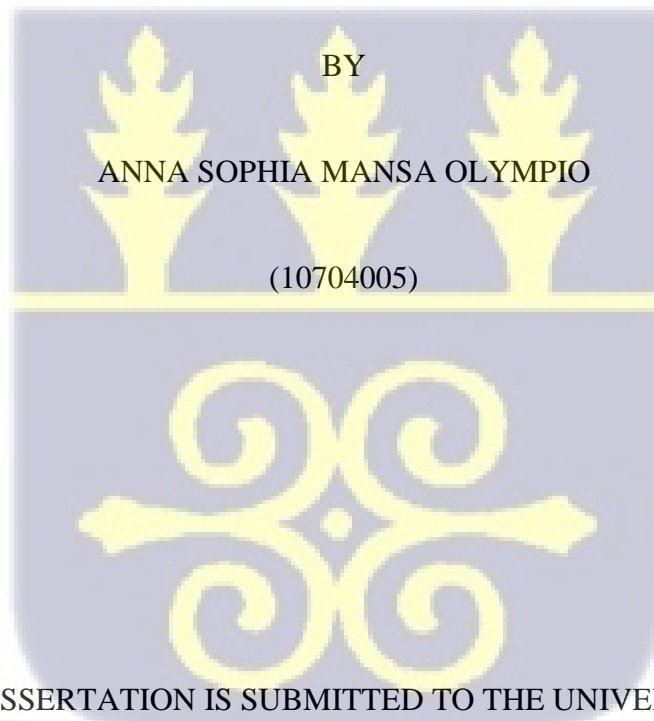


NEWS CONSUMPTION PREFERENCES OF UNIVERSITY OF GHANA STUDENTS



THIS THESIS /DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MA.
IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEGREE.

July, 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation has been the result of my own research, supervised by Dr. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo. No part of this research work has been published in whole or in part for the award of a degree elsewhere. All authors have been duly acknowledged and all references duly cited.

I shall accept full responsibility for any limitations that may be found in the study.



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ABSTRACT

News generally provide information about issues and events and informs decisions on various aspects of daily life for many people around the world. University students are usually seen as the future workforce of most countries and because they are in learning institutions, they usually have a plethora of information from various sources including the news. This study sought to find out the type of news preferred by the University of Ghana students. Based on a review of related literature and the Uses and Gratification theoretical framework, this study examined the type of news that holds the interest of the student and of what use news is to the respondents. Using a questionnaire as a data collection tool, 200 students from the university were studied. It was discovered that entertainment, sports and political news were the topmost preferred news types. The main use of news to students was to get information. The study identified that students were loyal to content and type of news. Findings showed that the preferred channel for news consumption by the sampled students was online news but this did not exclude the use of traditional news and the reason for seeking news is for the information it provides confirming previous studies on news gratification. This study recommends that future studies focus on online news.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Evan Nyameye Tachie-Menson for being understanding, patient and supportive.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

News is the foremost source of information about issues and events. News provides knowledge that shapes peoples' understanding of various happenings and determines their responses or reactions to issues around them. News can influence policy agenda as issues attain centre-stage in public debate (GMMP, 2010). People would read, watch or listen to the news not only for information but also to enhance their social functioning which also includes participating in public conversations, debates, making informed civic decisions and informed choices. To shape how the ever-changing world is viewed, get some knowledge on what happened in the past and to know more about how discoveries form part of the rationale behind peoples' news consumption.

There are various channels through which news is disseminated. Globally, with the growth of media technology, people can access news on a diversity of channels besides the traditional newspapers, television and radio. The oldest news channel is the newspaper, followed by radio then television. Modern news channels such as the internet have brought news closer to a majority of people through platforms such as mobile phone applications. In countries like Ghana, factors such as media liberalisations and deregulations have contributed to the expanded news environment and depending on which channel is available, determines how news is accessed. Interests and opinions formed about the channel and other factors can impact the decision in picking a channel as a preferred option over the other. Research has been conducted in various countries to study which channel is preferred over the other. The results of these fact-finding

investigations have been varied, with some results indicating that television was the most relied upon channel for news, followed by newspapers, and radio (Ibelema and Powell, 2001). Therefore, making the researcher consider what the situation is for the college students in Ghana, taking into consideration their peculiar nature of being digital natives and having available to them the plurality of news.

There are various types of news. News types have expanded from mostly politics to include other aspects and are generally grouped into different categories such as business, health, science, international, local, sports, and entertainment news. Each of these categories can attract diverse readership or consumers. As Dutta-Bergman (2004) points out, news consumption depends on the type of content, the characteristics of the audience, and the form in which the news channel is presented. Prior (2005) states that until recently, content preferences were limited because users had limited content in terms of types of news. News audiences have been introduced to being in control of what news they consume (Lee, 2013). Prior (2007), states that society has changed to become more high-choice in terms of news as more citizens place a high value on personal interests and leanings.

Regardless of the variety of news, a person is more likely to be dedicated to a certain type of content and will consume news only to the extent that it fulfils their needs (Dutta-Bergman 2004). People may select the preferred content depending on their interests, backgrounds and proclivity

be it entertainment, movies, sitcoms, music, lifestyle fashion magazines and blogs, or information about politics and current events—across a variety of platforms. (Shehata, 2016).

1.1 Young persons and media use

According to Huang (2009), young people who live double-quick lives tend to juggle school, employment, sports, social networking, leisure, entertainment, news consumption and so on. News consumption may gratify some needs for them. Vincent and Basil (1997) contend that with the abundance of options available, some young people consume specific types of news when the topics and content affect them directly. All the same, this abundance of news avenues available to young people can overwhelm them especially with likely frequent attention to social media via mobile phones and other gadgets. There is a possibility of finding news even when not seeking. On the other hand, with control and option to choose, they are less likely to consume news that does not affect them directly. Research has proven the age effect on news consumption.

According to Qayyum et al. (2010), the older people get, the more likely they are to show an interest in news. Another research also showed that younger people read newspapers and watch TV news less than the older generations (Poulus, 2010). In general, research has proven that how young people consume news is likely to be different from how the previous generation consumed news. News consumption habits may differ from generation to generation. Recently, in America, research has directed focus on the younger generation that grew up on the internet. They called those born after 1980 ‘Millennials’ (Poindexter, 2013) or the ‘Internet generation’ (Diddi and LaRose, 2006). They are mostly not interested in waiting for the morning newspaper to receive

up-to-date information. Rather, they usually prefer news on-demand, at their convenience. Young people may most of the time try to control all aspects of news media and not the other way around. Political and economic news may become more important as people age. On the other hand, younger people are likely to find entertainment, science and technology news more interesting.

Young people in Ghana are likely to encounter news even if they may not specifically set out to find news largely due to being in an era of internet and mobile phones. The availability of news to students is likely to be higher than that of the general populace as the internet may usually be made available by the universities for students' consumption.

1.2 Problem statement

College students are now experiencing life on their own and are more likely to be making important decisions by themselves, based on information they receive from various sources including news. Another key consideration is that for the next stage of life, college students are generally expected to be aware of important happenings around the world. Therefore, college students are likely to find news to be a valuable asset that will make them useful to their communities. News consumption is one of the ways to acquire such knowledge. Research has shown that there is a plethora of news outlets available today, audiences including college students have more choices now than ever (Lee, 2013). Rapid growth and changes in journalism practices and also growing interests and engagement of young audiences with news, make this study important.

Concerning the individual choice of news channel, on a daily basis, one would consider which one particular channel will satisfy their need. The more likely a news channel will satisfy the need, the more the individual will choose that news media. As a young population, college students are part of the digital natives, and pioneers in assimilating technological innovations related to digitization Huang (2009). Online news has been discovered as one of the preferred news channels of younger people. The key question remains; what type of news do students consume when they engage news?

Literature is inundated with news consumption by the youth from different parts of the world. In Ghana, similar work has been done to close the gap in news consumption preferences. However, this did not address the gap in the type of news preferred by university students. By focusing on the news consumption preferences of college students, this study seeks to describe with empirical documentation on the subject in the context of Ghana, the type of news preferred.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following objectives:

- To find out University of Ghana students news consumption preferences
- To find out the pattern of their engagement with news
- To find out the gratification derived from preferred news consumption

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the dominant type of news students consume?
- What is the pattern of their news engagement?
- What do they use the preferred news type for?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it would add to knowledge on news consumption habits of university students, particularly in Ghana. Specifically, it hopes to give an understanding of what University of Ghana students consume news by empirically identifying the news type(s) and consumption preferences of the university of Ghana undergraduate students. Therefore, understanding college students' news consumption preference in context Ghana. Previous research by Avor (2015) on the news consumption pattern of students, showed the media preference of students to be online, television and radio in order of preference. However, the study did not address the news type preferred by the students nor the time of day students attended to news. This study will therefore close the gap in the news consumption preference of students about the type of news students choose as they develop their news consumption habits as young adults.

1.6 Operational Definition

News preference: Based on this study, news preference refers to what students are inclined to read, watch or listen to.

News Types: Political news, Business news, Health News, Science News, Sports News, Entertainment News, Foreign and Local News.

News consumption: Listening, reading or watching news or attending to news media. How often respondents consumed news per day and weekly as well as the times of day news is consumed.

Gratification: For the purpose of this study refers to benefits from reading the news. i.e. grouped into four types of entertainment, information which also is referred to as surveillance, personal identity and discussion topic also referred to as enhance companionship.

Youth/ younger generation: Students studying in universities or college students.

News habits: Is the pattern of news engagement being the frequency of engagement; daily, once a week or occasionally, how much time is spent engaging news; 15-30min, 31-one hour or above one hour and time of day that news is engaged; Morning, Afternoon or Evening

1.7 Organisation of Chapters

The study has five chapters. Chapter one deals with the background of this study, discussing the various forms media takes, the complementary nature of new media and an overview of the current state of the Ghanaian media concerning the forms in which media is consumed in Ghana. Chapter one also gives the problem statement, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance as well as the arrangement of chapters in the study. Chapter two of the study addresses in detail the theory highlighting the reasons behind the consumption of media, reviews of literature significant to the consumption of media. Chapter three explains the

methodology which this study adopts. This chapter discusses the research design, research technique, sample selection, data gathering, data analysis and limitations to the methodology. Chapter four analyses literature, interprets and discusses the findings to the study. The final chapter, Chapter five draws inferences from findings after summary to conclude the research. Suggestions and some recommendations are also made in this chapter for future studies focused on the consumption of news media.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an overview of the theory- Uses and Gratification theory will be shared. This theory forms the basis of this research and therefore the bearings it has on news consumption will be discussed to deliver a better understanding of how and why people consume the various types of news.

The presentation of the theory is followed by a review of relevant literature existing on news consumption preferences including news types and channels among the youth with a focus on university students. Review of related literature on which this study finds its basis is presented. Previous research on how news choices are made will be looked at.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory underpinning this research is the Uses and Gratifications theory which was originally introduced by Katz (1959). Uses and Gratification theory focuses on news media users' role or simply reasons why specific media is sought and what needs it satisfies. The theory posits that the audience is active. The type of media used is dependent on the aim or purpose to be achieved,

media is used to fulfil a variety of gratifications, that content found in media can satisfy the needs of an audience or the social situation in which media–audience interaction takes place.

Unlike the media effects theories from which it is derived, the Uses and Gratification theory explains the use of media by people. The Uses and Gratification theory discusses what an individual's underlying motivations are when they engaged with news (Ruggiero, 2000) and therefore takes into consideration individual differences. It states that people are selective in their choice of media. The theory posits that the chosen media channel people use is specifically selected based on the gratification sought and gratification obtained is shown in audience satisfaction (McQuail, 1983). It connects the needs of the audience to the gratifications that will be satisfied when media is used. Overall, it seeks to answer the question -what do people do with news media? Why do people use media and what do people use media for? What motivates people to use media? What needs of the individual is news media gratifying, is it to satisfy the need for information, entertainment, education, to enhance social interaction or to escape stress posed by daily life.

Initially Uses and Gratification theory was used only to study audience motivation for the use of traditional media that is print, radio and television but has in recent years been used to study social media as well. The theory focuses on the media user, what people use news media for and therefore takes the audience-centred approach to understand mass communication. These are classified into five main groups which Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) recognized as motives behind the consumption of media. The five are personal integrative, cognitive, affective, social integrative

and tension release. Lin (1999), broke down these categories further into the different dimensions and it is as follows: habit, arousal, relaxation, companionship, passing time/leisure, entertainment, social interaction, information/surveillance, and escape, and stated that the majority of Uses and Gratifications studies research media use motivations with basis on some or all of the above-mentioned dimensions. Vincent and Basil (1997) identify surveillance need as a need for persons seeking in-depth information. The gratification of this need has been mostly associated with print media. Need for escapism or entertainment has also been identified by this theory and the theory states that television viewing satisfies this need. This study will use typologies by McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972). These categories were diversion, personal relationships, personal identity and surveillance. Diversion was defined as entertainment or escape from routine. The typology by Mcquail et al (1972) though dated are still relevant in studying new media that didn't exist during the time of the study. Ruggiero (2000) stated that the use of the Internet and personal computers have been linked to the fulfilment of gratifications such as interpersonal relationships, personal identity, escape, entertainment, and surveillance. Thus, revealing that the grouping will still be effective as the study investigates what students use news for.

University students may have a routine lifestyle of spending the day in lectures. Some may have jobs that take their time outside the classroom and may want a diversion to escape this. Personal relationships defined as the role of the media in providing companionship and something to talk about with others. Surveillance referred to information that would help the user to accomplish something-the overall need to know "what is going on" and personal identity involved value reinforcement through media.

Uses and Gratification theory in more recent research on social media use where young people are known to find news has shown that people use social media to gain information (Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield, 2006). The information gathered which is usually about other people enables the maintenance of interpersonal relationships (Seidman, 2013). Wellman and Gulia, (1999) showed in their research that some people use social media to meet like-minded individuals, to receive companionship and get social support. Whiting and Williams (2013) in their study discovered 10 gratifications. These were social interaction, information seeking, passing time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance or knowledge about others.

Uses and Gratification theory has had its fair share of criticism from some researchers. Rayburn (1996) Identified the conceptual ambiguity of motivations, needs, and uses. Pointed out the nonexistence of uniformity regarding how media use is measured and over-reliance on self-reports. As well as problematic assumption related to awareness of needs by users and being too individualistic while at the same time the theory does not take into consideration cultural influences nor context. The theory's lack of explanations has also been identified as a weakness. The Uses and Gratification theory regardless of these limitations is useful in discovering the link between people and media. People have reasons for using the news media pointing to the importance of varying news media choices. The varying choices allow for classification of news media users reason for the preference of choice thereby their motive. Overall, main objectives of the Uses and Gratification theory are: first of all, to explain how the audience use media to gratify

their needs, to show the major motives that determine media use, and to establish the consequences of the audience media use.

For this study, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is to discover why University of Ghana students prefer some types of news media over others. People have reasons for consuming news and it is to satisfy a need. It is useful to clarify the needs of students and give a better understanding of the pattern of their engagements with news and the gratification they derive from consuming news as a media product.

2.2 Literature Review

University students may be considered part of the elite members of society as they attain higher education levels. Research has revealed that a students' use of news media during college years is likely to impact how in future they will be politically aware, acquire political knowledge, and their involvement in political activity (Lee, 2006). News is usually associated with the elite and university students are considered elite in most communities. With University students being viewed as the elite future force, their level of knowledge which is critical for democratic life needs to be assessed.

A study by Prior (2005) states that content preferences are determined mostly by what those with cable or Internet access view, read, and listen to. Young people preferred a mix of entertainment and hard news, local news however the go-to news type. Qayyum, Williamson, Liu and Hider

(2011) discovered local news to be more important to young people because it was more relevant to them. Studies have proven that young people's news consumption is mainly sought from new media, especially social networks. Newspapers over the years are almost no more the main source of news consumption in the digital context. Research of university students in the United States has revealed a great connection between overall patterns of news use and news consumption (Chan-Olmsted, Rim, & Zerba, 2013). However, the type of news that young consumers seek is not an extensively researched area. When university students attend to media for news which type of content do they prefer? Studies on the types of content younger readers prefer to consume is largely lacking (Rosenberry, 2008). Literature on news consumption of young people will be reviewed to find out the type of news they consume and why they consume it.

2.3 Students and News consumption

In a study in America, to find out how and why young people consume news, Huang (2009), in this study, *The Causes of Youths' Low News Consumption and Strategies for Making Youths Happy News Consumers*, used both the Delphi technique- a system where questionnaires are sent to some experts on a specific topic to get their opinions on the stated topic and Uses and Gratification theory as the basis for their study. A three levelled interview was conducted with 28 American university and high school students, the study found that the respondents wanted to keep themselves informed and be up to date with events as they happened. Huang (2009) stated, that the main focus for young peoples' news consumption is surveillance, in other words, to stay informed. The students however referred to time constraint and news sensationalism as the reasons

that kept them uninterested in news. What kept students interested in the news was its relevance. If the news affected them they would pay much more attention to it. The needs the news consumption gratified for the young ones in this research include “an ever-ready escape from work to news.” Huang’s findings showed that news consumption by the students gratified the two major needs, surveillance and escapism.

In another research in the United States of America, Diddi and LaRose (2006) in their research, *Getting Hooked on News: Uses and Gratifications and the Formation of News Habits Among College Students in an Internet Environment* studied 303 university students in the introductory communication class by replicating the news media consumption measure by Vincent and Basil (1997). They also discovered that the needs the students sought to gratify were surveillance and escapism and these two were predictors of news consumption behaviour across these patterns. Their study revealed that news consumption overall was predicted by habit. They found that although most of the college students consumed news products, they did not consume as much news as older people.

Lee (2013) researched into modern-day news audiences looking for the link between audience motivations and news consumption. The needs that news consumption gratifies as reported in Lee’s study included information, entertainment, opinion formation and interpersonal needs. This survey measured news consumption motivations and uses of 1,143 United States of America citizens from the age of 18 and above. The study found that age was the most important factor that could be used to predict all four motivators mentioned above. Older adults were found to be

more likely motivated to consume news for information and opinion purposes, younger adults were more likely to be motivated to consume news for entertainment and social reasons. According to this study, younger audiences are more likely to have entertainment, opinion, and social motivations. The supply of news currently, far outweighs demand and for the first time, the consumer is in charge of what aspect of the news to consume (Lee, 2013).

The content of news is what holds consumer attention. Dutta-Bergman (2004) examined the Complementarity in Consumption of News Types Across Traditional and New Media posits that readers of specific news type are loyal to the type as long as it satisfies their need for content. The search for news in a specific content area drives the consumption of specific news (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). The study found that regardless of the source, news content is what interests the consumer. Dutta-Bergman proposes the media complementarity framework, which is simply the use of news content in all sources reflect how complementary news consumption is. With the use of a telephone-based survey, 3142 respondents were studied from small subgroups of the population. The research discovered that content type is what attracts the consumer to news to satisfy the need for information, interest in a type of news translates into exposure to diverse news outlets with information in that particular area of interest. Consumers of a particular type of news will consume that same type of news across all forms of media. For example, a sports fan hurries to read the sports news online in the morning or will quickly tune into sports section on the radio in the morning. During the day, he visits various sports websites and figures out what sports channel he will watch at night. The interest in sports issues makes the individual move from one sports channel to the next depending on the medium available at a particular time (Dutta-Bergman, 2004).

Bolalek (2013) examined news consumption practices in the United States of America and technology's influence on traditional news consumption. Specifically, the study of preferred news channels and credibility assigned to it. The plethora of options available for obtaining news was highlighted in the study and the ability for people to access news through the Internet and social media any time of day. The study stated that interest to consume news is maintained when the news is credible and trustworthy. Through a 42- item survey 105 members of a university community in the united states were conveniently sampled. Respondents answered questions that assisted the researcher to learn where they turn to for their primary sources of news and the credibility assigned to the various news sources. Results suggest that there was no difference in judgments of credibility for different news sources. Contrary to most of the scholarly research aforementioned in this current study, Bolalek (2013), revealed that television was the mainly preferred news source. This is supported by previous research where it was found that the main source of news for 48.3% of respondents was television (Miller & Kurpius, 2010). Therefore, making traditional media still dominant for news consumption as per the study. This could be because the research sample age spreads from respondents from age 17 to 62.

Chan-Olmsted, Rim and Zerba (2012) studied students' news consumption patterns and preferences and found that active-selection and habit inform news channel preference. They stated that the news consumer will fall on habits when confronted with several options. From five universities, 376 undergraduate students within America were studied. The study concluded that

young people are heavy consumers of online news but reluctant print newsreaders. It also found that the respondents also use traditional news channels. Online news was the most popular followed by television, radio then newspapers had the least interest from students. The study also found traditional news channels playing complementary roles to online news therefore making online news the substantive channel. The study also found sports to be the most preferred type of news among the respondents.

Various studies have shown that more students are consuming news online including Clark (2010), with the use of a questionnaire, studied 159 students at Nebraska University to find out how college students consume news. Questions raised by Clark (2010) included; Where do they get their news, or do they consume the news at all? The study found that the most popular news channel among the students was online newspapers. According to this study, level 400 American students are more likely to consume more news than the level 100 students. Clark's (2010) study indicated that college students do not consume news at a high rate with most students spending 15 minutes or less a day consuming news.

Research in Europe by Cauwenberge, d'Haenens and Beentjes (2010) threw light on gratifications sought by young people through news consumption. In their study on emerging consumption patterns among young people of traditional and internet news platforms in the low countries, they used a sample size of 1,193 people between the ages 15 and 34. They measured five gratifications derived from news media consumption. These were entertainment, information/surveillance,

social utility, pastime and escape. Information/surveillance gratification for consuming news was found to be high because of perceptions that it is the main motive for consuming news media. However, the findings from their study indicated that the need for entertainment and pastime gratifications were perceived by young people to be relevant factors for news consumption. Their study revealed that students consumed news to escape from the routine nature of their daily lives or in other words to be entertained. It found that irrespective of the source used to consume news by the students, the gratification remained the same being information/surveillance and diversion.

Madni, Batool, Abdullah and Nawaz (2013) studied students in India, reading online newspapers and readers perception (a case of University of Sargodha). A questionnaire which was administered to a sample of 300 students from the University of Sargodha with purposive and convenience sampling technique their study found that a greater number of students had no interest at all in the news while those who had interest consumed news for information. This research uncovered the students' preference concerning the content of online newspapers. Politics was the content most preferred by students followed by sports.

Research in Africa on students' news consumption, has identified news preferences. Adekannbi and Agbolabori (2018) studied news consumption on the internet by undergraduate students of public universities in Nigeria. The study used the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) model as the theory on which they based four of their main research questions one of which is of interest to this study. The study applied the use of a structured

questionnaire and interview schedule guide to collect data. These research questions of interest are ‘what is the amount of time spent consuming news by undergraduate students’ and ‘what type of news do undergraduate students access on the internet?’ To gather empirical evidence, they used both qualitative and quantitative approach to study a sample of 300 students. They found that the news preferred by the majority of the student respondents was entertainment news followed by national and then international news. The study states that majority of the respondents being female could account for this result. This study linked the result of a previous study on online newspapers and readers’ perceptions by Madni et al. (2013), which found that out of the online news consumers in India, women prefer to read information related to entertainment, development, health, education, and features while men prefer political, sports, crime and business-related news.

In Ghana, Avor (2015) studied the students of the University of Ghana in a survey of the news consumption patterns. The focus of the study was to discover news channels that University of Ghana students use in news consumption and the motivations for choosing those news channels. Avor (2015), studied 148 students. Starting with random sampling followed by systematic sampling procedure, self-administered questionnaires were used to collect data. It was found that access, cost and reliability of a particular news channel were the main motivators. Students consumed news through the traditional sources and the internet. The students understudied used both the traditional and modern channels to get the maximum benefit of all in news consumption by accessing the medium most accessible and affordable to them.

2.4 Summary

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and reviews related studies. The Uses and Gratification theory provides the explanations for motivation for consuming news and the gratification sought and in the consumption of news.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses the research design, method of data collection, sampling and method of data analysis.

3.1 Study Design/Method

The study adopted the quantitative approach. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from large numbers of students with greater ease and at relatively little cost. Accordingly, the descriptive survey method was used which as Wimmer and Dominick (2000: 161) point out, makes it possible for the researcher to “document current conditions and attitudes – that is to describe what exists at the moment.”

3.2 Population, and sample size

The population of this study was the University of Ghana students. The total population of students in 2018 was 37940 (University of Ghana Enrolment facts, 2018). The study purposively focused on students of the 2018/2019 academic year due to the study interest in documenting current data on their news consumption preferences. Also, there is a likelihood of students being different from the general Ghanaian population in news consumption due to the availability and access to the

variety and growth of news media channels as sources of information; not to mention also the variations of news and hence variations in audience preferences. A sample size of 200 was selected from 2018/2019 academic year freshers.

3.3 Sampling Procedure

A sample is a small subset of a population representative of the whole (Fowler 2014). This current study applied the multi-stage sampling technique in the process. The University of Ghana has four colleges. At the first stage, the researcher randomly selected two out of the four colleges namely the College of Humanities and College of Education. Then two departments each were randomly selected from both of the colleges. The college of education had three faculties with eight departments. The random sampling technique was used in selecting two of the departments – department of distance education and the department of information studies. The college of Humanities has 17 faculties with 39 departments out of which 2 were randomly selected. The sociology department and the English department. Out of the selected departments only first year, students were selected in each department. Using the sampling frame of the departments, 50 students were randomly selected from first year students in the four departments, bringing the sample size to 200. The sampling frame was the list of students in these departments obtained from the various departments.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire made up of open and closed-ended questions. The questionnaire had 18 questions and measured news consumption, gratifications and also contains questions on demographics. News consumption preference questions include “Which of the two categories of news do you listen to/ watch or read?” (local/foreign), and “How often do you engage with news media?”. There was one question on gratifications “What gratification do you derive from consuming news? The responses derived from students enabled the researcher to answer the research questions. Questionnaires were administered to selected students in their classrooms with permission from the appropriate authorities at the time. The researcher waited in the classroom for the questionnaires to be filled and took them back from the respondents after crosschecking. Each questionnaire took approximately 6 minutes to answer. All the 200 questionnaires were returned although some questions were left unanswered. One question on gratification sought from news consumption was not answered. Another respondent did not answer what time of the day they consume news. Three respondents did not answer the question on if you listen to the news on the radio what time of day do you listen.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were coded and analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To extract information from the data gathered and make aid in answering research questions, all the responses received were loaded one after the

other into an excel file. The researcher then double-checked to ensure that the correct responses had been put in the excel. After which the document was imported into SPSS. The results were analysed by the SPSS and the researcher interpreted the results as analysed. Simple frequency tables were used to present the findings of the study.

3.6 Summary

This chapter described focused on the research design and method of data collection. It also explained how the sample size was obtained, which method was used to collect data and how data collected was to be analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, data collected from the questionnaire were presented using frequency tables. The general information on respondents was presented by a description of the demographics. Subsequently, the findings were presented guided by the research objectives. The researcher aimed at discovering the news consumption preferences of the students. The study sought to discover the type of news preferred and gratifications sought by consuming news. Discussions on the findings have also been presented.

4.1 General Information

A Majority (73 %) of the respondents were between ages 16 and 24. The rest (27%) were between ages 25 and 34. More than half of the respondents (64%) were females and less than (36%) were males. All the respondents engaged with news through different means and at different times of the day. Also, all of them spent different amounts of time in their news consumption.

4.2 News consumption preferences- Foreign/Local

Regarding the dominant news consumption, respondents were asked to choose between local and foreign news, identify their preferences and were further asked to state what they consumed within the two categories.

Table 1: Type of news preferred - local/foreign

News Type	Local		Foreign	
	Number of students	Percent	Number of students	Percent
Political	70	35.0	37	18.5
Business	18	9.0	19	9.5
Health	14	7.0	7	3.5
Science	4	2.0	14	7.0
Sports	23	11.5	66	33.0
Entertainment	71	35.5	57	28.5
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0

Local news consumption was usually seen as a way for people to connect to their immediate environment (Table 1). Respondents preference for local news was marginally lower than the preference for foreign news suggesting a preference for foreign news. This further suggests that local news may not satisfy the needs of respondents and therefore they consumed less of it. For news consumption between local and foreign, more than half of the respondents (54%) stated that they consumed foreign news.

Between local and foreign news, Table 1 shows the type of news preferred. Consumption of entertainment, political and sports news was on top of the consumption preference by the respondents. For foreign news, the respondents showed a high interest in types of news such as sports, entertainment and politics in order of preference. However, for local news, entertainment, held the highest interest in news consumption, followed by politics and sports. Interest in science and health-related news was remarkably low in both local and foreign news consumption. With only a few respondents (2%) being interested in local science news, science news is the least preferred type of local news. Respondents were not interested in foreign Health news.

Entertainment news held the interest of respondents possibly because it was more relevant and therefore it presented some relatability to respondents making it the highest consumed local news type. Engagement with foreign news was higher suggesting respondents connected with their peers

on the international news more than they did on local news. Respondents were in a learning environment and seemed to have respect for those who possessed knowledge in broader things were likely to be more respected among their peers. It also suggested that foreign news more than local news satisfied the needs of respondents.

4.3 Pattern of engagement

The second research question sought to find out the pattern of news consumption of the respondents. How often respondents consumed news per day and weekly as part of the measure including the times and the different channels they used to engage with news. Regarding the frequency of news consumption, the respondents were almost equally spread between those who consumed news daily and those who consumed news occasionally (Table 2). Over a third of respondents (39%) stated that they consumed news daily, and close to the same number (36%) consumed news occasionally. Some students consumed news only once a week suggesting that they did not consume news regularly.

As shown in Table 2, most respondents spent less than an hour consuming news leaving less than a quarter of respondents spending over an hour to consume news.

Table 2: Time spent by students consuming news daily

TIME	Number of students	Percent
15-30 minutes	117	58.5
31-1 hour	59	29.5
Above 1 hour	24	12.0
Total	200	100.0

Even though responses showed that there was some amount of interest in news consumption, very few respondents spent over an hour in a day to consume news. Most respondents spent 30 minutes or less consuming news.

Table 3: Time of day students consume news

Time of day	Number of students	Percent
Morning	61	30.5
Afternoon	11	5.5
Evening	127	63.5
Total	199	99.5
Missing	1	.5
Total	200	100.0

the preferred time of day for consuming news among the respondents was evening as more than half of the respondents (63.5%) indicated and less than a tenth (5.5%) consuming news in the afternoon. This suggests that the lecture schedules and other busy schedules of students especially from morning through afternoon pushed news engagement more to be more of evening activity.

When asked if they read the newspaper and if they did which newspaper they consumed, almost half of the respondents (42%) stated that they did not read newspapers. However, out of the total number of respondents who read newspapers, most of them (38.5%) read the Daily Graphic, some (7%) read Daily Guide, a few (3.5 %) read Ghanaian Times and Graphic showbiz readers were also few (3%) The Mirror had (1.5%) of readership and 90 Minutes- a sports newspaper had a percentage of respondents consuming it. Newspaper readership was not high as compared to the use of other channels among respondents.

The study also found out that majority of respondents (70.5%) watch news on television in the evenings, 11.5% watched news on television in the mornings and very few respondents (3.5%) engaged television news in the afternoons while (13%) did not watch news on television at all.

To answer the question on what time of day they listened to news on the radio, most respondents (39.2%) said they listened in the evenings and a close number to the majority (35.7%) spend time to listen to the news in the mornings, less than a fifth (14.6%) indicated that they did not listen to the news.

When asked if they accessed news online, and if they did, what time of day respondents accessed online news, almost half of respondents (43%) stated that they accessed online news in the evenings, one fifth (20%) accessed online news in the afternoons, less than a fifth (16.5%) in the

mornings, a little over a tenth (12.5%) stated anytime and the rest (8%) stated that they did not access news online. The preferred channel for news was online news.

Although findings showed that all respondents engaged with news at different times of the day, it was also found that most students did not follow up on developing stories. Out of the 200 respondents, less than half of the respondents (42%) followed up on developing stories. Majority of respondents, (58%) stated that they did not spend time to follow up on developing news. This suggests that respondents were not motivated to follow up on developing news. Even though students engaged news, most of them were likely to go to the next news story to get new information and to get another discussion topic with their peers. This suggests that getting news as it happens was more gratifying than supplementary news.

Also, when asked if they followed developing stories on a different channel from where they first learnt of the news, a majority (56%) responded in the negative, while the rest (43.4%) answered they followed developing news on a different channel. Most Respondents may have followed developing news stories on the same channel they first heard it from for consistency. However, it further suggests respondents had their preferred channel where they were likely to consume news and would find developing news there. More than half of the respondents did not follow up on developing stories suggesting that that news was not a priority to them.

4.4 Gratifications sought from news consumption

On the subject of gratification from news consumption, this study used typologies by McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972). Their model of “media-person interaction, under the 4 categories shows the use to which people put media. This covers a varying range of gratifications that news satisfies for most of the respondents. These categories were diversion, personal relationships, personal identity and surveillance. Surveillance generally referred to as information was the most dominant factor as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Gratifications sought from news consumption

Gratification	Number of students	Percent
Diversion	17	8.5
Personal relationship	70	35.0
Surveillance	112	56.0
Personal Identity	0	0
Other	0	0
Missing	1	.5
Total	200	100.0

Surveillance or information gratification covers consuming news for information purposes. This includes consuming news to know more, understand the world, to learn about the individual and others, and to be informed about the immediate environment and the rest of the world. More than half of respondents (56.0%) consumed news because of the information they were likely to receive from the news. Respondents viewed surveillance as the main reason for news consumption. Some respondents, consumed news for the personal relationship enhancement it provided. Some regarded news consumption as a way through which discussions could be enhanced. Few respondents considered news as a diversion from routine or a way of escape. Personal identity as a gratification was not indicated by any respondent as a gratification.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This fifth chapter presents the discussions and conclusions based on the research objectives and questions. These objectives and research questions were to find out University of Ghana students news consumption preferences, to discover the pattern of their engagement with news and the gratification derived from preferred news consumption. The chapter further discusses recommendations and throws light on the limitations of the study.

5.1 Type of news preferred –Foreign/Local

Results obtained from the study revealed that students of the University of Ghana placed some value on news but did not spend enough time engaging news. All respondents confirmed that they consume news in various ways and at different points in time. Students made a conscious effort on news choices particularly for the type of news and channel preferred. Comparing local and foreign news consumption, students consumed foreign news more than local news suggesting a preference which was slightly higher than local news consumption. From the findings, students were more interested in engaging foreign news over local news. Results from the study suggested that the information students were interested in and discussed was found in the international news. Foreign news gratified their information and discussion needs. This means that the conversations respondents had on news topics was more based on foreign news and that is what held their peers'

interest in conversations. In this study, students looked out more for foreign news contradicting previous research which found that young people prefer local news consumption because the local news was relevant to the young ones (Qayyum, Williamson, Liu and Hider, 2011). This was evident in the study involving college students in America.

It was generally known that local news was seen as important for some young students because of the part it may have played in democracy and the relevant information it was likely to provide for decision making in civic duties. This finding also contradicted another study by Stone and Boudreau (1995), where they show a contrast in content preferences of 18-to-34year-olds and older groups and found in their survey, the 18-to-34year-olds group stated that news of the university in town and local news was their main areas of interest, the group placed national news as the next interest area. The reason for this preference for international news in this current study was its link to the entertainment and sports news which happened to be the preferred news type for most respondents. Respondents consumption matched their preference as majority of them consumed foreign news. Findings also showed local news consumption and it was evident that students prefer to consume local political news than foreign political news was because of the relevance of local politics to them.

Regarding the different types of news under various categories, the study showed that the main type of foreign news the students of the University of Ghana consumed was sports, entertainment news followed by politics. This implied that respondents within this age group had their interest

tilted more to sports and entertainment. However, they showed an interest in politics too and were aware of their position as the future elite. This finding was consistent with some existing literature (Adekannbi and Agbolabori, 2018) which showed that students were likely to have entertainment or political news remain as the main news type consumed by students. Students who consumed local news prefer entertainment and political news however, those who consumed foreign news preferred sports news the most followed by entertainment news.

In this study, out of the number of students who prefer local news, about the same number of them prefer local- political news, and local-entertainment news. This was found to be consistent with findings from Prior's (2005) study which found that young people prefer a mix of entertainment news and hard news. It is possible to infer that the preferred sports and entertainment news are mostly from foreign news. All the same Entertainment news is the overall preferred type of news followed by politics and then sports. Adekannbi and Agbolabori (2018) also found entertainment as the preferred type of news for students in their study. Consistent with the current study.

5.2 Pattern of engagement

Majority of the respondents spent the minimum amount of time (15 to 30 minutes) consuming their preferred news daily and only a few respondents stated that they spent over an hour doing same. This showed that students did not spend enough time engaging news. Suggesting that the level of news consumption by students of the university is low and not a priority to students.

However, the minimum time spent by respondents to consume news was between 15 – 30 minutes daily. This study revealed that students consume news and placed some value on news. A contradicting study of university students in India found out that, a majority of students do not consume news (Madni et al, 2013).

On the frequency of news consumption, the current study showed that majority of the respondents had some interest in news consumption. This confirms the view peoples' interest in news grows as they get older, this study found that a total of the majority of respondents who consumed news daily were between the ages of 25 to 34 representing the older group. This was quite opposite for students within the age bracket of 16 to 24. The majority of this cohort stated that they consumed news occasionally.

Respondents were not interested in following up on developing news stories suggesting a lack of interest; not much value was placed on it. However, the study revealed that students who followed up on developing stories preferred to use the same channel to follow up. This suggests that students have their preferred channel of news for consuming news and they stuck to them if they needed to follow up on developing news.

Most students attended to online news at different times of the day. All but sixteen (16%) accessed news online. Agreeing with previous studies that showed that students were mainly interested in

online news (Madni et al., 2013). However, findings from the study revealed also that the various news channels complemented each other in student's news consumption and the type of news sought would mostly depend on the channel used. Almost half of the respondents when asked did not include newspaper consumption when seeking or consuming news. Revealing a lack of interest in newspaper consumption. This confirmed reviewed literature that newspaper consumption was on the low. Regardless of the channel students preferred to consume the preferred time of day to consume news was in the evening followed by news consumption in the morning. It was found that very few students consumed news in the afternoon. Concerning online news consumption, some students did not put a time to it and stated that they would consume news at any time of the day.

5.3 Gratification derived from preferred news consumption

Getting information or surveillance was the main driver for satisfaction and a majority of respondents stated that this was the main purpose for consuming news. Findings showed that they consumed news to gratify certain needs. Respondents believed that information on what was going on around them was important and could also serve as a conversation booster. Information is key for students to function as relevant members of society. To be able to exercise their civic duty and also to make informed decisions concerning their lives after college.

This was very consistent with previous studies. Huang (2009) stated, that the main focus for young peoples' news consumption is surveillance. Diddi and LaRose (2006) had also found in their study that even when news consumption is a behaviour pattern, the top gratification sought is information. Consuming news as a means of diversion from the routine is not popular with the respondents. Respondents use news consumption as a relationship enhancer especially to assist in holding conversations on relevant topics. Findings from this study supported reviewed literature from Cauwenberge, d'Haenens and Beentjes (2010), Huang (2009) and Diddi & LaRose (2006) reported that the main reason students consume news is for information or surveillance.

5.4 Limitation

Even though the study is quantitative, it can only be limited to the current students of the university. It cannot be generalized for all students in Ghana due to the high turnover rate of students on annual basis. Due to how questions on newspaper, radio, television and online news consumption were asked, it is difficult to determine which students consume news through only one channel of news, only two or three or all. The questions should have been in-depth to make it responses more explanatory.

5.5 Recommendations

From the findings, multimedia news is the future. Students will watch, listen and read news online at their convenient time more than they attend to any other type of news channel. Traditional news

outlets should pay more attention to the new media and make it their main focus as the attention of young people is focused there. Students are more interested in entertainment, sports, politics and business according to this study, therefore, news content is most likely to be more interesting to students if more focus is put into these types of news.

5.6 Conclusion

News consumption before internet news was known to be consumed through reading newspapers, listening to the news on radio and or watching news television. With the advent of the internet, news can be watched, read and listened to online on various devices. Even though research has proven that as people get older their interest in news increases, it has also been found that college students have the type of news that holds their interest.

This research is a study which was conducted to survey the news consumption preferences of students of the University of Ghana. The main objective was to find out the type of news students preferred to consume and what gratification the type of news they consumed satisfied. According to this research entertainment news, politics sports and business are the top four types of news preferred. Students also have an interest in health and science news which has little content in news.

News consumption by university students leans heavily towards online news. Some students still read the newspaper, listen to the news on radio and others also watch television for news. They are not exclusive from each other. Some students consume news through all the channels while other students will pick their preferred channel(s) to consume news. There is a vast array of news sources out there which allows students to have many options to choose from. Newspapers are the least attended to channel mainly due to the possibility that the content of a majority of newspapers can be found online, making online news the most consumed.

The study utilized Uses and Gratification theory to underpin the study to discover what the respondents used news for. It was discovered that the main reason why students consume news is for information and a few others also consume news to enhance discussion with their peers.

Data gathered assisted in answering all the research questions raised and the Uses and Gratifications theory is relevant to this study. This is because the uses to which people put news content and the gratifications they get from it affect their choice of a particular channel. Students consume the type of content that appeals to them. They are selective with the type of news content they consume. This study confirms that students are loyal to the content and type of news. The main gratification sought as they consume news is for surveillance or information.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

Table 5: Name of newspaper students read news from

Newspaper	Number of students	Percent
Daily Graphic	77	38.5
Daily Guide	14	7.0
Ghanaian Times	7	3.5
90 Minutes	2	1.0
Graphic Showbiz	6	3.0
Mirror	3	1.5
Others	7	3.5

None	84	42.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 6: Time of day news is listened to on radio

Time of day	Number of students	Percent
Morning	71	35.5
Afternoon	21	10.5
Evening	76	38.0
None	29	14.5
Total	197	98.5
Missing	3	1.5

Total	200	100.0
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Table 7: Time of day news is watched on television

Time of day	Number of Students	Percent
Morning	23	11.5
Afternoon	7	3.5
Evening	141	70.5
None	26	13.0
Total	197	98.5
Missing	3	1.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 8: Time of day online news is accessed

Time of day	Number of Students	Percent
Morning	33	16.5
Afternoon	40	20.0
Evening	86	43.0
Anytime	25	12.5
None	16	8.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 9: Time spent consuming news daily: Cross tabulation Age

Age	How much time do you spend on the news daily?			Total
	15-30mins	31mins-one hour	Above one hour	
16-24	94	40	11	145
25-34	23	19	12	54
Total	117	59	23	199

Appendix 2- Questionnaire

This survey is being carried out by Anna Sophia Mansa Olympio, a student of the Department of Communication Studies for academic purposes. You are assured that no one will know you participated in this study and for that matter the answers you provide. It is an anonymous survey, so your name will not be requested or used in any way. Please circle one answer per question that BEST describes your news consumption habits.

You may please call Dr. Sarah Akrofi-Quarcoo on 0244292637 if you have some concerns about this study. Thank you for your co-operation and participation.

SECTION A: NEWS CONSUMPTION

1. Do you listen to/watch or read the news?

- A) Yes B) No

2. Which of the two categories of news do you listen to/ watch or read?

- A) local B) Foreign/ international

3. Which do you prefer?

- A) local B) Foreign/ international

4. Which type of **local** news do you consume

- A) Political B) Business C) Health D) Science E) Sports F) Entertainment

5. Which type of **foreign** news do you consume?

- A) Political B) Business C) Health D) Science E) Sports F) Entertainment

NEWS HABITS

6. How often do you engage with news media?
A) Everyday B) Three times a week C) Once a week D) occasionally
7. How much time do you spend on the news daily?
A) 15-30mins B) 30mins- hour C) Above one hour
8. What time of day do you consume news?
A) Morning B) Afternoon C) Evening
9. Do you spend time to follow up on developing news stories?
A) Yes B) No
10. Do you follow up on developing news on a different news channel from where you first heard the story on?
A) Yes B) No
11. If you read the newspaper which newspaper do you consume?

specify.....

12. If you listen to the news on radio which time of day do you mostly listen to the news?

specify)

13. If you watch news on Television what time of day do you mostly watch news?

Specify.....

14. If you access news online what time of day do you mostly access news?

Other (specify).....

15. Do you use the same channel to engage with different types of news?

A) Yes

B) No

SECTION B: GRATIFICATIONS

Please circle what best describes your reason in this section

16. What gratification do you derive from consuming news?

A) Diversion B) Personal relationship C) Surveillance

C) Personal Identity E) other (specify)

SECTION C: DEMOGRAPHICS

17. Gender:

A) Female B) Male

18. Age:

A) 16 -24 B) 25-34 C) 35-44