on these kinds of events. Although the station was usually present for press conferences, it only covered portions of it and moved on to other assignments that were of greater commercial interest.

**5.11 News gathering – Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M**

**Assigning reporters**

*Joy F.M* and *Uniiq F.M* were found to have similar patterns in the assigning of reporters to cover news events. The rankings of staff in the newsroom was not necessarily a factor, and any team member, from an intern to a senior editor, could be assigned to an event. However, particular attention was paid to the reporter’s background and level of expertise in a given
subject matter. Both newsrooms adopted the Western style of journalism, where ranking is not a basis for desk journalism or sit-down assignments. The newsrooms operated on the belief that for quality reportage, senior members of the team were most suitable because of their vast experience. An editor in the Joy newsroom said:

When you go to the developed world, you see Larry King and those elderly people. Look at their results and see. It’s not small boys who do the job. It’s only in Africa, or Ghana in particular, that we look at seniors as those who should be by the desk.

A senior editor in the Uniiq newsroom explained that assigning a reporter to a specific assignment also depended on the weight of the story and the reporter’s level of knowledge on issues surrounding the story. Usually, the assignment editors, over time, found out the areas of strength of each team member and were therefore able to send them to cover assignments commensurate with their capacities. Another editor explained that assigning reporters was not necessarily a function of which reporter had more contacts on the field that could give information:

We’re not necessarily looking for someone who has contact persons. If you have that, it’s fine, but if I want to assign you, I know that you can handle this assignment. When it comes to court reporting for example, we have our court reporters who are permanently there, so they understand the court issues. There are some of us who have reported in court before, so if the assignment is big and more people are needed, I can be sent there to beef up the report.

On one of the days in the Joy newsroom, an intern was assigned to cover a news story about a bank that had been attacked by robbers. The Managing news editor was however dissatisfied with the interviews conducted, insisting they had not been sufficiently exploratory and analytical, and he questioned the senior members of the team as to why they had assigned that story to an intern who was not familiar with the team’s newsgathering principles. He
emphasised that newsgathering was not the preserve of the junior team members, insisting that “Journalism is not about desk work. If you have to send me, do, I’ll go”. He stressed that high profile interviews and more complicated stories that need much delving into, should not be left in the hands of the younger team members but should be pursued by the more experienced, senior workers. Thus, the reporters’ experience was an asset valued by both the Joy and Uniiq newsrooms.

**Multitasking skills**

In both newsrooms, news workers who had multiple skills were highly sought after. Much value was placed on the ability of a reporter or editor to develop stories, handle technical equipment and edit the most appropriate sounds to capture a story, prepare and organise bulletins, give comprehensive reports, present the news, skillfully interview and glean information for news even when it seemed least likely. The ability to discover a news worthy element in an otherwise ordinary event was a highly treasured newsgathering skill, and according to an editor at *Uniiq F.M*, “even when nothing is happening, you should be able to get a story”.

**ROSR (Reporter-on-scene-report)**

The researcher observed that both stations preferred stories that were sourced from their own reporters, instead of those obtained from monitoring other stations. In cases where a news story was heard on another station and a suggestion was made to include it in the bulletin, a journalist was always assigned to follow up so that the stations would have an original and verifiable version of the story. Also, stories in which the reporter was present at the scene and
could give a live report (reporter-on-scene-report) during the news, were more often selected to feature in the bulletins, than stories that had been written as a report of an event that had already occurred.

5.12 Other Findings

Roles in news production

In the Joy newsroom, interns and national service persons were not given the full responsibility of overseeing production during the presentation of major news bulletins – this was clearly the preserve of senior personnel in the news teams. At Uniiq F.M, however, interns and national service persons either assisted during news reading or were put in charge of news production, thereby being responsible for placing telephone calls for interviews and reporter on scene (journalists’ live) reports, confirming the arrangement of news stories, and ensuring that news readers did not over run (exceed the time allotted for the news bulletin) or under run (end before the stipulated time is exhausted) while communicating with the newsroom concerning any developments or challenges where necessary. The researcher observed that being put in charge of these activities caused interns to build confidence in their journalistic abilities and to quickly become accustomed to the newsroom practices.

Punctuality

Both newsrooms valued the importance of punctuality as a media worker, but this was expressed differently as per the culture of both newsrooms. Joy F.M, for instance, did not use a logbook or device in recording attendance. When the researcher asked why this was so, a journalist explained that it was part of their culture to be accountable without necessarily being
monitored. He added, “There is no need for that. Everyone knows what they’re supposed to do”. At *Uniq F.M*, however, there was an automated device at the internal reception for recording the reporting times of staff, and this was meant to monitor their arrival and departure times. Both newsrooms therefore placed a high level of expectation on their team members to be punctual and to consciously ensure that the value of timeliness was upheld not only in reporting for work in the newsroom, but also in covering assignments. This value was especially enforced because news work is one that runs with the tick of the clock, and the opportunity to cover an important event could easily be forfeited because of a reporter or news team’s inability to arrive on time to the scene.

### 5.13 Summary

This chapter presented findings of the study in the newsrooms of *Joy F.M* and *Uniq F.M*. Descriptive details of both stations, as well as their daily newsroom routines and practices constituting newsgathering and news selection, were outlined. Factors that accounted for news selection as found in the study were also presented in the chapter. These included the technological bearings of the stations, and editors’ inclinations toward prioritising certain kinds of news items.
CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the study in relation to the research questions, problem statement, theoretical framework and relevant literature.

6.2 News values for Joy F.M and Uniq F.M

Gatekeepers at Joy F.M were likely to consider the news values of conflict, relevance and magnitude in selecting stories for publication, in line with Harcup and O’Neill’s (2017) taxonomy that listed these as relevant news values for a media organisation. Joy F.M’s news value of conflict was not in consonance with Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) taxonomy. This was mainly because, although it had not been listed in the Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) taxonomy, Joy F.M found conflict to be essential in generating public discourse and in pointing out and seeking solutions to societal problems. Therefore, to the radio station, conflict as a news value was indispensable within the Ghanaian context.

The study also found that Joy F.M’s news values of relevance and magnitude were in line with Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news values of meaningfulness, that is the extent to which the audience identifies with the story, as well as the news value of threshold, that explained a newsworthy item as one that impacted or affected a great number of people. Joy F.M recognised that the relevance of these news values cut across different contexts and were key in attracting and sustaining the interest of any audience, thus the need to include these as part of its dominant news values.
Additionally, the news value of interest that *Joy F.M* looked out for in news selection was not in consonance with Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) model but was more closely linked to Herbert (2000) and Cho et al.’s (2004) news value of human interest, which stated that stories that people could connect or relate to were more frequently covered as news.

The tendency for gatekeepers at *Joy F.M* to select events based on their rarity and novelty confirmed Herbert’s (2000) findings that events with the news value of novelty were more likely to be selected as news stories in most media organisations. The station also looked out for news with the value of expectedness, a finding consistent with Bell’s (1991) predictability criterion that noted that media organisations were more likely to choose anticipated events. This indicated that there were indeed some news values that cut across contexts. Contrariwise, although *Joy F.M*’s news value of expectedness was consistent with those in some Western models, such as consonance in Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) taxonomy, news values like rarity and novelty, found to be important in the Ghanaian context, were excluded in other models.

The *Joy F.M* gatekeepers’ predisposition to select stories described as “unexpected”, confirmed Hetherington’s (1985) finding that the element of surprise was a news value considered in news selection, and was also consistent with Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news value of unexpectedness that stated that gatekeepers were likely to choose an event based on its extraordinary nature, rather than an event which occurred every day. Generally, the study found that the station selected news that would generate compelling content, increase its audience base, and beat existing competition.
Uniiq F.M was unlikely to select news items with the element of conflict. This finding was inconsistent with Harcup and O’Neill (2017) and Strömbäck et al.’s (2012) findings that stated conflict as a standard news value. It was however consistent with the Galtung and Ruge (1965) taxonomy which did not list conflict as a standard news value in news selection. Also, in keeping with Uniiq F.M’s public service mandate to promote national unity, gatekeepers’ inclination in news selection was mainly towards events that reflected elements of national interest and regional balance, news values which were not consistent with most taxonomies including those of Galtung and Ruge (1965), Harcup and O’Neill (2017) and Strömbäck et al. (2012).

Uniiq F.M’s news value of personality was similar to the news value of ‘reference to elite persons’ in Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) taxonomy. The news value of personality was also found to be consistent with Nunoo (2016) and Harcup and O’Neill’s (2017) findings that personalities or celebrities were likely to receive coverage in the news. However, the station’s news value of simple language was not found to be in consonance with the Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) taxonomy.

6.3 Did ownership determine the gatekeeping process for Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M?

The study found that Joy F.M’s gatekeepers covered negative stories about the station’s advertisers and sponsors once these stories had been authenticated. This was inconsistent with August’s (2009) findings that profit-oriented media were unlikely to publish negative news about their advertisers. Also, although Uniiq F.M continued to receive state subventions, it operated outside of the dictates of government and was constitutionally insulated from
government interference. The study found that *Uniiq F.M* objectively reported stories about the government and sometimes published items that were not in favour of the government. This finding was inconsistent with Moehler and Naunihal’s (2011) findings that public media organisations were less critical of the government than commercial media organisations.

The study also found that the gatekeeping practice in both stations was enshrined in their editorial policies, thus gatekeepers at *Uniiq F.M* for instance, were not dictated to by the external institutions including the government concerning what to publish, except when it clearly had to do with matters of public interest. In summary, those who owned or funded the media did not dictate what should be produced. These findings were contrary to Djankov et al.’s (2003) and Altschull’s (1984) observation that ownership ultimately imposes control on the process and output of media organisations.

Other findings of the study were that, both stations were interested in profitability and this informed their publishing of commercial news stories as a means of income generation and subsistence. These findings were inconsistent with those of Croteau (2005) and Banerjee and Seneviratne (2005), that commercial stations are driven by their interest in profit-making, while the operations of public stations exclude profit-making motives.

The study found, however, that the two stations, because of the rationales for which they were established, were inclined to select certain news stories and to carry out their gatekeeping practices in consonance with these rationales. For instance, as a commercial station interested in beating its competitors by being the first to air a news story, *Joy F.M* was more focused on
maintaining a short interval between the coverage and broadcast of a story, thus it was generally faster in publishing news stories after coverage. Likewise, what determined *Uniiq F.M’s* news was not the dictates of its owners or sponsors, but the drive to fulfil its public service mandate to its audiences. These findings showed that ownership was not a determining factor in news selection and production. Rather, the organisation’s rationale for operating, which determined its culture and modus operandi, was a contextual factor that impinged on its gatekeeping practices. This finding was consistent with Croteau and Hoynes’ (2003) observation that the ownership structure of an organisation did not directly determine news output. It was also inconsistent with Kiwanuka-Tondo et al.’s (2012) observation that commercial and public media publish different news items by virtue of their ownership status.

6.4 The role of technology in newsgathering and the selection of certain news items

In both radio stations, technology played a key role in the newsgathering and news selection processes. In the past, for instance, journalists were required to return to the newsroom to write a covered story and to submit it for editing before it was included in the bulletins. However, with the incorporation of the internet and technology in news work, discussions among journalists and editors were held online, and news stories and corresponding sound bites could be sent from the field to the newsrooms for editing and production via social media platforms such as WhatsApp. Technology facilitated a more convenient and instantaneous way of communicating among news workers in their newsgathering and selection processes, and this was reflected in the organisations’ capacities to gather and produce timely news items. These findings were consistent with Akrofi-Quarcoo’s (2015) observations that technological
advancements have noticeably impacted on newsgathering activities such as sound gathering and editing.

The availability of gadgets for recording quality sound determined which news items would be covered. In relation to this, the sound that accompanied news stories was a key determinant in news selection in both newsrooms, as poor sound quality proved to be a basis for the exclusion of some news stories. Conversely, stories that made it to the airwaves were those supported with quality sound. Thus, in both newsrooms, sound was considered a vital element of radio news production. This finding was consistent with Harcup and O’Neill’s (2017) contemporary news value of audio-visuals, which stated that an organisation was likely to prioritise a story because of its audio-visual qualities.

Again, the preferences that both newsrooms had for reporter-on-scene-reports could only be possible and accessible through the use of technology, where the mobile phone was noted to be an indispensable gadget through which journalists could directly contact the newsrooms and give live updates while news bulletins were being broadcast. Thus, the mobile phone served as a refreshing replacement to land-line telephones in newsrooms. These findings were in consonance with Strömbäck et al.’s (2012) observation that media technologies play an increasingly important role in the news production process in an organisation.

The use of processing systems for writing and editing scripts also changed the face of newsgathering, selection and production in both newsrooms. For instance, at Joy F.M, news production was facilitated by the paperless system. Relying on other websites as a source of
news also meant that journalists did not always gather stories from the field but sometimes retrieved stories from the internet and rewrote them according to the house style (a unique style of writing as adopted by the organisation).

6.5 Other factors that determined news values and the selection of certain news items

In both newsrooms, other factors such as the availability of resources and logistics (such as vehicles to transport reporters to cover events) in newsgathering determined whether a story would be covered or not. This finding supported those of Schlesinger (1987) that logistics could determine whether or not a story was covered.

Also, factors such as the reporter’s safety, as well as the editor’s dictates that were a result of the hierarchy of roles and the level of interactions between junior and senior staff per the organisation’s culture, impinged on the news. These determinants were found to be key in news selection within the Ghanaian context although they may not have been considered in traditional categorisations of what makes news.

Consciously or unconsciously, gatekeepers in both radio stations were inclined to select stories in line with their personal preferences, and were likely to exclude those that did not correspond to their ideologies, beliefs and values. This finding was consistent with that of Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Alowo (2010), that personal ideology is a possible determinant of news that reflects in the gatekeeping practices of media organisations. The finding also contradicted earlier claims in both newsrooms that news selection was based on professional principles and
not personal ideologies, affirming Reeves et al.’s (2008) finding that ethnographic research has the potential of discovering that the actions of people contradict what they say.

Though there was an editorial policy in each newsroom, gatekeepers in both stations were first guided by their consciences in determining the kind of news to select. This finding was similar to Nunoo’s (2016) observation that stories were selected based on journalists’ discretion, although in his study, this occurred because the newsroom did not have a specific document outlining what should determine news selection.

6.6 News items prioritised for news selection by editors and journalists of each radio type

For Joy F.M, stories that involved death and that had generally negative undertones were considered priorities for news selection. This finding corroborated Soroka’s (2012) finding that newsworthiness was generally attributed to stories with negative undertones, and that these kinds of stories were sometimes perceived, both by gatekeepers and audiences, as more important, more attention-grabbing and more actively sought after, than positive stories.

Events that reflected many news values were also given priority in the Joy newsroom. This confirmed Harrison’s (2006) observation that the news values in an event will give it a greater chance of selection. The finding was also consistent with that of Harcup and O’Neill’s (2017), that the more an event fulfils the news criteria, the more likely it will be considered for selection.
The Uniiq newsroom gave greater focus to stories that would encourage national unity and development. This finding was similar to those of Avorgbedor (2009) that news stories were selected to promote peace and national development. Again, gatekeepers at Uniiq F.M considered stories that were most directly related to human lives. In the light of this, health stories were usually given priority over others.

The radio stations also played an agenda setting role by giving prominence to stories they wanted audiences to perceive as the most important. This was similar to Harcup and O’Neill’s (2017) finding that news stories were sometimes selected in line with the news organisation’s own agenda.

6.7 Similarities and differences that existed in news selection, news gathering processes and newsroom routines of the two stations

As part of their routines, both news teams had editorial meetings incorporated as a necessary part of the gatekeeping process. While Joy F.M held three editorial meetings – in the mornings, afternoons and evenings, Uniiq F.M held its meetings in the mornings and afternoons. However, the objectives of editorial meetings remained the same for both – to generate and debate on story ideas, plan for impending assignments, discuss successes and challenges in previous news bulletins and the way forward, introduce new team members to the routines and culture of the organisation, discuss and reinforce the principles of the profession, and generally exchange ideas pertaining to work in the newsroom and on the fields.
The study also found that both stations religiously followed the established routines in their newsgathering and selection activities, and were guided by their editorial policies. This finding was consistent as noted by Ryfe (2009) that newsrooms preferred to operate in line with their own conventional guidelines.

In addition, the stations’ editorial policies were found to reflect the guidelines of journalism in Ghana. For instance, the GJA Code of ethics mandated journalists to uphold public interest in disseminating information, and this was reflected in the editorial policies of both stations. It could thus be said that newsgathering and selection activities were largely a function of the context or environment under which the media organisations operated.

In line with Shoemaker’s (2006) findings that routine events were typically not included in news selection, findings showed that in both radio stations, every day events that were perceived as ordinary were not selected as news. An event would be selected only if it had an extraordinary or unique element and would not be perceived as predictable, obvious or boring. For instance, for Joy F.M, donation stories were generally not covered because they were considered ordinary.

In the Joy F.M and Uniiq newsrooms, the ability to multi-task was a vital and indispensable skill in news gathering and production. Both newsrooms encouraged diversity of skill, and with advancements in technology, news workers who were able to adapt quickly to different gadgets and handle several tasks were highly valued, particularly because they facilitated the news
production process. This finding confirmed Akrofi-Quarcoo’s (2015) observation that multi-tasking is increasingly becoming an asset in newsrooms in the modern era of journalism.

The study also found differences in the routine practices of both stations. Some gatekeepers at Joy F.M considered selecting news items because of their sensational element and resultant ability to appeal to audiences. However, gatekeepers at Uniiq F.M did not regard sensationalism as newsworthy or as a value to consider in professional news selection. This finding contrasted with those of Strömbäck et al. (2012) that sensational events were considered important in news selection. The finding also indicated that even within the same context – in this case, Ghana – news determinants could vary for media organisations.

Joy F.M was found to be more proactive in seeking what audiences preferred to listen to, as evidenced in their efforts and planning during editorial meetings, to conduct surveys to determine audience preferences. Though Uniiq F.M encouraged audiences to contribute to the News Commentary section of the Major news bulletin, it was not found to be as active as Joy F.M in seeking to incorporate its audience’s preferences in the news. Rather, it produced what its gatekeepers perceived listeners needed to hear, and what would serve the public interest.

As earlier presented in the findings, Joy F.M and Uniiq F.M had similar newsroom policies but different newsroom organisations, target audiences and rationales for operating, and these differences were translated in the form and content of news that the stations produced. This confirmed Soroka’s (2012) observation that differences were expected to exist in gatekeeping
practices between public and commercial media when factors such as media competition and the organisation’s routines are involved.

6.8 Summary

The chapter analysed the findings of the study, leaning on the research questions, related literature and theories as a framework for discussion. Discussions pointed to the fact that not all news values considered in news selection within the Ghanaian media context were incorporated in traditional taxonomies. Analysis also indicated that the context of the media organisations, and not their ownership statuses, dictated their newsgathering and news selection practices.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction
This chapter summarises the key findings of the study as relevant to the study’s objectives and research questions. It also outlines the limitations which may have impacted on the research findings and gives suggestions for further research into news values and gatekeeping practices.

7.2 Summary of key findings
In exploring the dominant news values of Joy F.M, conflict, interest, relevance, magnitude, novelty, timeliness, expectedness and unexpectedness were found to be the overriding news values. Some of Joy F.M’s news values were found to be existent in taxonomies such as Galtung and Ruge’s (1965), Herbert’s (2000) and Harcup and O’Neill’s (2017) models. This could imply that some news values of the radio station were based on traditional classifications of news; the possibility also exists that the station’s gatekeepers may have considered these primary news values not because they had been enlisted in other taxonomies, but because they were in line with the station’s philosophies and rationales. For instance, editors admitted that stories were selected based on the objectives of generating compelling content, attracting more listeners and beating competition. Broadly speaking, the existence of multiple media organisations, as a result of liberalisation of the media in Ghana, compelled Joy F.M to pattern its news after certain news values that, in the perspective of gatekeepers, would help the station beat its competitors.
The study also found that the central news values for *Uniiq F.M* were national interest, non-conflict, regional balance, personality and simple language. Findings showed that *Uniiq F.M*, in seeking to promote national development and unity, patterned its news after its mandate and therefore departed from traditional taxonomies with regards to some of its dominant news values. It was also interesting to note that although the station had been converted into a public service station, it continued to base some of its news values (national interest, regional balance and non-conflict) on nationalist ideologies, as it was in the pre-liberalisation era when GBC had the monopoly of news production.

The study also found that news values such as conflict, although they were enlisted in other taxonomies, were not the priority of the station’s gatekeepers. These findings showed that a set of news values adopted in news selection may vary based on context. Ordinarily, if *Uniiq F.M* had produced its news based on traditional definitions of news, certain items relevant to the Ghanaian context would not have made it into the news.

This finding also suggests that though certain news values may be standard in certain contexts, they may not be universally applicable given an organisation’s orientation, which ultimately determines the news values its gatekeepers are inclined to prioritise. The different dominant values of the stations could also be in response to the needs of their different target audiences, in terms of what the stations’ gatekeepers perceived would appeal to their respective audiences.

The study found that ownership was not a determinant of news both in *Uniiq F.M* and *Joy F.M*. Contrary to popular contributions on the ownership theory, those who funded the
organisations, in this context, did not determine what they produced as news. *Uniiq F.M*, particularly, was found to be constitutionally insulated against government interference. *Joy F.M*, however, did not have this clearly documented, but as part of its gatekeeping practices, guarded against control from advertisers and funders to protect its editorial independence.

Technology was found to be a determinant of news in both stations. Newsgathering and selection processes were facilitated using gadgets such as mobile phones, as well as editing software, social media and the internet. The use of ICT-based technology was particularly important given the intervention of audiences in the production of news. The key role technology played was such that limited access to it presented journalists with a more arduous task of beating deadlines. This finding suggests that, for a media organisation to remain relevant in delivering news to its audiences, it must invest in up-to-date technology. Also, the implication of the use of technology in the gatekeeping practices of both stations was that, news stories retrieved in newsgathering were subjected to a less rigorous editing process before broadcast. This was reflected in the radio stations’ preference for reporter-on-scene-stories, in which a journalist’s live report of ongoing incidents was not taken through the editing process, but was directly reported in news bulletins through the use of mobile phones.

Along with technology, the element of sound was found to be an important value in news selection. The availability of quality gadgets for sound recording played a key role in determining which news events received coverage. Consequently, the quality of sound determined which stories would finally be broadcast, as those with superior quality were
chosen over others, which, if found to be unsuitable for broadcast as a result of poor sound quality, were either shelved or replaced with more audible and impeccable sound bites.

Other factors such as availability of resources and logistics, the professional guidelines that regulated the media environment within which the organisations operated, the organisation’s own editorial policies, the reporter’s safety and the gatekeeper’s personal ideologies, also determined the news in both media organisations. Thus, what determined the news in both stations was found to be an interplay of diverse factors specific to the context of each station.

Gatekeepers at *Joy F.M*, in their news selection, gave priority to stories with negative undertones, time bound stories and stories that were targeted at pressuring authorities to take a necessary action. *Uniq F.M*’s gatekeepers prioritised development stories, health and human interest stories. Time-bound stories, trending stories, stories geared at directing authorities toward a desired action, as well as stories that had been paid for, were also found to be priorities in news selection.

The study found that both stations preferred journalists who were multi-skilled and who could handle several aspects of the newsgathering and news selection activities. This could have been a cost-effective strategy of the organisations, and the result of the competitive nature of the media market which demanded that organisations hired workers with the highest professional skills. This has implications for gatekeeping practices in the sense that, in the face of the fast changing demands of news work, workers in the newsrooms who do not upgrade their skills will become irrelevant and redundant.
7.3 Limitations of the study

The researcher was unable to content analyse the news bulletins of both radio stations due to time constraints and limited resources. This would have further confirmed the dominant news values of each station, and whether they were reflected in their news bulletins.

Data analysis of in-depth interviews may have been influenced by the researcher’s interpretations, which may be different from another investigator’s interpretation. This is explained by Wimmer & Dominick (2011:139), who state that a disadvantage of in-depth interviews is that “a researcher given the same body of data taken from an interview may wind up with interpretations different from those of the original investigator”. Also, according to Shlasky and Alpert (2007), in an ethnographic study, a researcher’s emotions, thoughts and experiences may affect the interpretation of data, as well as the outcomes and conclusion of the research. The researcher therefore concedes that some of the findings may have inadvertently been affected by such factors. The researcher however made efforts to control this possibility through the triangulation of data sources.

There were also challenges encountered with regards to accessing the Uniiq F.M’s editorial policy from the Administrative office. Low retrievability is a limitation that Yin (1994) notes as often associated with document analysis.

The researcher recognises that the terms “private” and “public” are, in practice, more mutually exclusive and operationally definable than “commercial” and “public”, because “public” does
not always preclude “commercial”. However, in reference to *Joy F.M*, “commercial” was selected in line with the Ghana National Media Policy’s (n.d.) categorisation of media organisations, and also because *Joy F.M* considers itself a commercial radio station.

Given the qualitative nature of the study, findings from the two radio stations cannot be generalised to other radio stations across the country.

### 7.4 Conclusions

The study set out to answer the pertinent question, “What is news?” by examining the values of news as defined in a commercial and a public radio station in Ghana. It argued that traditional taxonomies were not universally applicable and that contextual differences partly determined an organisation’s news values. The study demonstrated that certain news values such as national interest and regional balance, found to be dominant in *Uniiq F.M*, were not based on traditional taxonomies of news, but were patterned according to the organisation’s context and rationale for operating. The study concludes that what makes news varies according to context and that no taxonomy is universally applicable.

The study also found that some of *Uniiq F.M*’s dominant news values (particularly, national interest, non-conflict and regional balance) were still in line with nationalist ideologies promulgated in the era prior to media liberalisation. This indicates that the station continued to value the incorporation of these ideals in its news, despite changes associated with media liberalisation, such as a highly competitive media environment. However, the dominant news
values by which *Joy F.M* operated were different from those that had been adopted in news production before the advent of media liberalisation when GBC monopolised the news. The study therefore concludes that media liberalisation indeed provided a platform for diversities in news content, as indicated by *Joy F.M*’s adoption of a different set of dominant news values.

Gatekeepers of the commercial radio station, *Joy F.M*, based news values and news selection on objectives of generating compelling content, attracting more listeners and beating competition. Particularly, *Joy F.M* patterned its news after its dominant news values that, in the perspective of gatekeepers, would help the station beat its competitors. This indicated the station had these objectives as a recourse to sustaining its uniqueness amidst the plethora of media organisations in Ghana. Thus, the competitive media environment, brought about by re-democratisation and media liberalisation, played a role in shaping the news values adopted by the station.

With regards to ownership as a determinant of news, the study concludes that contrary to perspectives that those who finance the press control its content (Altschull, 1984; Djankov et al. 2003), the news in these two stations was determined by factors other than ownership. Also, contrary to the perspective about ownership (August, 2009; Banerjee & Seneviratne, 2005), this study revealed that the public radio station, *Uniiq F.M*, was also interested in selecting and producing commercial news as a means of generating income. Thus, the study showed that producing stories to generate income was not unique to the commercial station but was common to both despite their ownership differences.
The study’s findings indicated that technology played a key role in determining the news. In both newsrooms, the incorporation of new media technologies and social media changed the face of news gathering and news selection practices. The study concludes that technology is a key determinant of news, and that news is also an evolving product of technological advancement. Therefore, what makes the news changes and will continue to change in response to technological advancement and the media organisation’s ability to maximally incorporate technology in its news work.

The traditional definitions of what makes news, such as the Galtung and Ruge (1956) model, as well as other taxonomies that were subsequently formulated, should serve as a foundation for further studies on news production processes, and should not be seen as the final word on what makes news. They should also serve as a basis or pointer to interrogate new practices in journalism. For this reason, as suggested by scholars such as Harcup and O’Neill (2017), this study concludes that the question of what makes news should generate more, rather than less research into news.

7.5 Recommendations

A qualitative content analysis of the radio news bulletins may be helpful in ascertaining their dominant news values as reflected in their bulletins.

It is recommended that further studies be conducted to explore the news routines of other radio stations in Ghana, as the findings of this study cannot be generalised due to its small sample
size. Furthermore, a generalisable study will be useful in establishing the determinants of news in the Ghanaian media context.

The study also recommends research into news determinants of other media forms such as community radio, television and online or digital news spheres.

This era of journalism is characterised by integration of digital technologies in news work, as well as the increasing spate at which a wider group of people, apart from journalists in newsrooms, make the news. Citizen journalists, freelance journalists and activist groups, among others, contribute to the daily supply of news. This phenomenon implies that limiting the study of news values to newsrooms may not give a full representation of what makes news within specific contexts. Therefore, studies to explore the news values, gatekeeping and reporting practices of these alternative purveyors of news is recommended.

The study also recommends that media organisations insist on and ensure that all workers including temporary staff, are conversant with the professional guidelines of journalism, as these individuals are also directly engaged in the news production process.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX 1
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EDITORS

I am Deborah Emefa Agodzo, a Master of Philosophy student at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. I am conducting research on the News determinants in public and commercial radio stations in Ghana, with a study on Uniiq FM and Joy FM.

I will be most grateful if you will answer the questions to the best of your ability. Your responses will be treated with confidentiality and will be used only for academic purposes.

DEFINITION OF NEWS


PRIORITIES IN NEWS SELECTION

2. What would you consider as the most important news stories for a news broadcast?

NEWS VALUES

3. To Uniiq FM/ Joy FM, what is referred to as (defined as) ‘news values’?
4. What would you say are the ‘news values’ of Uniiq FM/ Joy FM?
6. What, according to you, are the most important reasons for selecting a particular news story?

INSTITUTED POLICIES THAT GUIDE NEWS SELECTION

1. Have you read the GJA, GIBA and NMC guidelines?
2. Are you familiar with these guidelines?
3. What do you think about these guidelines?
4. Do you use these guidelines in deciding what news items to select?
NEWSROOM POLICY

5. Is there a newsroom policy that guides news selection or news gathering? Is it written? What does the policy say concerning these processes?

6. Who has the right of access to the newsroom policy in the newsroom?

7. What do you think about the newsroom policy?

8. Is there any other guideline/policy that informs your selection of news items? Is it written?

9. Do you consider these guidelines in carrying out the news selection process?

10. Is it easy or difficult to abide by these policies and professional standards?

11. Apart from this policy (if there is), what else guides you in your work?

EDITORIAL POLICY

12. What is the editorial policy that Uniiq FM/Joy FM operates by?

13. How does the editorial policy influence the items for news selection?

14. Which particular instances can you recall where the policy influenced news selection?

15. Do you always go by the editorial policy?

16. Who makes the final editorial decisions?

NEWS GATHERING PROCESS

17. What are the news gathering procedures in the newsroom? By which processes do journalists gather information?

- How are people assigned to cover news?

- How is news selected to be broadcast?

- Who is ultimately held responsible for what is broadcast/published?

18. Why do the news gathering procedures follow a certain pattern?

19. What are some of the sources of news to the radio station?

STRUCTURE OF THE NEWSROOM

7. How many reporters are in the newsroom?

8. How many editors are in the newsroom?
9. How long have they worked with you?

10. Please describe the organisational structure of the newsroom.

11. What resources are available to reporters in the newsroom to carry out news gathering, news reporting and editing processes?

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

12. What is the general educational background of your staff?

13. Were they trained as journalists?

OTHER NEWS PRACTICES

14. Do you share stories with other radio stations?

15. How much influence do advertisers have on the content of the news?

16. Are personnel of the newsroom given trainings?

17. How often?

18. Anything to add? Questions?
APPENDIX 2
INTERVIEW GUIDE: JOURNALISTS

NEWS GATHERING PROCESS
1. What criteria do you look out for when gathering, reporting or writing news for publication?
2. Which news values are important to you when reporting or writing news for publication?

PRIORITIES IN NEWS SELECTION
3. What would you say are the most important reasons for which you would gather a particular news item for broadcast?
4. What reasons would you consider for submitting a given news story over another?

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
1. Have you received formal education/ training in journalism?
2. If yes, from which institution?
3. What is your job title?

NEWSROOM POLICY
4. Do you have a newsroom policy? Is it written?
5. What do you think about it?
6. What are the news gathering procedures in the newsroom?

INSTITUTED POLICIES
7. Are you familiar with GJA, GIBA and NMC guidelines?
8. What do you think about these guidelines?
9. Which of these policies influence your newsgathering work? How?
10. Is it easy or difficult to abide by these policies and professional standards?
11. Apart from these policies, what else guides you in your work?

OTHER NEWS PRACTICES

12. What are some of the sources of news to the radio station?

13. Are there some areas of news that journalists will not select from? Why?

14. What kinds of technology are available to the newsroom?

15. What resources are available to reporters in the newsroom to carry out news gathering, news reporting and editing processes?

16. How are you encouraged/ incentivised to be competitive?

17. Are you given trainings?

18. How often?

OWNERSHIP

19. What does the radio stations editorial policy say about the selection and production of certain news items?

20. What are the rewards and sanctions (consequences) of publishing certain news items?

21. Does ownership (private/ state-owned) influence the selection of stories?

22. Does politics or state-related issues affect news selection?

23. Does this affect professionalism? How?
APPENDIX 3
OBSERVATION GUIDE

The researcher will generally observe how newsgathering, news selection and news production is carried out in the newsrooms, the factors that influence these processes and the elements that typifies the gatekeeping process, that is, sorting out newsworthy items from a wide range of available items, and transforming these into suitable items for news production.

The researcher will observe:

1. The news gathering process

   - How workers are assigned to report on various stories
   - Which assignments are covered and which are ignored
   - The processes involved in preparing to cover an event

2. The news selection process

   - Editorial meetings and how ideas for news items are generated
   - The nature of discussions and conversations that take place in editorial meetings – visible attitudes, choice of words.
   - Types of news items the newsroom selects as newsworthy, and items which are finally selected as news over other available items
   - The types of news items the newsroom does not consider newsworthy and why
   - Whether final selection of news items is done by an individual or a team
   - How news items are verified for accuracy
3. The news production process

- How information gathered is processed for publication, eg. writing stories after covering an event, editing.
- How items are considered and used by journalists and editors - as primary or secondary news items?
- The pre-production, production and post-production processes, and whether or not each process is consistent or otherwise.

4. Sources of news

- The means by which the newsrooms access all news items, whether for foreign or local news
- The types of news items that are most commonly used or otherwise
- The sources of news items (eg. general public, contact persons, news beats)

5. Training

- The nature of training programmes undertaken by the newsrooms
- The subjects and issues addressed in training sessions
- Resources (personnel, technology) used in training programmes

6. Factors influencing gatekeeping

- If workers selection of news is clearly influenced by individual values and preferences
- Whether a written policy is actively put to use in the news selection processes, and how
- Whether external forces (advertisers and competitors) influence news selection
- The organization’s ownership characteristics and policies which affect the use of certain news items over others
- Which professional guidelines and standards influence the selection and use of news items
- Resources available to newsrooms that enhance news production, and limitations that affect news production
- Other factors that may be considered prior to the news selection process, and how they influence the process