

DETERMINANTS OF NEWS SELECTION: A STUDY OF THE *DAILY GRAPHIC*

BY

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DEDICATION

DEDICATED TO

NANA E. ASEDA NUNOO,

MY BEAUTIFUL AND INTERESTING DAUGHTER

AND

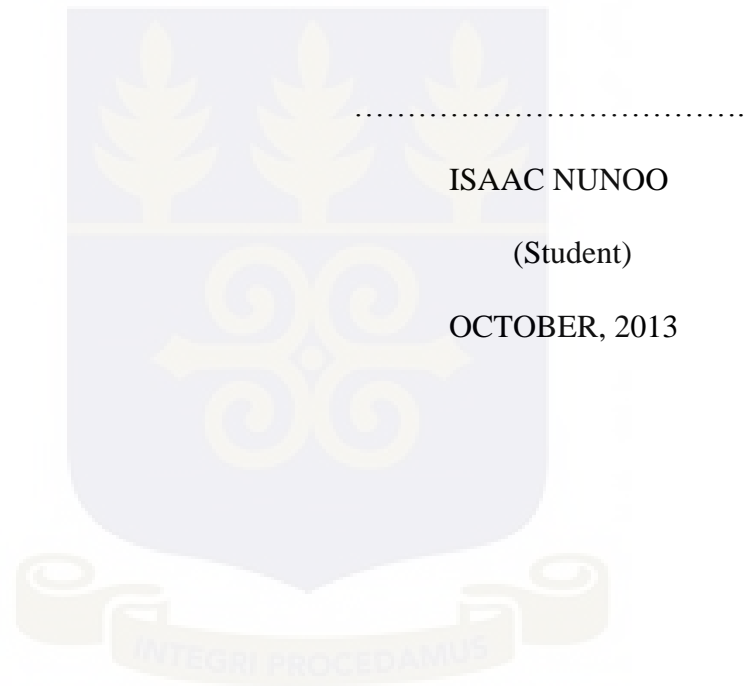
RHODALINE TAY

WHOSE SUPPORT GAVE ME ENCOURAGEMENT TO COMPLETE THE COURSE



DECLARATION

Except for the references and quotations which have been duly acknowledged, I declare that this dissertation is entirely my own original research, and that it has never been submitted in whole or in part for another degree elsewhere.



.....
PROF. AUDREY GADZEKPO

(Supervisor)

OCTOBER, 2013

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed and carried out to find out the criteria that govern the selection of news at the *Daily Graphic*. The study focused particularly on the front page news.

The study was also intended to assess what informs the choice of certain news items over others and why some news items are presented prominently on the front page over others.

Three methods were used in this study: a survey, content analysis and in-depth interviews. Seventy-two editions of the *Daily Graphic* and in all, 202 news items were content analysed.

The study found that although news values is vital in news selectivity, the *Daily Graphic* did not use news values as the sole criterion for news selection. What is important is whether a particular news story was in the interest of the general public and that it had a high range. That is to say, such a news story affected the majority of Ghanaians.

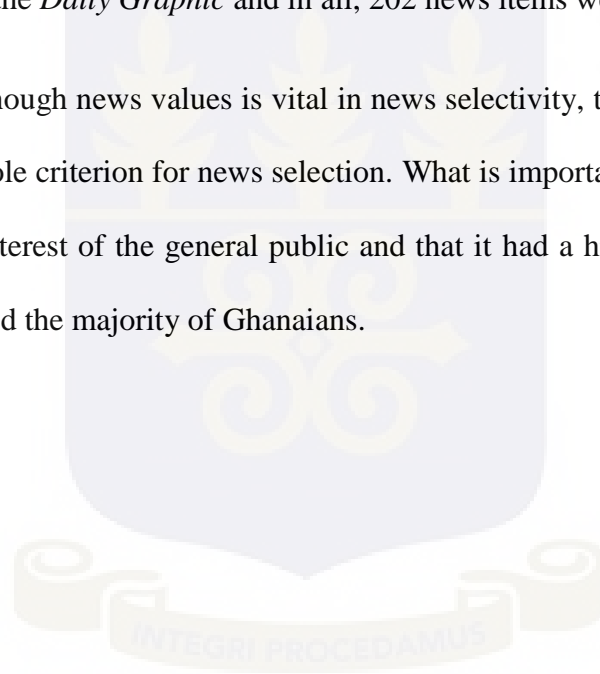


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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

News selection has always been an integral part of communication research. While it seems to be beyond dispute that selection has to take place in order to reduce the complexity of the process of collecting and assembling of news for distribution, “the criteria for the process are subject of a continuing debate” (Eilders, 1996: 1). One of the research traditions concerned with the problem of news selection is news value research. Media and communication scholars and practitioners concede that the news stories which are eventually broadcast or published go through a gatekeeping process during which journalists, copy readers and editors assess their (the news stories’) newsworthiness using news values. During this process, Shoemaker (1991: 2) says that the news gates, which are different decision-making points in a communication channel, open, close or are ajar for certain news items.

News selection takes place irrespective of the medium used – whether print or electronic. The criteria for selection may depend on a host of factors. Kunczik (1988) traces the history of gatekeeping in terms of news values or criteria by which news is selected. Kunczik concludes that in 1676 Christian Weise advocated news values selection based on strict differentiation between truth and falsehood. Daniel Hartnack in 1688 (cited in Kunczik, 1988) stressed the importance of an event and its consequences as the basis for selection. Two years later, Tobias Peucer (Kunzick, 1988) submitted a dissertation in which he argued that since not all available information could be published by a newspaper, only news worth remembering and knowing

must be deemed publishable. Among the list of items Peucer considered worth publishing were strange signs, storms, floods, terrible thunder storms, earthquakes, new inventions or discoveries, war and peace enterprises (Kunczik, 1988). Peucer's selection of news worth publishing meant, in effect, the rejection of what could be deemed unenticing issues or those that were not worth remembering including routine matters.

Contributing to the issue of news selection, Kasper Stieler in 1695 identified news values such as newness or novelty, geographical proximity, consequence/implications and prominence as well as negativism (Kunczik, 1988). He also stressed that newspaper writers should be capable of selecting the important from the trivial (Kunczik, 1988). In a classical study, Galtung and Ruge (1965) proposed a list of news values that can be used to assess the newsworthiness of news items. By far, the most commonly cited list of news values is that of Galtung and Ruge (1965; Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). Galtung and Ruge's 12 criteria are as follows: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, unexpectedness, continuity, compositional balance, elite nations, elite people, reference to persons and reference to something negative (Fowler, 1991: 13).

Many lists of news values/criteria have also been suggested by media researchers and journalists since then. For example, Denis MacShane (1979: 46) subdivided newsworthy events into the following categories: Conflict, Hardship and Danger to the community, Unusualness, Scandal and Individualism. Harcup and O'Neill's (2001, cited in Brighton and Foy, 2007) study of the printed press resulted in their attempt to revise and update Galtung and Ruge's list as the following: Power élite, Celebrity, Entertainment, Surprise, Bad news, Good news, Magnitude, Relevance, Follow-ups and Media agenda. According to Hall (1973: 182),

“News values appear as a set of neutral, routine practices, but we need, also to see formal news values as an ideological structure—to examine these rules as the formalization and operationalization of an ideology of news.”

Stanley Johnson and Julian Harriss (1966: 33-37) of the University of Tennessee (USA) were already talking about the “news values” of events before the work of Galtung and Ruge. They were not only concerned with news values but also whether there are any criteria that guide journalists in deciding or selecting the most important news out of the thousands of items. Johnson and Harrison (1966: 39) therefore made the following recommendation:

“News items have intrinsic characteristics known as news values [emphasis in the original]. The presence or absence of these values decides its importance and thus guarantees the reader’s attention. These news values are, therefore, useful measures of the importance of events. If properly applied, they will determine if an event is news or not.”

They argued that “...news items compete for space and may be measured according to their comparative importance. They may also be measured according to their intrinsic importance, which determines their length and how they are presented” Johnson and Harrison (1966: 39).

In evaluating newsworthiness, Johnson and Harrison proposed the following “factors of magnitude”: 1) the degree of intensity), 2) the number of people affected (range), 3) distance from the event (proximity), 4) time of the event (opportunity), 5) significance of results arising out of the event (consequences) and 6) diversity of news values (Johnson and Harrison, 1966, cited in Jorge, 2008).

In addition to the above, politics (Schulz, 1976; Staab, 1990; Ruhrmann et al., 2003, cited in Eilders, 2006: 8), economics, ownership or organisational policies (Ettema & Whitney, 1987, cited in Cassidy, 2007), pictures/visualness (McGregor, 2002) religion and technological change/accessibility(McGregor, 2002) all have influencing effects on what gets published in a

particular medium for public consumption. Other considerations include the social system, the personality of the news selector and the philosophy of the publisher or owner. Whoever determines the editorial policy of the medium influences directly or indirectly what news items should be selected for publication.

While in the West studies on news values and gatekeeping have been conducted by media researchers such as O'Neil & Harcup (2001) and Peterson (1979), in Africa and Ghana in particular, not much has been done. That notwithstanding, there has been vast improvement in the media of all kinds selecting and offering news to Ghanaian consumers.

1.1 Background to the study

The history of the press in Ghana has been chequered and marred by decades of political and economic quagmires. Like the press in many African countries, the Ghanaian press abound with instances of state interference in private newspaper publishing. For example, *The Pioneer* was banned for some time in the 1960s and 1970s by the Convention People's Party led by Nkrumah and the National Liberation Council led by Acheampong respectively. The *Legon Observer*, the *Standard*, the *Christian Messenger* and the *Echo* have all suffered from one political persecution or the other.

As was the culture of the press in most African countries in the colonial era, the Ghanaian media played a pivotal role in the crusade against colonialism. After Ghana's independence, the media became the vanguards of opposition to dictatorial rule. However, according to Gadzekpo (2009), the media were also ineffective in their role as the watchdogs over society and political bandits.

The media often functioned “as tools of the succession of military regimes which ruled the country from the mid-1960s through the 1970s and 1980s (ibid: 89).

The first newspaper published in Ghana was *The Royal Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Intelligencer*. It was published from 1822 to 1824/5 by Sir Charles McCarthy, governor of the British Gold Coast settlements. This was followed by *The Accra Herald* which was published by Charles Bannerman in 1857. Bannerman’s hand-written newspaper was the pioneer of African-owned and edited newspapers in the Gold Coast; thus, a press that was not indebted to the government but ran by private indigenous businesspersons (Gadzekpo, 2009). After 16 years of survival other indigenous newspapers emerged. Among those newspapers were the *Gold Coast Times*, *Western Echo*, *Gold Coast Assize*, *Gold Coast News*, *Gold Coast Aborigines*, *Gold Coast Chronicle*, *Gold Coast People*, *Gold Coast Independent*, and *Gold Coast Express*” (Hasty, 2002).

Newspapers like the *Ashanti Pioneer* (1938), founded by John and Nancy Tsiboe, the *Accra Evening News* (1949), founded by Nkrumah; the *Daily Graphic* (1950) and the *Sunday Mirror* (1953), founded by Cecil King dominated the media landscape in the mid-60s. Nkrumah established the Guinea Press under which he introduced the state-owned *Ghanaian Times* in 1958.

Nkrumah bought the *Daily Graphic* and the *Mirror* in 1962. With *Graphic* and *Mirror* being incorporated into the state apparatus and being backed by the existing party newspapers such as the *Accra Evening News*, the *Daily Gazette* and the *Sunday Punch*, the newspaper scene became state dominated by the time Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup in 1966.

However, the *Ashanti Pioneer* remained defiant in the 1950s and the early 1960s until it was finally banned by Nkrumah in 1962.

The Fourth Republican Constitution provided an opportunity for media pluralism and the private media began to rise again. Freedom of expression and media protections are enshrined in the 1992 Constitution. The National Media Commission was established with the chief task of insulating state media from governmental control and ensuring high journalistic quality, thus, vastly improving the regulatory environment for journalists. However, as Kakari (1994: 20, cited in Gadzekpo, 2009) notes, “in the early years of re-democratisation, the unfettered private press were adjudged as playing a role expected of the independent media under a libertarian, pluralist constitutional system of government; namely ... serving as watchdogs of accountability.” The content of a number of newspapers fell far short of journalistic standards with some of them publishing outright fictitious stories against public officials and Cabinet members (Kumado, 1995 cited in Gadzekpo, 2009: 98). The goodwill the media have enjoyed in the Fourth Republican Constitution continues today.

1.2 The *Daily Graphic*

The *Daily Graphic* which is a state-owned daily newspaper found itself on the news stand on 2nd October, 1950 as one of a chain of newspapers owned by private interest, the Daily Mirror Group of London. The *Daily Graphic* and *Mirror* were not an indigenous effort like the *Accra Evening News*, *Gold Coast Chronicle*, *Ashanti Pioneer* and *The Accra Herald*. Unlike the local press, the *Daily Graphic* had access to transnational capital, to modern technology, ran a more efficient business organisation, and demonstrated better journalistic expertise (Hasty, 2002).

The *Daily Graphic* has carved out a certain niche market based on its distinctive ‘house style’ (Hasty, 2006). The *Daily Graphic* has the largest nationwide readership which includes elites who influence government decisions and also make national policies. The newspaper market in Ghana is led by the *Daily Graphic* which claims a daily circulation of 100.000 copies (www.nationsencyclopedia.com; 17/09/2012).

Though a state-owned newspaper, the *Daily Graphic* still operates as an independent newspaper. Appointment of the Board Chairman and the Board Members is however provided for in the Constitution of Ghana and it is done by the National Media Commission in conjunction with the Civil Services Secretariat.

Even though, a cursory look at the front page content of the paper suggests the use of the inverted pyramid, the journalists and the editors are also informed by other factors such as “national security, [one’s] condition, ... personal relationship with sources of news” (Hasty, 2006) and public interest . Thus, apart from the universal factors of newsworthiness (proximity, newness, controversy, prominence etc.), the *Daily Graphic* considers other issues that border on national security, peace and unity in selecting news for publication.

Its content includes current affairs, politics, economic issues and foreign news. What is published in the newspaper is carefully chosen during a daily editorial meeting attended by top editors. During the editorial conference, the news editor presents a line-up of the potential page-one news items. The editors then assess the newsworthiness of each news item and which news item to give high prominence to. What is finally given to the Ghanaian consumer is a product of an editorial decision.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The media have been globally recognized as the industry responsible for informing, educating and entertaining the public. This recognition highlights the duty and power the media have in a given society. By selecting, offering and placing emphasis on certain news topics from the copious topics available and given news values, the media have the aptitude to influence the attitudes and beliefs of the people in one way or another (Alowo, 2010).

The *Daily Graphic*, which has become synonymous with the newspaper, provides ideas and information to the majority of newspaper readers, especially the elite. It is therefore important to assess what informs the choice of certain news items over others and why some news items are presented prominently on the front page over others since in the opinion of Reisner (1992:971), the front page of a newspaper is the most important page. Croteau and Hoynes (2000:126) have also observed that the front page embodies the most essential news items selected by editors.

Gatekeeping and news values coupled with framing have in most cases governed editors' selection of news items for their front page stories (Donohue, George A., Phillip J. Tichenor and Clarice N. Olien et al., 1972). What then are the most common news values, topics, focus and type of news items presented on the front page of Ghana's leading newspaper?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This research is intended to find out what journalists consider as news and why and therefore how that is reflected in what eventually gets on the front pages of the *Daily Graphic*. The content of the front pages will be analysed to establish the newsworthiness that informed their selection as well as why some stories were prominently presented and not others.

The research will also seek to establish how the journalistic decisions among journalists differ or agree in terms of what news stories should be presented prominently on the front page.

1.5 Research Questions

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), research questions are formally stated questions intended to provide indications about something but not limited to investigating relationships between variables. They also provide essential and relevant information to understanding the research topic and give direction to the study. The following research questions were outlined to help in gathering relevant data to understand the research topic:

1. What are the most common news values and topics in the news presented prominently on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*?
2. Does a news item with many news values become the lead?
3. Are there any specific guidelines influencing news selection at the *Daily Graphic*?
4. Do journalistic choices of news gatherers (writers and reporters.) match those of news processors (editors and copy readers)?
5. Why do certain news items and not others reach the editor's desk?
6. Why do editors give prominence to certain news items on the front-page?

1.6 Significance of the study

Principally, this study is considered significant because it will spell out the characteristics of the news on the front page of a leading newspaper in Ghana and give a snapshot of the news values of Ghanaian journalists. Secondly, the study will provide meaningful information to scholars interested in Ghanaian media content. Thirdly, this study will also make it possible to compare

research done in other countries to this research. Lastly, the results may serve as a guide for both news processors and news gatherers in their choices of news items.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section of the research discusses the theoretical framework guiding the research and reviews some studies done by other scholars on news values and gatekeeping in the media. The news values theory and gatekeeping theory underpin this study. These two theories were selected on the basis that they are relevant in explaining why in spite of the thousands of news items that are available to journalists and editors only a few are published in a newspaper.

2.1 Gatekeeping

The gatekeeping theory is of the view that several pressures determine the passage of certain news items through the news gates. These pressures, which are known as forces, range from micro (individual forces) to macro level (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). The fundamental point of the gatekeeping theory, as developed by Kurt Lewin (1947), is that there are forces or pressures that can either impede or facilitate the flow of news items through the "gates" (Shoemaker, 1996).

Kurt Lewin's experiments to entice Iowa women to eat more beef (hearts, livers, kidneys, and other secondary cuts of meat) as a patriotic duty during World War II (Rogers, 1994) has evolved into numerous models and hundreds of studies of media gatekeepers and gatekeeping. It has also resulted in contemporary study of whether the Internet has turned solid "gates" into little more than screen doors. Kurt Lewin (1947) first used the term "gatekeeping," to describe a wife or mother as the person who decides which food finally ends up on the family's dinner table. The

gatekeeper is the person tasked with the responsibility to decide what qualifies to pass through each gate section, of which, there are several in the process. Although Lewin's original focus was the food chain, the gatekeeping concept has been applied to how news items meander through some selection processes. In the 1970s, however, McCombs and Shaw decided to study the effects of gatekeepers' decisions and found the audience's appreciation of a news item is premised on the degree of prominence given to it by the media.

A gatekeeper in a social system holds the right and power to make decisions concerning which commodity (materials, goods, and information) may enter the system. Gatekeepers may decide to control the public's knowledge of what is happening in and around the society by letting some stories pass through the social system while denying others access. Media gatekeeping is based principally on principles of news values, input structure, organizational routines and common sense. Gatekeeping is crucial in almost all communication planning roles including news selection in the print media.

Gatekeeping can be both useful and dangerous depending on how it is applied by the gatekeeper(s). If not judiciously applied, gatekeeping can be a recipe for an abuse of power by deciding what information to abandon and what to accept or allow to pass through the "gate".

The gatekeeping theory is related to the mass media and organizations. In the mass media the focus is on the organizational structure of newsrooms and events. An example may be a wire service editor who decides alone what news audiences will receive from another continent. The idea is that if the gatekeeper's selections are biased, the readers' understanding will therefore be a little biased or that the readers might not read the news items at all if they are found to lack news value. Shoemaker et al. (2001:233) describe the gatekeeping process as the one which

involves how the news is designed, timed for distribution and managed. This process encapsulates all forms of information control which includes inter alia selection, shaping, deletion, addition, localization and withholding information. For instance, McQuail (1994: 213) defines gatekeeping as a process by which selections are made in media work, especially decisions whether or not to admit a particular news story to pass through the news gates. News gates are different decision-making points in a communication channel (Shoemaker, 1991:2).

The factors, which are dotted throughout news gatekeeping literature, include among others 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 (Alowo, 2010: 16). Akin to this, Shoemaker and her colleagues examined the forte of the media routine of judging the newsworthiness of congressional bills and individual forces in the selection of news. Their conclusion was that the media routine, which according to O'Neil & Harcup (2009) is guided by a good understanding of news values, greatly influenced the selection of news than individual forces (Shoemaker et al., 2001:236). Cassidy (2006:17) like Ramaprasad (2006:11) says that the media routine has the largest influence on news selection.

Early studies on gatekeeping focused on the decisions of individual journalists (Manning White, 1950; Snider, 1967). However, subsequent research reveal that the work of journalists in the gatekeeping process is also affected by other forces, such as the professional routines of journalists and the influence (or policies) of the news organization (Ettema & Whitney, 1987, cited in Cassidy, 2006).

2.2 News values

News values, occasionally referred to as “news criteria” or “news factors,” are a conceptual framework used within journalism studies and journalism education to describe the gatekeeping practices of the mainstream news media. Specifically, news values are defined as qualities of events that increase the likelihood of their being covered in the news. In respect of news routines, news factors or values can be seen as a set of selection rules which govern journalistic judgments. Galtung & Ruge (1965) used the concept, news values in their attempt to explain which particular features, attributed to an event influence journalists’ perception and selection of contemporary events as news.

The theory of news values proposes that there is a systematic and stable association between the qualities attributable to an event (news factors) and the news value assigned to the respective news item by journalists (Scheufele, 2006, cited in Maier & Ruhrmann, 2008: 199). Numerous lists of news values exist (Ryan, 1991) and have been generated using a wide variety of methods, including interviews and surveys of journalists, analysis of news coverage, newsroom ethnographies, content analyses of finished news items, and simple introspection by journalists-cum-academics. However, the most widely cited list of news values remains that of Galtung and Ruge (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001, 2009), which is often credited to be the original list. As such, Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) list is given here as an exemplar: frequency, threshold, unambiguity, meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, compositional balance, elite nations/regions, elite people, negativity and personification. A news item must possess all or most of these characteristics to have news value.

Galtung and Ruge (1965, cited in Braun, 2009: 6) explain their 12-criteria for the assessment of newsworthiness below:

1- Frequency: events that unfold within a publication cycle of a news outlet are more likely to be selected for publication.

2- Threshold: the widespread the event, the more people it affects and the more likely it is to be selected. Events have to pass a threshold criterion for them to be considered in the first place; the largeness and the degree of intensity of events facilitate their selection by news media for publication.

3- Unambiguity: events not open to multiple interpretations and can be clearly understood have greater chance of being reported.

4- Meaningfulness: the more culturally familiar and/or relevant an event is the more likely it is to be selected.

5- Consonance: if the news selector has a mental preconception of an event and thus, based on experience, predicts its occurrence, then it is more likely to be selected.

6- Unexpectedness: an event that is unexpected or rare is more likely to be reported.

7- Continuity: issues related to an event that has already made the news are more likely to be selected because such event it has become familiar and easier to interpret.

8- Composition: an event that has the potential to contribute to the variety of subjects already covered in the news is more likely to be selected than one that only adds to related news items.

9- Reference to elite nations: events concerning elite nations are regarded momentous than the actions involving less elite nations hence, their likelihood of being reported.

10- Reference to elite people: the actions of elite people are likely to be reported because they are believed to have more consequence than others,

11- Reference to persons: news that can be presented in terms of individual people rather than abstractions is likely to be selected.

12- Reference to something negative: an event that has a negative result is generally deemed unequivocal and newsworthy.

Since Lippmann (1990: 23, cited in Eilders, 1996: 1) asserted that there are event characteristics that lend “news values” to a news item which enhances its chances of being selected for a publication by news media, many lists of news values/criteria have also been suggested by media researchers and journalists beyond those of Galtung and Ruge’s. For example, beginning with Östgaard (1965, cited in Eilders, 1996: 1), who meta-analysed several content analyses on the international news flow and found three factors determining selection: simplification, identification and sensationalism; Denis MacShane (1979: 46) subdivided newsworthy events into the following categories: Conflict, Hardship and Danger to the community, Unusualness, Scandal and Individualism.

Harcup and O’Neill’s (2001, cited in Brighton and Foy, 2007) study of the printed press resulted in their attempt to revise and update Galtung and Ruge’s list as the following: Power élite, Celebrity, Entertainment, Surprise, Bad news, Good news, Magnitude, Relevance, Follow-ups and Media agenda. Other examples include Warner, 1970; Ruehlmann, 1979; O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders & Fiske, 1983; Hetherington, 1985; Bell, 1991; Ryan, 1991; Gregory & Miller, 1998; Herbert, 2000; McQuail, (2000) (cited in Braun, (2009: 16).

It is worth noting that many media and communication researchers have used a combination of Galtung and Ruge’s list of news values and the lists of other researchers like Herbert

Gans' (1979, cited in Braun, 2009: 16) in their studies and scholarship. As such, as Braun, (2009: 17) puts it "there is often little to recommend one list over another, or to suggest whether a given list is 'complete'." Thus, some aspects of the various lists including that of Lippmann's five factors of newsworthiness: sensationalism, proximity, relevance, unambiguity and facticity have often informed recent scholarships.

Concluding on the difficulty in reconciling the diverse lists of news values, O'Sullivan (1983: 154 cited in Braun, 2009: 17) states:

"Numerous attempts have been made over the years to pin down news values more specifically. But it is hard to collate these into a hard and fast list of values, because different studies have approached the idea from different standpoints, using different assumptions and terminology."

Nevertheless, as Eilders (2006: 5) admits, the complexity of the gatekeeping process is guided by news values, which are considered as the most protuberant approach to news selectivity. And as noted by Harcup & O'Neil (2001, cited in Braun, 2009: 7), news values "are more often deemed axiomatic, endlessly anthologized, and taken for granted in reviews of the literature." This does not, however, insulate news values from censorship as a conceptual framework.

Yet, the usefulness of the theory of news values has been confirmed by results from theoretical considerations as well as empirical analyses (Berkowitz, 1991; Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Hester, 1974; Kim, 2002; Schulz, 1982; Schwarz, 2006, cited in Maier & Ruhrmann, 2009: 199). Contemporary studies like Cassidy (2007); Eilders (1997, 2006); Braun (2009); Shoemaker (2006); Ruhrmann, Woelke, Maier, & Diehlmann (2003, cited in Maier & Ruhrmann, 2009: 199) and Scheufele (2006, cited in Maier & Ruhrmann, 2009) have further given clarity to the explanatory value of the news factors.

These studies have confirmed both the relevance of news values for the analysed published or broadcasted contents and as the traditional concept of Galtung and Ruge suggests – in news recipients' information processing (Eilders, 2006; Maier & Ruhrmann, 2009: 199).

Thus, the theory of news values is a fruitful theoretical approach for the analysis of the criteria for news selection in both the print and the electronic media, hence its employment in this study.

2.3 Review of Related Works

Many scholars have taken news values—whether those of Galtung and Ruge or other scholars—to be an accurate representation of the news media's selection practices. William P. Cassidy (2006) studied the similarities between online journalists and print journalists in the USA in relation to the gatekeeping and news value concepts as well as the influence of gatekeeping forces at the individual and routine levels on the professional role conceptions of print and online daily newspaper journalists. Cassidy used the survey method and gatekeeping theory and Shoemaker and Rees hierarchical model of news influences , which allows for the study of gatekeeping on five levels of analysis—individual, routine, organizational characteristics, extra media and ideological. His finding was that routine gatekeeping forces exerted more influence on the professional role conceptions of print and online journalists than did individual level forces. In effect, Cassidy (2006) like Ramaprasad (2006:11) says that the media routine has the largest influence on news selection.

However, McGregor (2002) argues that rather than news values, that what is selected and presented as news is driven by pictures and their perceptual and iconic power, thus the value of visualization (Maire, Ruhrmann & Karin, 2008) which is also called visualness (McGregor, 20

02). To justify that this value is not only valid for television news, McGregor cites Grattan (1998) as noting that most newspapers are increasingly design-driven, therefore design is used to attract readers, especially the young. And that, stories likely to have designs or pictures stand a greater chance of being selected for publication. This was McGregor's finding when he studied newsworthiness in the media in New Zealand to determine contemporary criteria for selecting the news beyond news values.

As yet, no single news value has been identified as having more intensity during the gatekeeping process than the other. This could perhaps be because events or situations that are written about have equal chances to score highly or low, not only on one or two news values, but a whole host of them. In the study they carried out concerning the appearance of news on the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus in four Norwegian newspapers, Galtung and Ruge (1965) discovered that when the frequency of an event is related to the frequency of appearance of the news carrier, its chances of becoming news are higher. They concluded that, the more an event satisfies certain conditions, the more easily it will be chosen as a news item.

They established 12 criteria. The first five are related to the impact of the story: breadth, frequency, negativity, novelty, lack of ambiguity. Four of the factors are connected to identification with the audience: personalisation, significance, reference to elite nations, and reference to elite people. And the three other factors are links to ways of covering news: agreement, continuity and composition (McGregor, 2005).

Though Galtung and Ruge's (1965) study is dated it is believed to be seminal in the sense that the majority of the studies done on news values use their study as the starting point. The researchers either review Galtung and Ruge's 12 criteria of news values, draw a comparison

between their results and Galtung and Ruge's findings or just add few news values to the existed 12 criteria values. An example of such studies is the one done by McGregor, (2002). McGregor, as stated already, argues that visualization is the most prevailing news value of today. Therefore, the more the event satisfies the criteria of visualness the more likely the event will be selected as news. So, McGregor argues that rather than the 12 news factors, visualness determine news selectivity.

Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012) also observed that other factors not included in Galtung and Ruge's (1965) set of news values equally influence news selection. Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh reviewed the application of Galtung and Ruge's (1965) 12 criteria of news values in Iranian media to observe which news values play the major role in the selection process of newspapers. Their study covered 100 news stories from four international newspapers. The outcomes of their study were that while reference to elite people was given much prominence and frequent news value, some criteria which were not mentioned in Galtung and Ruge's list of news values have a considerable role in news selection process of newspapers in Iran. They also discovered that impact of ideology is a considerable factor which plays a major role in the overall news selection process. Thus, from Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh's study, it is clear that although the twelve factors of Galtung and Ruge's list are influential in news selection there are other factors which are equally important.

In their study to examine foreign news coverage in an American newspaper, Beaudoin and Esther (2001) content analysed 338 news stories with a system of 13 values in terms of how foreign nations, groups and individuals were represented in the news. The study found that values related to conflict and positive receive much coverage. The values are also distributed

differently according to story type, story domain and focal nation. This confirms Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh's finding that news values are likely to be influenced by culture and ideologies. It also goes to affirm that the criteria for news selection are not limited to the traditional news values and that other factors such as culture (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Schulz, 1976, Staab, 1990; Ruhrmann, 2003; cited in Eilders, 2006), ideology (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), economy (Staab, 1990; Ruhrmann et al., 2003; cited in Eilders, 2006) and politics (Schulz, 1976; Staab, 1990; Ruhrmann, 2003, cited in Eilders, 2006) are also influential.

Akiba, Cohen and Shoemaker (2006, cited in Shoemaker, 2006: 6) demonstrate how news and newsworthiness may differ from one nation to the other and one individual to the other in their study of news in 10 countries (Australia, Chile, China, Germany, Jordan, India, Israel, Russia, South Africa, and the United States). The study's findings show that there is a disparity between what many people perceive as newsworthy and the prominence given to those stories by the newspapers. Journalists, public relations practitioners, people from both low and high socio-economic backgrounds through focus group discussions were asked to rank 10 headlines from their local newspapers on the basis of their newsworthiness from the most prominent to the least prominent according to how they (the stories) had been displayed in the newspapers. While most of the people within each focus group agreed on the ranking of the stories in terms of their newsworthiness, a comparison between the people's newsworthiness rankings and how prominently such stories had been displayed in the newspapers showed a low correlation between prominence and newsworthiness of an event.

It therefore stands to reason that "the newsworthiness of an event is only one of many factors that determine how prominently the story will be covered" (Shoemaker, 2006: 6). Shoemaker

states that different people judge newsworthiness differently. What may be considered newsworthy because of its news values by a reporter, a journalist or correspondent may not necessarily be selected by an editor for publication much less being made the lead news on the front page.

Kalyango (2009:209) corroborates Shoemaker (2006; 1996), Tuchman (1973), Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Cassidy (2006) finding that apart from the media routines (especially assessing news worthiness of news items using news values) there are other forces that influence news selection. In his study to examine political news use and democratic support in Ugandan radio, Kalyango (2009) discovered that the editors' selection of news was greatly influenced by the interest of their listeners. In this regard, editors of newspapers are likely to identify the interest of their readers as an important factor during the gatekeeping process of especially the lead news. Many Ugandans use the media to get information about politics and the government (Kalyango, 2009:209) and this is likely to be the case of in Ghana as well. The *Daily Graphic*, a state-owned newspaper, through political reporting informs and educates Ghanaians about the political situation in the country as well as government policies.

Barzilai-Nahon (2008, cited in Bui, 2010) carried out a study to find out the gatekeeping role on the World Wide Web. Barzilai-Nahon's study was meant to propose a theory of network gatekeeping. He suggested that gatekeeping in a network context does not only encompass the selection of information but also addition, channelling, manipulation, localization, integration, disregard and obliteration of information. Barzilai-Nahon (2008) concluded that even though the internet era creates a much leeway for accessing information, the gatekeeper's design and policy largely influence the information that reach Internet users due to the fact that these users are

served by only a small number of information providers. He continued that the degree of a gatekeeper's power over what is sent over the Internet is highest when that which is put on the Internet together with the news media responsible for its (the information) production has little political power in relation to the gatekeeper, information production ability, relationship with the gatekeeper, and fewer alternatives to circumvent gatekeeper's control. This accentuates Shoemaker's (2006:109) view that both news values and gatekeeping role complement each other in news selection. Thus, a news story that is selected and worked on by a reporter or a journalist would have to pass through the gatekeeping gate for it to be published. Barzilai-Nahon's propositions support this study because it touches on the fact that the gatekeeper's role is crucial to news selection in the media enterprise.

Shoemaker et al. (2001:236) examined the potency of the media routine in assessing the newsworthiness of congressional bills and individual forces in the selection of news. Their finding was that the media routine, which is largely grounded in news values (O'Neil & Harcup, 2008:161), greatly influences the selection of news than individual forces (Shoemaker et al., 2001:236). This is corroborated by Ramaprasad (2006:11) in his study on reported influences on news reporting among journalists in East Africa. He concludes that the media routine has the largest influence in determining what news story worth publication. Although, there are no documented rules on news values locally or universally, many journalists and news organisations have similar views about them, hence Manning's (2001:63) summation that in contemporary media circles, a vast majority of the news values found in stories across different newspapers have become universal.

Using the survey method, Okigbo (1990) conducted a study of gatekeeping in the Nigerian press. His study involved 21 senior editors and reporters from four national newspapers (*The Guardian, National Concord, New Nigerian* and *Nigerian Standard*.) and the finding is that “as a concept, gatekeeping holds great promise in African mass communication research” (Okigbo, 1990:9). Specifically, the study reveals that: (1) gatekeeping operations are affected by corporate philosophies and policies of newspaper organizations irrespective of type of ownership; (2) journalists working in privately-owned newspapers pay less attention to ownership forces in the selection of news; and (3) that prejudice and personal preferences are played down considerably by the journalists. This, however, contradicts Shoemaker’s (2006) claim that the more power a person wields the greater his/her chances of selecting, shaping, and otherwise determining what becomes news.

There is however a great correlation between Okigbo’s (1990:9) conclusion that “as a concept, gatekeeping holds great promise in African mass communication research” and Clayman and Reisner’s (1998) finding that editors display a systematic preference for stories chosen upon collaborative effort in the gatekeeping process. Clayman and Reisner examined how newspaper editors, in conference meeting, jointly determine which stories will appear on the front page. Their findings suggest that the gatekeeping process involves not only the managing editor’s decision but even the decisions of journalists, reporters as well as all other editors at the editorial conference. The study used audio recordings of editorial conferences conducted in 1989 at eight daily newspapers in the US. This study is germane to my research in the sense that Clayman and Reisner’s study focuses on the criteria for the selection of front page news stories which is the crux of my study.

In a study conducted by Semmel (1976), 100 newspapers from four American dailies were content analysed. A high degree of uniformity in the treatment of themes was found. A higher percentage of the issues covered were about happenings in the metropolitan centres, especially the capitals, with the focus on the elite thespians.

Even though, Semmel's study was about foreign news selection and coverage in the four American dailies, his conclusion that the media tend to give much attention to people with economic and political influence than the ordinary people is applicable to local news selections.

McCombs and Shaw (1976) took a different direction when they looked at the effects of gatekeepers' decisions. They found the audience learnt how much importance to attach to a news item from the emphasis the media place on it. McCombs and Shaw pointed out that the gatekeeping concept is related to the newer concept, agenda-setting. Perhaps, this explains why Karine Barzilai-Nahon (2008) agrees with Lewin (1947), that the gatekeeping process, which could be also applied to communication studies, is guided by forces which influence the gatekeeper's decision on either to accept or reject a given news item from getting into a newspaper.

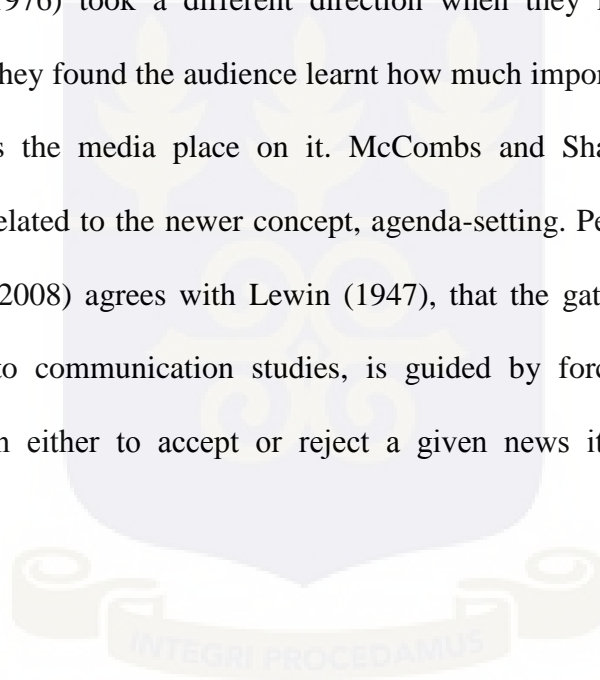


Table 1: Showing a list of news selection factors in selected studies

GALTUNG & RUGE (1965)	SCHULZ (1976)	STAAB (1990)	SHOEMAKER & REESE (1996)	BEAUDOIN & ESTHER (2001)
Elite people	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture
Continuity	Politics	Economy	Ideology	Conflict
Unexpectedness		Politics		Positive
Meaningfulness				
Unambiguity	EILDERS (1996)	HARCUP & O'NEILL (2001)	SHOEMAKER (2006; 2001)	CASSIDY (2006)
Threshold				
Frequency	Currency	Power elite	Personal	Currency
Consonance	Controversy	Celebrity	Philosophy and background	Controversy
Composition	Bizarre/	Entertainment		Bizarre/
Elite nations	Unusualness	Surprise	Currency	Unusualness
Negativism	Prominence	Bad news	Controversy	Prominence
personalisation	Magnitude	Magnitude	Bizarre/	Magnitude
	Range	Relevance	Unusualness	Range
		Follow-ups	Prominence	
		Media agenda	Magnitude	
			Range	
OSTGAARD (1965)	MACSHANE (1979)	OKIGBO (1990)	RAMAPRASAD (2006)	BARZILAI-NAHON (2008)
Simplification,	Conflict,	Organisational	Currency	Design &
Identification,	Hardship &	Policy and	Controversy	Policy
Sensationalism	Danger	Philosophy	Bizarre/	
	Unusualness		Unusualness	
	Scandal &		Prominence	
	Individualism		Magnitude	
			Range	

MAIRE, RUHRMANN &KARIN (2008)	MCGREGORY (2002)	SEMMELE (1976)	KALYANGO (2009)	LIPPMANN (1990)
Visualisation Prominence Range	Visualisation Technology Religion	Influence, Personalisation	Audience interest	Sensationalism Proximity Relevance Unambiguity Facticity

2.4 Summary

The gatekeeping process is a collective effort by editors and even journalists. The editors, in conference meeting, jointly determine which stories will appear on the front (Clayman and Reisner, 1998). During the gatekeeping process, the gatekeeper selects information to include in the story, polishes it by adding more detail to it for it to be meaningful, holds back information which does not fit well into the story, creates a tone for the story, makes it suit the preferences of the reader in a given locality or culture and then removes the information which is insignificant. This media routine (Shoemaker et al., 2001:236) is guided by news values (O'Neil & Harcup, 2009) and has the highest influence on news selectivity (Cassidy, 2006:17, Ramaprasad, 2006:11) (Table 1).

Scholars seem to posit that the values lessen the rigidity of the gatekeeping process and choices on how to present the news (news prominence). Their absence or low presence in a news item may lead to the exclusion of such a news item from the possible news selected for publication by the gatekeeper. Even when it is not excluded, the likelihood that such a news item would have a low prominence on a newspaper page is high.

In the context of this study, news values can best be viewed as the qualities embodied in an event which have the greatest influence on media gatekeeping process as to whether a given event is worth publishing as news and with what prominence. That is to say, they serve as a guide for news selectivity and news prominence.

It is however worth noting that there are other forces beside news values such as the professional routines of journalists and the influence (or policies) of the news organization (Ettema & Whitney, 1987, cited in Cassidy, 2006) which also have the potential of influencing the gatekeeping process. (see Table 1 for a catalogue of news selection factors).



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study used content analysis, in-depth interviews and survey methods to examine the criteria used for news selection at the *Daily Graphic*. This is what Wimmer and Dominic (2011: 49) termed triangulation, which refers to the use of both qualitative methods and quantitative methods to fully understand the nature of a research problem. These methods have been used in previous news selectivity studies; for instance, Maier, Ruhrmann & Karin (2008) conducted a content analysis to examine German television news selection, whilst Peterson (1979) employed a survey to study the influence of news values on news selection behaviour of 73 journalists working for *The Times* (London).

Triangulation is used because as Stemler (2001: 17) observed, “in qualitative research, validation takes the form of triangulation”. Triangulation lends credibility to the findings by incorporating multiple sources of data, methods, investigators, or theories (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Validity is usually defined as the degree to which an instrument actually measures what it sets out to measure. “Most descriptive content analyses rely on face validity...” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011: 176). This validation technique assumes that an instrument adequately measures what it purports to measure if the categories are rigidly and satisfactorily defined and if the procedures of the analysis have been adequately conducted. Shapiro & Markoff (1997) add that content analysis itself is valid and meaningful in the sense that the results are related to other measures.

Journalists whose news appeared on the front page and the editors who selected and presented the news were surveyed and interviewed respectively because they constituted a representative sample. In addition, the questions asked were specifically in relation to the theories used in this study which also matched the research questions. Both the journalists and the editors were given the opportunity to express their own opinions about their preferences for topics that deserved being the leads and why they selected certain news items and not others to become leads. Their responses were carefully analysed and conclusions were made based on previous similar studies and theory. Therefore, face validity is highly claimed in this study (for the survey and the in-depth interviews as well).

This chapter describes and discusses the various processes through which data were gathered and analysed for the study.

3.1 In-depth Interview

The in-depth interview is a qualitative approach that provided a depth of understanding and the reasons underlying the selection behaviour of the gatekeepers. The purposive sampling technique was employed for the in-depth interviews. The Deputy Editor, *Daily Graphic* and the General Manager, *The Newspaper* were interviewed. These two persons were selected because they played a vital role in news selection and gatekeeping at the *Graphic*. The general manager was once the editor and he still sits in the editorial conference.

3.2 Content analysis

Content analysis has been defined by Walizer and Wienir (1978, cited in Wimmer and Dominic, 2011; 159) as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information;

Krippendorff (2004, cited in Wimmer and Dominic, 2011: 159) defines it as a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their context whereas Kerlinger (2000) views it as a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. This means that the content to be analysed is selected according to explicit and consistently applied rules; the researcher's personal idiosyncrasies and biases should not enter into the findings. This definition points out the quantifying focus of quantitative research methods and the objectiveness of the findings because the procedures followed in a study must be clearly spelt out.

In this study, front page news items published in the *Daily Graphic* over a period of 12 months were content analysed. Content analysis as a method is said to amply provide answers to the questions a researcher wishes to study (Deacon et al 2007:115 cited in Alowo, 2010: 23).

Neuendorf's (2002, cited in Alowo, 2010: 24) steps of content analysis were used. Consequently, five categories of variables were identified—news prominence, news topics, focus of the news (positive, negative and neutral), type of news and news values. They were operationally defined and measured based on previous studies and theories on news selectivity as guidelines. A coding sheet and a coding book were developed. The coding book used was moulded after Strömbäck's (2008, cited in Alowo, 2010:27) coding book used to study the selection of news in the Swedish media – *Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, TV4 Nyheterna, Expressen, and Aktuellt*. The coding sheet was tested through a pilot content analysis of 30 editions of the *Daily Graphic* to help check intercoder agreement (Tinsley & Weiss, 1975, 2000). Intercoder agreement is needed in content analysis because it measures the “extent to which the different judges tend to assign exactly the same rating to each object” (Tinsley &

Weiss, 2000: 98). It helped the researcher to address issues that would have cropped up in the final study, thus, minimizing delays and waste of time in coding in the final study.

3.3 Unit of analysis

A single news item formed the unit of analysis. This, however, did not encapsulate other items published on the front page such as the editorials, commentaries, and advertisement. “A news item is defined as a piece of information which is at least four lines and longer and has a headline and a by-line (name of the author)” (Alovo, 2010: 24). The headline and the content of the news items selected were studied. However, a cursory look at the stories published in the *Daily Graphic* within the period under review indicated that the staff usually used the inverted pyramid, a traditional form of writing, whereby the most salient parts of a given news item are packed in the first two paragraphs. Therefore, the first four paragraphs were given much consideration.

3.4 Content category system

The news items or variables to be analysed were put into 5 categories as stated earlier. This was done with an assumption that the decision to position a news item prominently or not is a reflection and an emphasis of the newsworthiness certain news items have. So the positioning of the news changes depending on the number of news values present in a story.

An operational definition of each variable was developed in close guidance of its theoretical meaning for it to fit the purpose of the study and to aid coding.

3.5 Operationalization of variables

It is useful for every content category to be thoroughly defined to indicate what type of material is and is not to be included. These form the operational definitions of categories. Categories must be mutually exclusive so that a word, a paragraph or a theme belongs in one and only one category (Chadwick et al., 1984). The categories must also be exhaustive so that all units examined fit in a suitable category. The following operational definitions were adopted in this study.

3.5.1 News values

The following 14 news values were considered:

- 1) Controversy – Disagreement between two or more parties.
- 2) Status of the location/setting – the economic and/or political importance of the setting of the news (whether in Accra, the capital city or another place).
- 3) Influence – Groups and individuals involved in the news item had high social influence
- 4) Prominence – Well-known people both nationally and internationally.
- 5) Personalization – A news item that had a reference to people.
- 6) Action (concreteness of activity) – News about acts or situations with finite verb(s) which have the potential to form mental images in the mind of a reader.
- 7) Range – A given occurrence affects a given number of number of people openly or implicitly
- 8) Surprise – the degree to which an event or situation written about occurred unexpectedly.
- 9) Damage/Failure – A news item that reflects the negative outcome of an event or idea as reported.
- 10) Aggression – threat or use of violence.

11) Threat and risks — News items concerning events and ideas that threaten or put people in a given society at risk. The risks or threats can be economical, physical, medical or psychological in nature.

12) Demonstration — The collective presentation of aims including the announcement of a demonstration.

13) Sex — A news item touching on sexuality and erotic moments, when sexual behaviour, love and relationships are mentioned in the news. This is a reference to amorous and romance rather than gender. Therefore, sexuality in terms of the gender and sex of the people referred to in the news are not coded.

14) Continuity — Topics or issues already in the news.

3.5.2 Prominence of news

(a) lead news— the headline with the biggest (font) size.

(b) second lead— the headline with second biggest (font) size.

(c) third lead— the headline with third biggest (font) size. Any other headline beyond the third one was coded under third lead.

3.5.3 News topics

(1) Internal politics—government acts and politics at district and national levels; legislative activities, Executive activities, Judicial decisions, Constitutional issues, Elections, Political fundraisings and donations, Statements and activities of individual politicians, Political appointments, interparty relations, activities of interest groups, Public opinions pools, Abuse of political power, corruption

(2) Diplomacy and foreign relations-- Activities of international political organizations, diplomatic visits, diplomatic negotiations and agreements, promises of aid and corporation, policy statements, wars between countries.

(3) Military/navy and defence— military activities like war and defence, appointments and firing of military personnel. This category includes both foreign and domestic stories.

(4) Crime/law and order— all crimes stories including criminal proceedings in court and Police involvement.

(5) Accidents and disasters— man-made accidents and natural disasters like earthquakes, droughts, and plane crashes.

(6) Public healthcare and Welfare— health, diseases, poverty, public welfare, social and safety measures, welfare of children and marriage and marriage relations.

(7) Education — Education, teachers, national examination results, relations between parents and teachers and religion.

(8) Land— land titles and reforms.

(9) Others— this includes news items that do not fall under in any of the above categories.

3.5.4 Direction/focus of news

1. Positive News: Stories about peace, unity, patriotism within the country and between nations and nationals, cooperation, development, economic growth, and easing of tensions.

2. Negative News: Stories about dispute, conflict, crisis, border disputes, human or natural disasters, poverty, disease, dumping of toxic waste, smuggling, frauds and scandals.

3. Neutral: “Stories that did not fall into any of the two categories” (Pate, 1992: 64).

3.5.5 News type

1. Soft news: light or spicy news that does not need to be reported immediately or at all, e.g. celebrity gossip, man and human interest stories (Alowo, 2010); news that needs urgent publication for its wide public interest and not because of its inherent significance (death or arrest of a major thug, or a celebrity) or for professional reasons (exclusive scoop involving say, a university lecturer, a top civil servant);

2. Hard news: important news, especially those concerning politics, economics, society (education, welfare), or the environment needing immediate attention in view of its influence or repercussions on the public and the general society; a breaking, unexpected event that need to be reported immediately because of its enormous effect on a great number of the public and/or the environment; natural disasters (such as a volcanic, tsunami, earthquake), epidemic outbreak, terror attack and fire outbreak are likely to receive urgent reportage; novelty, discovery or report about an on-going story which has great importance for the majority of people in society and/or the environment.

3.6 Sampling technique

A composite week was constructed to get a representative sample. Riffe, Aust, and Lacy (1993, cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2011: 163) demonstrated that a composite week sampling technique was superior to both a random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing

with newspaper content. For example, a study might use a sample of one Monday (drawn at random from the number of possible Mondays in the month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on, until all weekdays have been included (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011: 163).

The universe was publications of the *Daily Graphic* spanning January 1 to December 31, 2012. Using the constructed composite week, six editions were selected from each month and that amounted to 72 editions for the sample size (for the content analysis). And 202 news items were analysed (see Appendix I for the list of news items studied). Using Wimmer and Dominick's (2011: 163) example as a model, a sample of one Monday (drawn at random from the number of possible Mondays in the month), one Tuesday (drawn from the available Tuesdays), and so on, was considered until all weekdays including Saturdays had been included for the month of January (see Appendix I for the 72 editions and the list of news items studied). This was applied to all the twelve months.

3.7 Survey

In addition to the publications, the journalists or news gatherers, whose by-lines appeared in the news items of the selected sample, were interviewed using a questionnaire (see Appendix IV). In all, 62 journalists were interviewed using the questionnaire.

3.8 Analysis of data and presentation

A priori coding approach was employed in coding the data. Here, the categories are established prior to the analysis based upon some theory. Professional colleagues agree on the categories,

and the coding is applied to the data. Revisions are made as necessary, and the categories are tightened up to the point that maximizes mutual exclusivity and exhaustiveness (Weber, 1990).

First, the data were entered into paper coding sheets and then into the computer for analysis and construction of tables and graphs. Computer programmes such as SPSS and MS Excel were used because as Neuendorf (2002:40, cited in Alowo, 2010: 30) notes, “the notion of the completely “automatic” content analysis via computer is a chimera ... The human contribution to content analysis is still paramount.” The possibility of human errors in coding was mitigated by first, double checking the variable coded against the operational definitions and second, by running an intra-coder reliability test to test consistency in the measurement of the variables.

Responses to open-ended questions were classified according to themes and topics which included news beats, news values, and news type among others. The qualitative data assembled through the in-depth interviews were also put under themes and topics and were quoted extensively to buttress the reasons advanced by the interviewees as being the underlying factors for news selection and/or thwarting of other news items. This categorization involves identification of commonalities and differences in the responses, grouping similar ideas and themes and putting together points that could be used to draw conclusions and direct quotations.

The data were presented using frequencies, descriptive statistics and cross tabulations. These were calculated to establish the link between news prominence and the news topics and news values. Tables and graphs were used to present the data because they are convenient for the presentation of analysed data. They were labelled appropriately to eschew or minimize misreading or misinterpretations. To make the findings easy to read and understand, the data (responses to open-ended and closed-ended questions) were explained in a narrative form (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001:234, cited in Alowo, 39).

3.9 Reliability

According to Weber (1990: 12), "To make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: Different people should code the same text in the same way." Weber (1990: 15) further notes that, problems with reliability are usually associated with the ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules. In this study, reliability was discussed in terms of intracoder reliability.

Intracoder reliability might be assessed in circumstances where only a few coders are used to avoid the cost of training coders for the coding. To test intracoder reliability, the same individual codes a set of data twice, at different times, and the reliability statistics are computed using the two sets of results (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011: 175).

One way to measure reliability is to measure the per cent of agreement between ratters. This involves simply adding up the number of cases that were coded the same way by the two ratters and dividing by the total number of cases. The problem with a per cent agreement approach, however, is that it does not account for the fact that ratters are expected to agree with each other a certain percentage of the time simply based on chance (Cohen, 1960). Holsti (1969) reports this formula for determining the reliability of nominal data in terms of percentage of agreement:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

where M is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree, and $N1$ and $N2$ are the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder, respectively.

“As a rule of thumb, most published content analyses typically report a minimum reliability coefficient of about 90% or above when using Holsti’s formula,” (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011:

175). Neuendorf (2002, cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2011: 175) proposes the following guidelines: Coefficients of .90 or greater are nearly always acceptable, .80 or greater is acceptable in most cases, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices.

Using Holsti's (1969) formula, a reliability coefficient of .965 was realised. This was calculated as below:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Reliability} &= \frac{2(195)}{202 + 202} \\ &= 390/404 = .965\end{aligned}$$

Though, this study is likely to lend itself to easy replication, reliability in respect of the survey and in-depth interview results can be challenging in the sense that the respondent are likely to give diverse answers to the open-ended questions and the questions in the interview guide. In effect, varying results might be arrived at. This is likely to affect the degree of the reliability of those results.

3.10 Scope of the study

News values published between 1st January, 2012 and 31st December, 2012 were content analysed and journalists whose news items were published were surveyed. The Deputy Editor, *Daily Graphic* and the General Manager, *Daily Graphic* were also interviewed.

The study examine the criteria that govern the selection of news items for the front page of the *Daily Graphic* in the face of many news items that reach the editorial table. However, scholars have found that assessing the newsworthiness of news items using news values is perhaps the

most important (Fahmy, Kelly & Kim 2007: 548, cited in Alowo, 2010: 6). Therefore, this study principally focused on news values.



CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

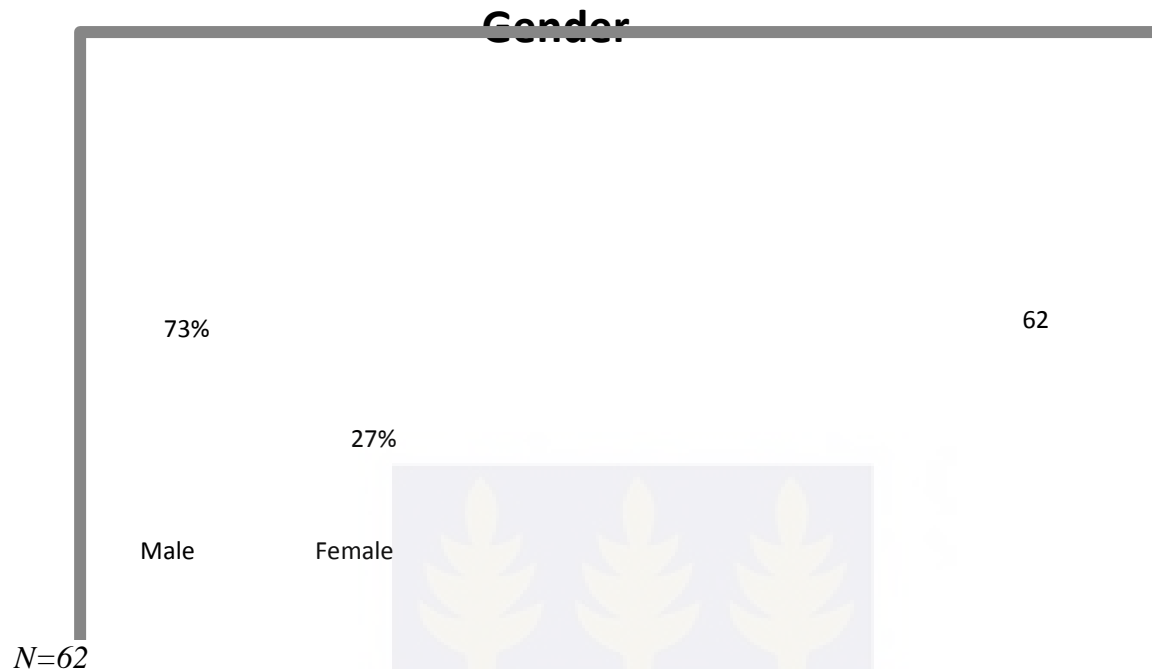
4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative and the qualitative data gathered during the study. As stated elsewhere, the cardinal aim of this study was to examine the content of the front page of the *Daily Graphic* with a focus on news values. This is to help ascertain the criteria used in determining what news item should go on the front page of *The Newspaper*.

In all, 202 news items were content analysed (Appendix I) to establish their news values or characteristics. In addition to the content analysis, 62 journalists and two editors were surveyed and interviewed respectively.

4.1 Demographic information

Most of the 62 news gatherers were males (73%) while 17 were females (27%). The majority of the respondents were aged between 19 and 29 representing 45 per cent of the total respondents, while 35 per cent were aged between 30 and 41. Fifteen per cent of the respondents were within the age bracket of 42-51 while five per cent reported to be aged between 52 and 61.

Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents

Eighty per cent (80%) of the respondents were reporters, five per cent were freelance journalists while seven per cent were photojournalists and remaining eight per cent were copy writers. Ninety-three per cent (93%) of the respondents had received tertiary education while the per cent had done some certificate courses. The majority of the respondents majored in print journalism (80%) and 10 per cent majored in electronic journalism. Ten per cent majored in other fields like education, economics and so on. The majority of the respondents had worked at the *Daily Graphic* for an average of eight years. Fifty-five per cent (55%) of all the respondents reported 16 years of experience in journalism. Thirty per cent (30%) gave a range of 8 and 15 years of experience in journalism whilst 10% failed to indicate their years of professional experience. Three per cent had practiced journalism for less than five years. It is intriguing to know that two of the respondents had been practicing journalism for thirty years.

Findings from the demographic information of the respondents show that print journalism is gradually being dominated by formally trained professionals.

The finding that the majority of the respondents were males buttresses the assertion by earlier scholars that journalism has long been a male domain and women started getting actively involved in the field during the first and second world wars (Lee and Man 2008:6, cited in Alowo, 2010). This finding is similar to the result of Mwesige's study of professionalism of Ugandan journalists that showed that the typical description of a journalist is that he is male, university graduate and is averagely 31 years old with experience of seven years in the profession (Mwesige, 2004:77).

4.2 Content analysis results

A content analysis was carried out to provide answers to the following research questions:

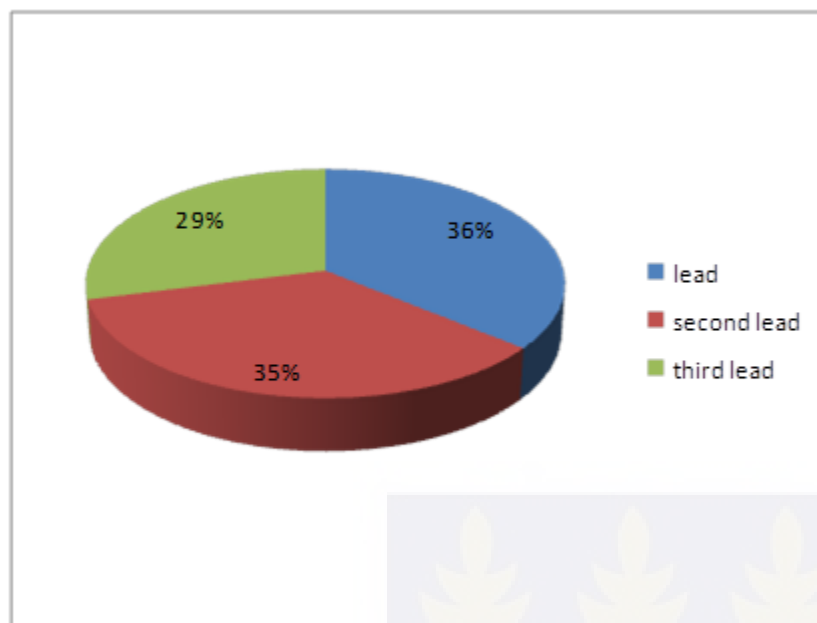
1. What are the most common news values and topics in the news presented prominently on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*?
2. Does a news item with many news values become the lead news?

Five categories were analysed, namely: the news topics, news type, news focus or direction, news values and the news prominence.

4.2.1 News items on the front page

The average number of news items ran on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* each day was three. There were however, two cases of four news stories on the front page (6th January, 2012; 25th June, 2012). There was also a case where only one news story was published on the front page (9th August, 2012).

Figure 2: The prominence of news stories on the front page



N=202

As shown in Figure 2, 36 per cent of news items analysed was presented prominently while 35 per cent and 29 per cent came second and third respectively. The two cases where there was a fourth lead story they (the fourth lead stories) were analysed under third lead since they had almost the same font size.

4.2.2 The most common news topics

News about internal politics emerged the most prevalent (55.4%) (see Table 2). This was followed by news on crime, law and order (12.9%). The third most covered news topic was public healthcare and welfare (9.4%) followed by the category dubbed other (7.9%)

Table 2: Frequency of news topics

Topic	Frequency	Per cent
internal politics	112	55.4%
accident and disasters	15	7.4%
military/navy and defence	1	5%
diplomacy and foreign relations	6	3%
public healthcare and welfare	19	9.4%
education	7	3.5%
crime/law and order	26	12.9%
other	16	7.9%
Total	202	100.0%

This table shows the most covered news topics. N=202

Accidents and disasters (7.4%) was the fifth most prevalent news topic with education (3.5%) being the next most common news topic as shown in Table 2. Military, navy and defence was (0.5%) while no news was covered on land, entertainment, fashion and beauty shows on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*.

A cross-tabulation of news topics and news prominence (Table 3) revealed that although there was some mix of topics, news stories about internal politics, crime, law and order, and public health and welfare and accidents and disasters were likely to be presented more prominently than other topics. Election related issues, court cases, the funeral of the late President Mills, activities of political parties, accidents and corruption dominated the political topics presented on the front page. Surprisingly, although the *Daily Graphic* is a state-owned newspaper, its front page news

stories presented a panorama of issues and not only the activities of the government. This could only be explained in the sense that The *Newspaper* operated as a profit limited liability company and survives on sales from its selling copies. Thus, ownership did not have influence on news selection at the *Daily Graphic*. Besides, the National Media Commission (NMC) also insulates the *Daily Graphic* from governmental control so although state-owned, there is no direct interference.

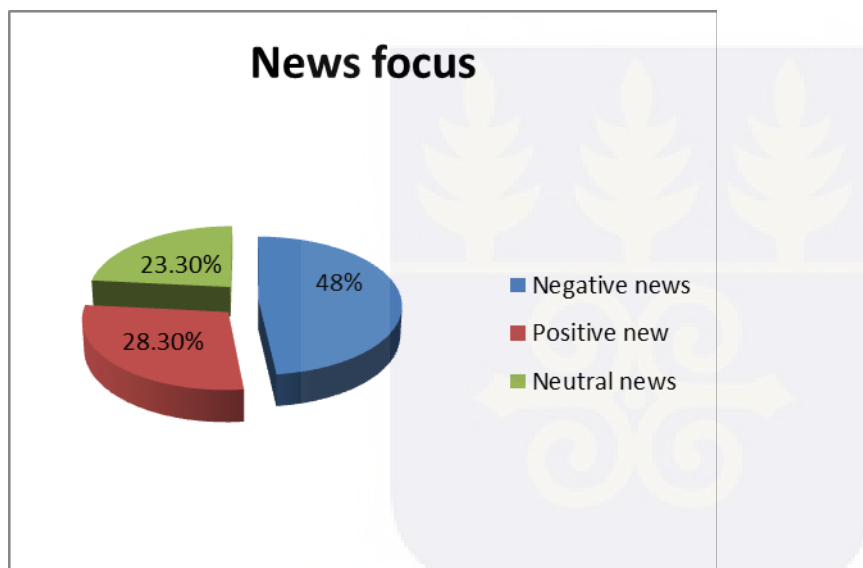
Table 3: Showing a cross tabulation of the most common news topics and news prominence

News topics (count)	News prominence (count & %)			Total
	lead	second lead	third lead	
internal politics	41 56.9%	35 49.3%	36 61.0%	112 55.4%
accident and disasters	3 4.2%	8 11.3%	4 6.8%	15 7.4%
military/navy and defense	1 1.4%	0 .0%	0 .0%	1 .5%
diplomacy and foreign relations	1 1.4%	4 5.6%	1 1.7%	6 3.0%
public healthcare and welfare	5 6.9%	8 11.3%	6 10.2%	19 9.4%
education	2 2.8%	2 2.8%	3 5.1%	7 3.5%
crime/law and order	11 15.3%	8 11.3%	7 11.9%	26 12.9%
other	8 11.1%	6 8.5%	2 3.4%	16 7.9%
Total	72 100.0%	71 100.0%	59 100.0%	202 100.0%

4.2.3 The focus of the news stories

Negative news, which encapsulated stories about misunderstanding, conflict, diseases, natural and human disasters, frauds and scandals was given much focus on the front page (48.0%). Positive news (news about development, economic growth, easing of tension, harmony and justice) came second (28.7%) followed by neutral news (23.3%) as shown in figure 2.

Figure 3: Focus of the news



N=202

A cross tabulation of news focus and news prominence showed that about 50 per cent of the lead news had a negative focus (see Table 4). This finding supports Hakins's (1981:3, cited in Alowo, 2010: 45) observation that negative news is more prominently presented than any other news in both newspapers and television. The finding also corroborates Hall et al's (1978, cited in Alowo, 2010: 45) contention that negativity is the most common news value. Perhaps, the *Daily Graphic* which survives on sales from copies that are sold out each day, agrees with Hartley (1982, cited

in Alowo, 2010: 45) that “bad news sells because it is —good news... [It’s] unambiguous... it happens quickly... [And] it is consonant”

Again, as observed by Schwartz (2005), negative news was dominant in the lead news because journalists find it easy and simple to write about. They also understand such news better and are able to frame an idea or opinion. This helps them to give to the public a message that is devoid of ambiguity.

Table 4: a cross tabulation of news focus and news prominence

	News focus			Total
	positive news	Negative news	neutral news	
News prominence				
lead	19	37	16	72
second lead	25	34	12	71
third lead	14	26	19	59
Total	58	97	47	202

This table shows the most covered news focus and news prominence, N=202

4.2.4 The most common news type

The majority of the news items found on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* were hard news.

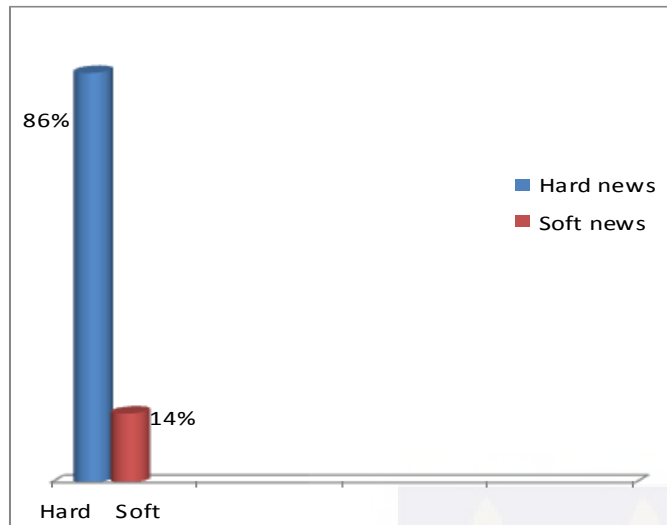
Figure 4: Showing the most common news type

Figure 3 shows that almost nine out of every ten news items (86%) published on the front page was hard news. The *Daily Graphic* which has become synonymous with *The Newspaper* is a state-owned newspaper considered as an elite newspaper dealing with serious and important matters in and around the country. It is therefore not surprising that *The Newspaper* concentrated on hard news.

This finding is consistent with results from other research that found that the elite press lay emphasis on hard news regarding topics like politics because it considers its democratic watchdog role as being the most important (Nir, 1984, cited in Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky, 2010:43). The prevalence of hard news can also be attributable to elitism of the crop of people written about. According to Strömbäck (2008:19, cited in Alowo, 2010: 46), the media which concentrates most on hard news has a propensity to cover events and activities involving influential people. Hartley (1982, cited in Alowo, 2010: 46) considers such influential people as elites whose actions are presumed as having more impact on the public vis-à-vis the actions of

other people. Soft news (news on human interest stories, entertainment, fashion, and beauty) were however, captured in other pages of the newspaper.

4.2.5 What are the most common news values?

Figure 4 shows that influence, range, prominence, status of location, action and personalization were the six most important news values presented on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*. The least frequent criteria used to select news were aggression and demonstration with less than two per cent (1.11%) and less than one per cent (0.46%) respectively. The news value of sex (eroticism and sexuality) was not found. This finding supports Maier, Ruhrmann and Karin's (2008) findings of their study of news values for Television news. Maier and her colleagues found influence, prominence, action, damage/failure, range, visualization and success/usefulness as being relevant news values for both public and private television.

News values of range (15.8%) and influence (15.8%) were the most common. This could mean that groups and individuals with high social power (influence—15.8%) also accounted for part of the news. As a state newspaper, the *Daily Graphic* also tasks itself with the responsibility of reaching out to the vast majority of the public with information that is of interest to the general public by focusing on news items with high range. The news value of range which represented 15.8 per cent of the total news values in the news presented on the front page is among the six most significant news values. This finding has a correlation with earlier studies like those of Galtung & Ruge (1965), O'Neil & Harcup (2001, cited in Braun, 2009), Maier, Ruhrmann & Karin (2009). The consequence of news with this quality usually affects a great number of the population. Examples of such news were the election petitions concerning the Biometric registration and the Legislative Instruments for both the Biometric registration and the creation

of new constituencies in the country. Another example was the news on the death and funeral of the Late President Mills. Such news stories have magnitude.

As noted earlier by Gans (1979), Galtung & Ruge (1965), Peterson (1979) and Maier, Ruhrmann & Karin (2008) in their study of news values in the Western media, the news presented on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* during the period under review turned out to be about prominent people like the Late President Mills, leaders of the various political parties, businessmen and women, and heads of institutions who are known in the media circles. Prominence accounted for 13.3 per cent of the news displayed on the front page. This revelation is consistent with Gans' (1979) finding that news was about prominent people (the 'Knowns') while the ordinary people (the 'Unknowns') accounted for only 20 per cent of the local news. Gans carried out the study to determine the actors in the news broadcast by two major American television stations. The majority of the ordinary people whose names appeared in the news were mentioned not because of their prominence or influence but because their actions were against the social norms and law and order therefore they were prevalent in crime news. For example, fetish priest who exposed three suspected murderers was the second lead because those three ordinary people whose names were mentioned in the news had flouted the law and the woman they killed was a victim of crime (March, 31, 2012). These findings suggest that the media put emphasis on the few "Knowns", relegating the "Unknowns" who are the majority. In effect, the media through their gatekeeping role, determine which news should be allowed through the 'gates' to the public and those to be excluded.

At least (10.3%) of the stories reported took place in the capital city, Accra (Status of Location). The Graphic Communications Group Limited, the company that runs the *Daily Graphic* is

located in Accra. This could be partly due to the fact that the majority of reporters and writers of the newspaper work in the offices in Accra. It was also obvious from the content analysis that the biggest sources of news come from Accra, perhaps because of the city's political and economic importance. For example, all branches of government, the state bureaucracy, as well as the press where the government meets the press to brief journalists about its activities are all located in Accra. News with concrete action (9.8%) was among six prevalent news values embodied in the news stories presented on the front page. This finding shows that people prefer news with concrete actions (e.g. a court ruling, a dispute between members of political parties and a futile car accident or plane crash) to those news stories that merely describe situations or processes because such news lend themselves to easy understanding.

News value of personalisation (9%) was also found to be prevalent in the news. Here the individuals were the focus of the news rather than their organisations or the role they played for their organizations or groups. Such news is usually soft therefore its prevalence in the news is surprising as compared to the finding of this research that more than eight in every 10 (85.6%) news stories displayed on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* were hard news. The prevalence of the news value of personalisation in the news could best be explained by the newspaper's special 'home style' of reporting some soft news (celebrity gossip, 'man bites dog' news, the death or arrest of a celebrity) on weekends (Fridays and Saturdays) with the chief aim of helping people to relax at home and enjoy themselves. Continuity accounted for a little above six per cent (6.1%) of the news presented on the front page.

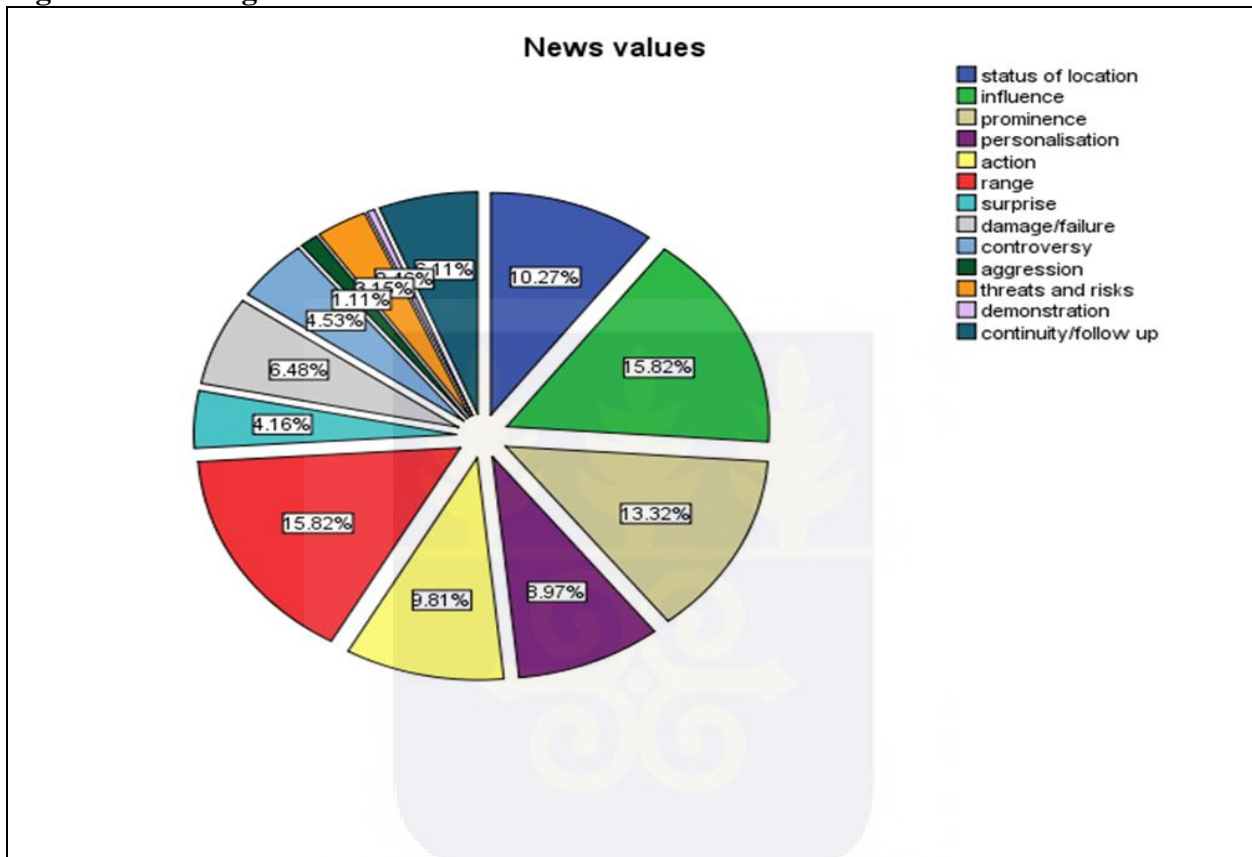
Though eighth most common news value, the presence of continuity as a news value in the news replicates the findings by O'Neil and Hiccup (2001, cited in Allow, 2010: 48-50) who also found

it among the seven most common news values on the front pages of UK newspapers when they were examining Gatling & Ruge's (1965) set of news values. This finding suggests that the *Daily Graphic* first breaks news and follows it to validate the earlier newsworthiness of such an article. Journalists and editors of newspapers monitor and keep records of events already making the news and update the public on such events as they unfold. The coverage of the death and burial of the Late President Mills by the *Daily Graphic* is an example of continuity as a news value.

A number of news stories were presented in the newspaper not because of their positive effects but rather for their negative ramifications. Such news items, which represented over six per cent (6.5%) of the news covered, are said to contain the news factor of damage/failure. The presence of this news value can be attributed to the frequency of negative news in the newspaper and it is associated with what Galtung and Ruge (1965) termed as bad news. This finding, however, contradicts Alowo's (2010: 46) finding that positive news was the most prevalent in the Ugandan national newspaper, *The New Vision*. News about ideas, events, and happenings that pose potential threats or risks not restricted to economic, physical, medical or psychological to people in a given society were also published. This attribute constituted less than three per cent (3.1%) of the total news values. Based on this finding one can say that the gatekeepers were fulfilling their watchdog role in the society by monitoring the happenings around the world and alerting the people. This explains why Shoemaker and Cohen (2006:3) describe newsmen and women as professional surveyors for the public. News clearly presenting different opinions of more than one party or judicial conflicts (controversy—4.5%) was displayed on the front page. Controversy or conflict is one of the most agreed upon news values (Zhang et al., 2006:75, cited in Alowo, 2010: 52). Its presence goes to affirm that old axiom of the media that —if it bleeds it leads. Controversy as a news value is important during the news selection process because according to

Gans (1979: 35, cited in Alowo, 2010: 52) controversy, especially in politics, attracts the attention of readers.

Figure 5: Showing the news values in the news



This chart represents the percentages of news values in news. Note: sexuality/eroticism as a news value was not presented on the front page.

The news value of surprise recorded a little above four per cent (4.2%). This finding is similar to the results of earlier studies by scholars like Galtung & Ruge (1965), Peterson (1979) and Maier, Ruhrmann & Karin (2008). Perhaps such news is published because people naturally tend to remember negative news stories which are usually unexpected events or occurrences than positive news (Strömbäck 2008:32, cited in Alowo, 2010: 49). In effect, the finding here

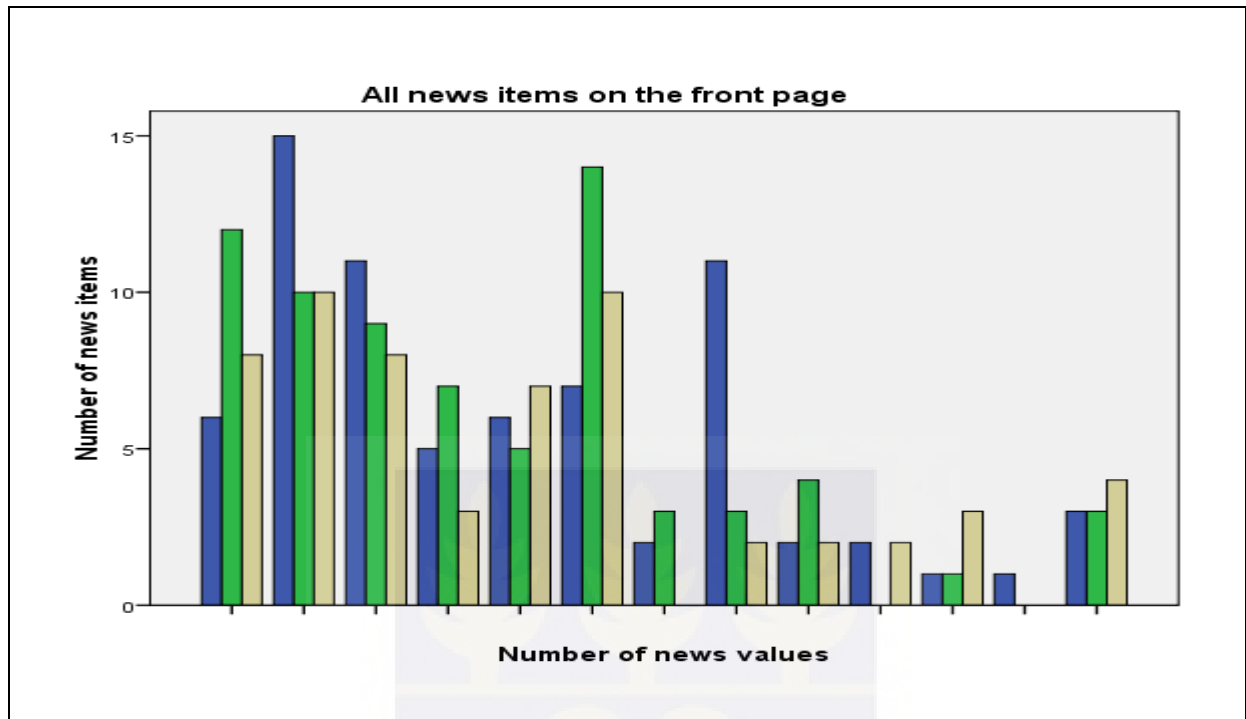
suggests that journalist and editors prefer giving their audiences news that they can remember easily.

As already indicated, the study found that news involving the use of violence (aggression—1.11%) and demonstration (0.46%) were also published on the front page but at a minimal level. Aggression, which refers to the outcomes of violent behaviour like civil wars and ethnic conflict was minimal because there was no civil war in Ghana during the period under review however, there were pockets of ethnic conflict. Demonstration was less than one per cent because even though it was an election year, there were not many instances of demonstration or that the state-owned newspaper did cover many of such news. It could also be such news were placed in different pages suggesting that the editors at *the Graphic* do not give much prominence to such news. Besides these reasons, the death and burial of the late President Mills could have also contributed to that as many Ghanaians saw the period as a moment for unity and peace among all Ghanaians, especially members of the various political parties. The news value of sex (eroticism and sexuality) was not found on the front page of the *Daily Graphic*. Such news (sexuality and other entertainment events) are presented in different pages.

4.2.6 Do news stories with more news values become the leads?

The research was also conducted to establish the correlation between the number of news values in a given news item and its prominence (how it is presented on the front page). The study found that each news item on the front page had an average of five news values (see Figure 5).

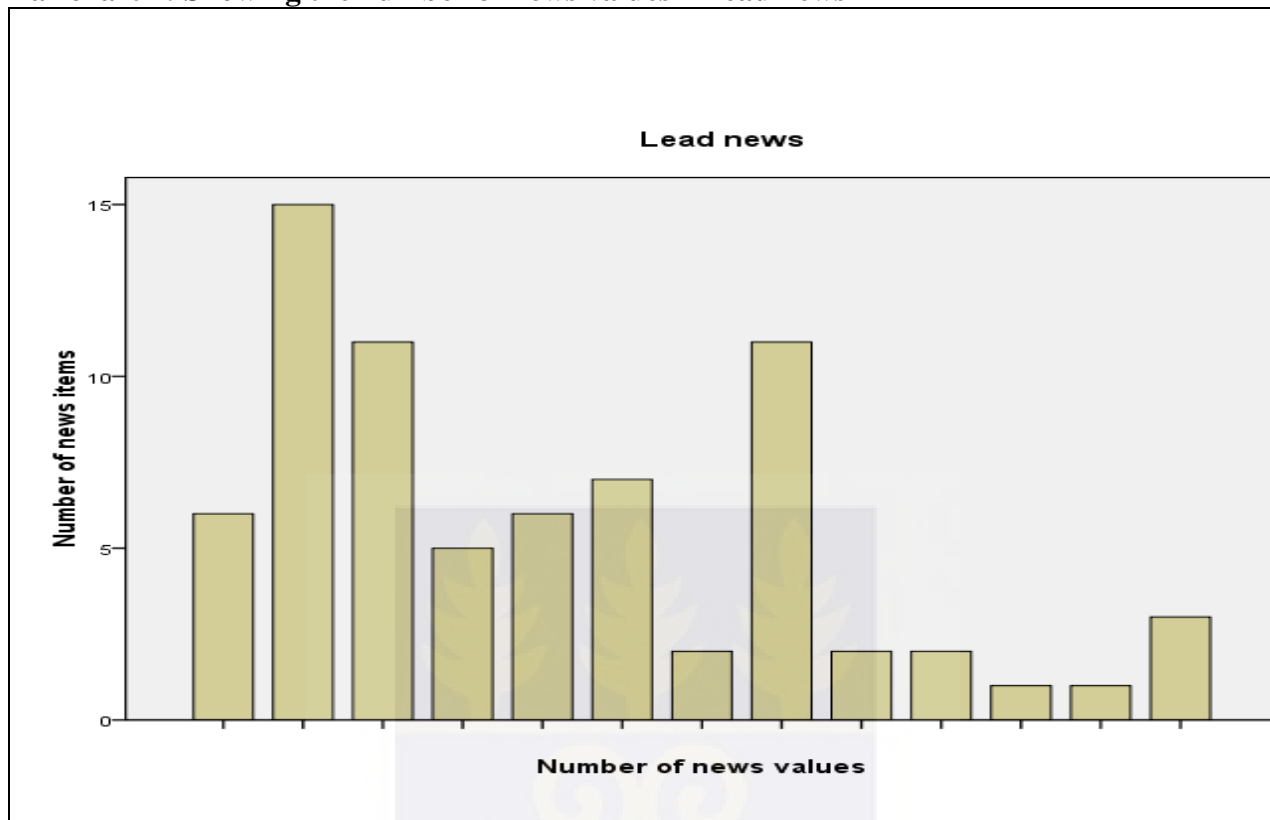
Bar chart 1: Showing the average number of news values in news items



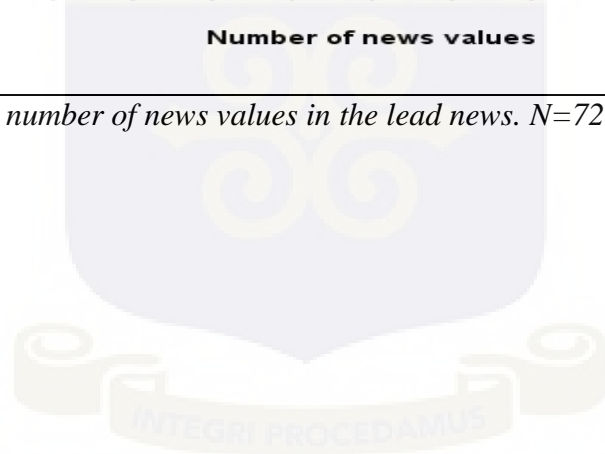
This chart represents the number of news values in the news.

Even though a news item should embody an average of five news values for it to be published on the front page, a news item did not have to possess the highest number of news values to become the lead. As indicated by Bar chart 2, a news item with one or two news values could be chosen as the lead depending on the prevailing atmosphere in the society and the gatekeepers' decision. This finding is inconsistent with earlier studies that found that news items with more news values easily pass through the news gate (Galtung & Ruge 1965). This finding could also be attributable to what Hasty (2006: 74) termed "the house-style of the newspaper [the *Daily Graphic*]."

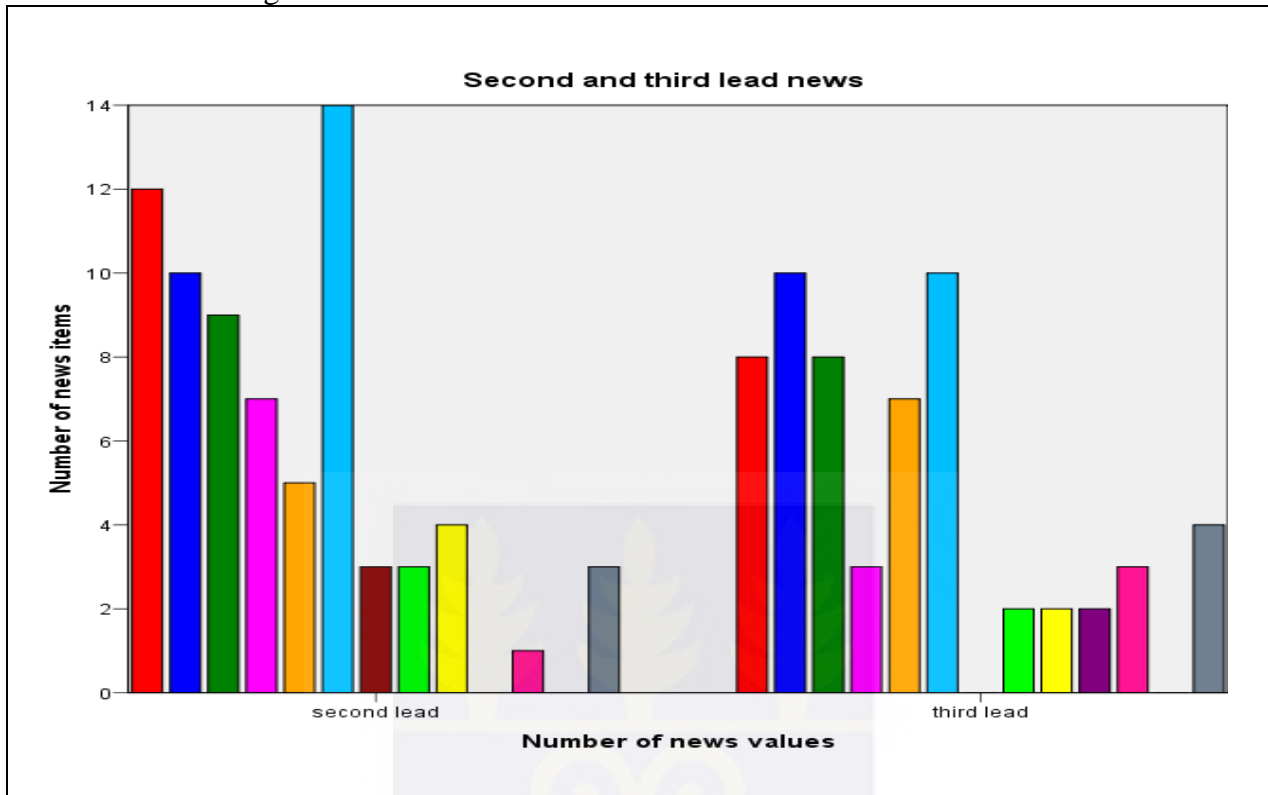
Bar chart 2: Showing the number of news values in lead news



This chart represents the number of news values in the lead news. N=72



Bar chart 3: Showing the number of news values in other news stories



This chart represents the number of news values in other new stories. $N=130$

4.3 Survey

A survey was conducted to provide answers to the following research questions:

3. Are there any specific guidelines influencing news selection at the *Daily Graphic*?
4. Do journalistic choices of news gatherers (writers, reporters etc.) match those of news processors (editors and copy readers)?
5. Why do certain news items and not others reach the editor's desk?

In all, 62 out of the 66 journalists whose by-lines appeared under the stories published on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* in the year 2012 were surveyed. The other four could not be reached because two of them had left the paper while the other two were far from the location of

the researcher. The demographic data of the respondents included age, gender, experience in journalism, academic level, the beat and major course of study.

4.3.1 News beats

From the data collected from the survey, nine types of writer/reporter beats were identified. Apart from the thirteen per cent (13%) who had not specialised in any beat, all the other respondents (87%) had specialised in some beats. Twenty-three per cent of the respondents had crime/law and order as their beat. Thus, they report about all crime related issues including criminal proceedings in court. The political beat, which includes those engaged in parliamentary activities, was twenty per cent (20%) while eight per cent (8%) reported on business, which included the national budget and the governmental financial and economic affairs. Health as a beat was reported by fifteen per cent (15%) of the respondents while two per cent (2%) said they reported on environmental issues. Others were sports (3%), education (12%) and entertainment (2%). Two per cent of the respondent also reported that oil and gas was their beat. The beat system helps to understand why some reporters and writers concentrate on some news topic or institutions most often.

The majority of the respondents working on the crime and political beats provided a good explanation for the prevalence of news about internal politics and crime on the front page found in the content analysis. Thus, the beat determines and guarantees what is covered in newspapers. One of the journalists gave the following explanation for the prevalence of political issues in the news.

“We all know that many people are increasingly becoming interested in politics. Activities of the government affect almost everybody so naturally you expect people to

pay attention. And not something about some musician who has released a new album or say a man somewhere who slaps the wife”

4.3.2 Are there any specific guidelines influencing news selection at the *Daily Graphic*?

The journalists were asked to indicate whether there was any written document guiding the selection of news at the *Daily Graphic* and how that affected them in their work. Ninety-five per cent of the respondents answered in the negative. Five per cent (5%), however, indicated that there was an editorial policy which governed how the “final news” was selected for publication. This revelation of the “final news” being decided at an editorial meeting is consistent with the editors’ submission that news selection at the *Daily Graphic* is generally open, however, what finally comes out or is published on the front page is determined at an editorial conference held every day. In effect, news selection at *Graphic* is left to the discretion of the reporters and the writers but what is finally allowed through the ‘news gate’ is editorial role. This finding also suggests that the influence of ownership on news selection is very minimal or does not even exist at all at the *Daily Graphic*. Though, a state-owned newspaper, the *Daily Graphic* operates as an independent entity surviving on selling copy.

4.3.3 Do journalistic choices of news gatherers (writers, reporters etc.) match those of news processors (editors and copy readers)?

This question was meant to establish the relationship between the journalistic choices of news gatherers and news processors. The journalists, like the editors, were asked to indicate the most important news values the lead news should have and the topics they preferred to be the lead news

The finding shows that the majority of the journalists (85%) reported the news value of range as being extremely important. This value was followed by influence (80%), prominence (70%) and continuity (65%). Controversy, status of location and concreteness of activity were each reported by sixty per cent (60%) of the respondents. Risks and threats followed with fifty-five per cent (55%) while surprise, damage/failure and aggression were each reported by forty per cent (40%) of the respondents. Twenty per cent (20%) of the journalists ranked personalisation as being extremely important. Interestingly none of the respondents reported sexuality/eroticism as being extremely important for a front page publication. The inclusion of sex (sexuality/eroticism) in the survey was to confirm or prove otherwise its absence in the content analysis. The finding therefore confirms the outcome of the content analysis that news about celebrities is not given much prominence at the *Daily Graphic*.

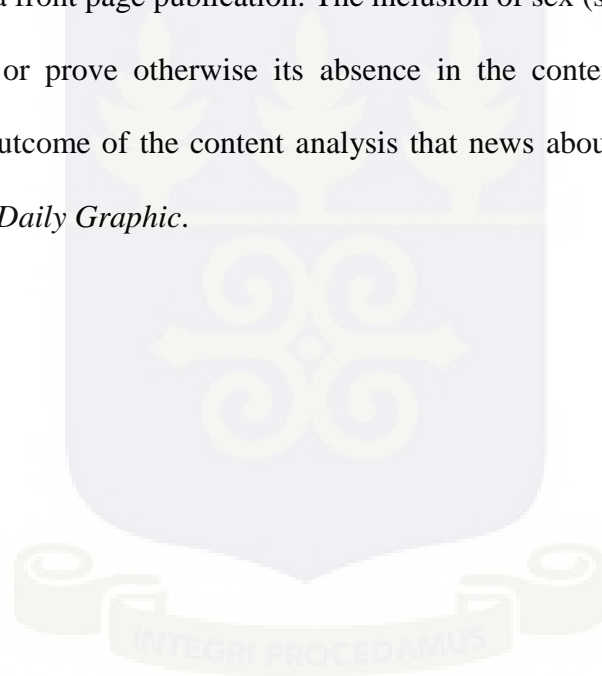


Table 5: Importance of news values to the journalist and the editor

News values	Journalists (%)	Editors (%)
status of the location	60.00	50.00
Influence	80.00	100.00
risks and threat	55.00	100.00
Prominence	70.00	100.00
personalisation	20.00	50.00
Concreteness of activity	60.00	50.00
range	85.00	100.00
surprise	40.00	50.00
damage/failure	40.00	50.00
controversy	60.00	100.00
aggression	40.00	50.00
Continuity	65.00	100.00
Sex	0.00	100.00

The journalists' choices of news topics relevant for first, second or third lead were similar to those chosen by the editors and they also reflected their ranking of the various news values as being extremely important for a front page publication. However, the responses given by some of the respondents suggest that the selection of the lead news topic is a prerogative of the editor(s). This observation highlights one of the weaknesses pointed out by the gatekeeping theory that only a handful of gatekeepers, who constitute just a few elites have the prerogative to select,

refine and sort news in the way they deem fit. This implies that the public is likely to be fed with or receive information which is only in the interest of the gatekeepers and their organizations. And this is likely to limit their decision.

Table 6: News topics and news prominence

News topics	Lead
internal politics	26%
Accident and disasters	17%
Military/navy and defence	3.4%
Diplomacy/foreign relations	3.1%
Public healthcare/Welfare	20%
Education	15%
Crime/law and order	11%
Other	4.5%

Table 6, shows that the majority of the journalists identified political news (26%) as the one which qualifies most to be the lead news. This topic included judicial proceedings, parliamentary or legislative instruments, activities of political parties and corruption. This was followed by health (20%) with respondents arguing that when health problems are highlighted they attract

government attention. Responses on human rights were analysed under this topic. News about accident and disasters were also reported to be lead news by seventeen per cent (17%) of the respondents while education and crime/law were endorsed by fifteen per cent (15%) and eleven per cent (11%) respectively. About five per cent (5%) of the respondents thought every event with some news values could become the lead.

An interesting deduction from the above observation is that through political reporting, the *Daily Graphic* informs and educates the public about the policies and other activities of government as well as the actions of the people who make the laws that govern the country.

4.3.4 Why certain news items reach the editors desk

The news item which is finally presented more prominently on the front page is called the lead story or news. Several responses were given by the news gatherers on why they submit certain news stories to the editors for consideration as the lead news and not others. An assessment of the responses revealed that certain news items reach the editor's desk because of the news values they possess. The news values identified by the majority of the journalists were currency, impact/relevance, magnitude/range, prominence, unusualness/surprise, controversy/conflict and influence. Some also argued that personalization, influence and prominence were important news values because important personalities or VIPs so to speak, are news makers. The perceptions that came out of the survey that news values are major determinants of what news items reach the editors' desk correspond with arguments advanced by scholars like Galtung & Ruge (1965) among others who claim that news values qualify an event or situation worth for publication. Particularly, the journalists attach much importance to news items which have an effect on the public, the influence of the people involved in the events, situation and ideas they write about,

the nature of news and proximity which can be understood as the physical distance between an event, person or idea and the news media's office. For the audience, proximity may imply that things that happen within their vicinity are newsworthy because they are relevant to them, while for the media organization, the costs of covering such events would be minimal, thus implying that the nearer the event to the media organization, the more newsworthy it becomes.

The study also found that breaking news, which is part of what Tuchman (1973, cited in Alowo, 2010: 63) calls developing news which concerns emergent situations, is more likely to be received by editors and also to become the lead news. An example of this kind of news is the one carried in the newspaper concerning the death of President Evans Atta Mills. This situation occurred unexpectedly (SURPRISE) it was RECENT or TIMELY and it involved a president of a nation (prominence), he was the head of ruling party and the president (INFLUENCE). Besides that, someone had died and it was bad news (NEGATIVITY) which concerned the entire Ghanaian populace and even other countries (RANGE). From the few news values identified in this news item, it appears that breaking news has many news attributes which scholars like Galtung & Ruge (1965), O'Neil and Harcup (2001 cited in Alowo, 2010: 63) and Maier, Ruhrmann & Karin (2008) among others say qualify an event, idea or situation to be newsworthy.

Although it seemingly appears that a news item having news values warrants page-one treatment, there is no doubt that what qualifies a given news item to reach the editor's desk is more complex than it appears. This perspective is in the sense that other qualities other than news values were cited as determining what news items are delivered to the editors. Such qualities included a news item having the ability to influence decision making and also a potential to

appeal to the readers and also generate public debate. It should be noted that because news gatherers overemphasized news values given news stories had as the major quality of the news, it does not necessarily mean that other issues undermine them as the major basis for why certain news items and not others reach the editors desk. From this observation, it appears that the other qualities are more of secondary while news values are primary.

4.4 In-depth interview

As indicated earlier, two in-depth interviews were conducted to specifically address the research question below:

6. Why do editors give prominence to certain news items on the front-page?

Beyond providing information for the analysis of this question, the in-depth interviews were also meant to provide data to augment the survey results and aid the analysis of research questions three, four and five.

Originally, the researcher intended to interview the news editor and the editor of the *Daily Graphic*. However, the editor was difficult to find so the deputy editor (*Daily Graphic*) and the general manager (*Daily Graphic*) who was himself an editor before he was elevated to his current position were those interviewed. The deputy editor plays virtually the same role as the editor and the general manager plays an important role at the editorial conference. It is at the editorial conference that page-one news items are selected. The general manager will also be referred to as an editor in this study.

4.4.1 Why certain news items are presented prominently

Editorial decision makers or news processors were asked to explain why they selected and presented certain news items prominently and not others. Results from the interview revealed that generally, a high number of news values a given news item embodies were important elements that influenced the decisions of the editors. The respondents noted that for a given news item to become the lead news, it must have affected a big number of people (RANGE), be timely, unexpected (SURPRISE) and also have the attributes of controversy and conflict. For instance one of them argued that:

“A news item may be the lead if it affects many people because at *Daily Graphic*, our aim is to help with the development of Ghana and so anything that we see contributing to the development of the country that is what will go” (Editor 1).

This submission by the editor suggests that there were times that a news item needed not have so many news values to become the lead story. This revelation supports the finding from the content analysis that there were times that news items with least news values became the lead news (see Bar chart 2). The study also found that there were no specific written down policy guidelines for the selection of lead news.

“We do not have specific written down policy or guidelines for lead stories. ... This idea of using the biggest font and so on ... sometimes may not even matter so much. A story might be very small in the corner but the way it is treated it may be even important than the one with the biggest font. So, there is no written policy to guide news selection” (Editor 1).

The editors indicated that whatever policy guidelines that they have were for the general operations of the newspaper and not for news selection.

It is interesting to know that differences in font size do not necessarily mean news prominence (news item displayed prominently in the newspaper). Perhaps this also forms part of what Hasty (2006: 74) referred to as “the house style of the newspaper [the *Daily Graphic*].” So, as Shoemaker (2006: 111) notes,

“Underlying the general understanding of what, within a culture, will become news is a long list of factors and influences, and newsworthiness is only one of these. We should no longer use the prominence with which events are covered as a measure of the event’s newsworthiness, and our theories should not use newsworthiness as the sole (or even an important) predictor of what becomes news.”

They (the editors) noted that news values such as timeliness, controversy, bizarre, prominence magnitude and novelty are among the most commonly accepted news values.

“We do not have documented news values that determine news selection here. Generally, it is about the traditional ones- timeliness, controversy, bizarre, prominence and magnitude. We do not depend on one particular value ... what is important is what we have on our table on a particular day” (Editor 2).

This revelation is consistent with the findings by Eilders (1996), Braun (2009), Galtung and Ruge (1965) that among the most common news values a given news item embodies are timeliness, controversy, bizarre, prominence, magnitude and range.

Based on the arguments above, it can be said that the editors agree with the journalists on the most common news values in news stories with much focus on those stories which have an effect on the public—be it in terms of a possible threat to life or an enhancement in people’s way of living. The news values in such news include relevance, damage/failure, threats and risks, range, conflict/controversy which are the same like those ranked by the journalists as extremely important and also featured most in the lead news. So there is likelihood that news gatherers

submit stories which are in the taste of the editors. And the news stories which eventually become the lead, reflects the newsworthiness editors attach to them (Shujun, 2008: 9, cited in Alowo, 2010: 65).

The editors revealed that besides lack of stringent editorial policy, no governmental pressures influence their news selection. In other words, in spite of the fact that the *Daily Graphic* is a state-owned newspaper, its operations are entirely private and that ownership is not a factor considered in news selection. Elaborating on the issue of other factors, including ownership, affecting news selection in the media, one of the editors had this to say:

“No! No! No! We don’t. You see, may-be years, years ago. We have moved away from the situation where the thing is coming from government so it’s got be on the front page. That was a long time ago. We are mindful of the fact that being a national/state-owned newspaper we cannot go sensational so we have to present the fact as they are. So we see news as that which will be of interest to the general public— things that will generally develop the nation” (Editor 2).

From the above submission, it can be argued that the *Daily Graphic* focuses on hard news (news on important and serious matters such as politics, business, and economy). This further explains the absence of the news value of sex (celebrities and their lifestyle and entertainment) in the content analysis. Like the journalists, both editors ranked sex (sexuality/eroticism) as not being important in the selection of page-one news stories. One of the editors had this to say when asked a direct question on the presentation of sex (sexuality/eroticism) on the front page: “sex in terms of that? No, not at the *Daily Graphic*. We concentrate on what affects the generality of Ghanaians.” This revelation is consistent with the data from the content analysis also.

Gender was also not identified as an important news factor in the case of the *Daily Graphic*. However, there are peculiar circumstances that might account for news about gender being displayed on the front page.

“Gender actually doesn’t influence news selection at the Graphic but as we are in a male dominated society if naturally something happens to a woman it is felt it has a lot of societal impact. So, if for instance, a man butchers the wife, it is something that is of societal importance and it will be considered for the front page” (Editor 2).

4.5 Summary

It is evident from the data gathered in this study, that news values immensely influence the processing, selection and presentation of news stories. News gathering, selection and presentation by both journalists and editors are wittingly or unwittingly influenced by news values greatly. Hall and his colleagues therefore contend that:

“Although they are nowhere written down, formally transmitted, or codified, news values seem to be widely shared as between the different news media,...and form a core element in the professional socialisation, practice and ideology” (Hall et al., 1978: p. 54).

The results from the content analysis also confirmed that news values were considered important by both editors and journalists in their selection and presentation of news (see Figure 4 and Table 5)

However, in their gatekeeping roles, editors are not enslaved by news values. Other factors such as public interest, national developmental agenda, interest of the news organization and type of ownership and day and/or time of publication have a greater potential in influencing the editor’s selection and presentation of news items on the front page of a newspaper.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

News gathering and news selection are two important exercises that are of much concern to every media house, be it electronic or print. However, these two important exercises cannot be carried out efficaciously without given cognizance to newsworthiness and the concept of gatekeeping. It suffice to say that both journalists and editors play a crucial role in the gathering, processing, selection, sorting and shaping of the news received by the public.

The findings of this study indicate that: A greater percentage (86%) of the news stories published on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* was hard news. On average, three news articles are published on the front page. Each news article has an average of five news values. However, a news item needs not have several news values to become the lead. News about internal politics was the most frequent on the front-page news followed by crime/law and order and public healthcare and welfare.

Negative news appeared most on the front page. The lead news had a negative focus also.

The majority of the news gatherers had political and crime/law and order as their beat.

Influence, range, prominence, status of location, action and personalization are the six most important news values.

Both news gatherers and news processors do not necessarily use the number of news values a news item embodies as a yard stick to determine which news item becomes the lead. Rather, what is important is the range of a news item and the public interest.

A news item with the biggest font is not necessarily the lead news. It could be the one with the least font but depth and quality of its content tells whether it is the lead news or not.

Both news gatherers and news processors regard similar news values as being extremely important: influence, controversy/conflict, prominence, range, surprise and threats and risks while sex is not important. However, the news value of personalisation was ranked low by the journalists. Both news gatherers and news processors prefer political news being the lead news.

The *Daily Graphic*, though a state-owned newspaper, government does not interfere with its operations including news selection process and the editor's gatekeeping role. There is no documented or written down policy dictating what news stories are to be gathered or selected. And that what appears on the front page is purely editorial work.

5.1 Discussion

It is necessary to note that the study intended to examine what determines news selection at the *Daily Graphic* especially in the face of so many news stories that come up each day. Specifically, news values concept and the gatekeeping role of the editor were considered in establishing the impact of these two concepts on news selectivity criteria at Graphic.

The results obtained reflect the content of the news stories given importance or presented prominently in the *Daily Graphic*. Generally, news about politics which included legislative

activities, executive activities, judicial decisions, constitutional issues, elections, political fundraisings and donations, statements and activities of individual politicians, political appointments, interparty relations, activities of interest groups, public opinions pools, abuse of political power and corruption, dominated the front page of the *Daily Graphic* partly because such news stories had high range and greater public interest. This was followed by crime/law and order and public healthcare and welfare.

A cross-tabulation of topics and news prominence revealed that while all news topics can be the lead news, internal politics was found to be the most likely topic to be presented prominently. Even the editors' disclosure that the lead news need not have the highest number of news values but rather it should be of public interest and contributes to national development is a clear indication that news stories about politics will be selected as lead news since they usually affect the generality of the Ghanaian populace. The domination of the front page of the *Daily Graphic* by political and crime and disaster news accentuates the finding of a study by Stempel (1985, cited in Alowo, 2010: 47) on the mix of topics and the selection of stories which found that topics also influence the selection and presentation of news in the media. According to Shoemaker and Cohen (2006:11), people tend to pay more attention to deviant individuals and acts hence, their frequency on the front page. The dominance of politics could be partly due the fact that 2012 was an election year and naturally issues about politics were expected to dominate the media landscape.

However, Hartley (1982, cited in Alowo, 2010: 47) asserts that the prominence of the people involved in such news may partly account for its frequency because of the assumption that

actions of illustrious people (e.g. the president, ministers, Parliamentarians, lawyers, judges and leaders of political parties) are more consequential than the activities of ordinary people.

With twenty per cent (20%) of journalists having politics as their beat, it stands to reason that many of them would be comfortable covering events that are related to internal politics.

Again, the public's interest in politics is another reason that might have led to the prominence of political news in the newspaper.

News about crime, law and order was also prevalent on the front page and this was followed by internal politics. There are two reasons that may account for the frequent publication of crime news. First, the beat system, which involves journalists specializing in certain topics, partly explains this pattern of news coverage at the *Daily Graphic*. The majority of the respondents had a beat of crime which probably explains the dominance of crime news on the front page. Notable here is that journalists tend to routinize their news beats by consistently and frequently visiting their sources for information and this practice eventually becomes an integral and sustainable part of an organization. However, it can also be said that the beats contribute to the limited diversity of the most prominent topics in the newspaper because in case there is a topic journalists are disinterested in, there is likelihood that it will not be covered at all. Secondly, news on crime, law and order dominated the front page because this kind of news is not too difficult to obtain or deal with. For instance, records of criminal cases can easily be obtained from the police and by following criminal court proceedings. In addition to this, crime news is usually negative and people turn to be much attracted to bad news.

Negative news, which has a bad connotation, dominated the lead news. The reason for this this kind of coverage can be attributed to Shoemaker and Cohen's (2006:11) observation that people

pay less attention to good news than to bad news and that people tend to remember negative news more than positive news (Strömbäck, 2008:32, cited in Alowo, 2010: 68).

Hard news dominating the front page was expected because the *Daily Graphic* is regarded as an elite newspaper. In fact, the paper has a couple of inside pages specifically intended for what Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky (2010) categorized as soft news. Besides this, the Fridays and Saturday editions also carry more soft news. This explains in part why such news is not published on the front page. According to one of the editors, *The Newspaper* focuses on soft news on Fridays and Saturdays because people usually would want to relax on such days and they would not want anything so serious or hard.

“I can tell you that, when selecting stories for Fridays and Saturdays, we always have it that as a weekend, we have to give things that are as you called it soft. For example, if a man goes to steal so that he can marry another woman, it will be selected because we feel that people need to rest or relax and enjoy themselves. It will be different from news that will be selected for the weekdays” (Editor 1).

The editors told the researcher that the bachelor’s degree with a major in journalism is the minimum qualification required for being a journalist at the *Daily Graphic*. The majority of the news gatherers were found to be print journalism degree holders with 16 years professional experience. The increasing public demand for quality and professional journalism partly explains the high education levels among journalists. Secondly, it also seems that the *Daily Graphic* management values formal education, expertise and experience.

Both news gatherers and editors highly value the ability of the lead news to influence social change by holding the government accountable to its citizens. This indicates the commitment of the newspaper’s role in promoting transparency.

Because of the limitations of time and space, selection of content is a necessary function. Editors have to make difficult decisions in evaluating the news stories and determining which news items to provide to an audience. The evaluation processes do not happen in a vacuum but are influenced by several factors of which news values is the most essential. All the news values the journalists regarded as extremely important were among the factors most widely cited as criteria for news selection—timeliness or novelty, importance or impact, influence, prominence, unusualness, conflict or controversy. Both news writers and processors indicated that controversy, prominence, surprise (unusualness) and range (Impact or importance) were vital attributes in the lead news. From that point of view, it could be argued that all the journalists irrespective of their location exercise similar news values or have the same standards for the lead news.

5.2 Limitations of the study

The study faced some challenges. The lack of much research done on the selection of news in Ghana posed a limitation to this study. The theoretical approach used in this study is largely based on gatekeeping and news values which are purely based on Western perspectives. But since the newsroom practices tend to be similar irrespective of their location, these concepts were applied in a similar context.

Again, conducting a content analysis on a relatively smaller sample is another shortfall. Ideally, a larger sample size would have been preferred but due to time and resources limitation, a smaller sample which was manageable was used.

The other obvious limitation is that photographs which accompanied the news stories were not included yet they play a big role in the presentation of news text. However, as earlier noted, the focus of this study is news stories not pictures hence it would be important for future research to include pictures.

The nonparticipation of the editor and the news editor of the *Daily Graphic* was quite worrying. However, this was adequately addressed by interviewing the Deputy Editor, *Daily Graphic* and the General Manager, Newspaper. Both men sit in the editorial conference and the general manager until his current position was the editor of the *Daily Graphic*. They provided the researcher with very useful information that helped tremendously in finding answers to the research questions.

5.3 Recommendations

Although this study answered the important questions the research wanted to address, others questions related to this subject remain unanswered. The role of photographs in the selection of the lead news was not explored because of the limited operational definition of news prominence used here. Probably a study that combines the position of the news stories, their length and the accompanying pictures would be useful in media content scholarship in Ghana. Since the headline with the biggest font size does not necessary mean that story is the lead news in the context of the *Daily Graphic*, an investigation into what really determines news prominence at the *Daily Graphic* should be explored in future.

5.4 Conclusion

Both gatekeeping theory and news values theory make it clear that not all the news items available to editors are published in the newspaper. News stories go through a complex process of inclusion and exclusion of stories which was perceived as a gatekeeping process by earlier scholars. During this process for instance, news gathering, writing, shaping, sorting and presentation, news gatherers or news processors use news values as guidelines as argued by Golding and Elliot (1979, cited in Alowo, 2010: 73):

“...the criteria of selection from material available to the newsroom of those items worthy of inclusion in the final product. In another way, they are guidelines for the presentation of items, suggesting what to emphasize, what to omit, and where to give priority in the presentation of the items to the audience.”

The majority of the new items published on the front page of the *Daily Graphic* had an average of five news values (see Bar chart 1). Except Sex, the news values of Damage/Failure, Aggression, Threat, and Risks, Demonstration, Continuity, Surprise, Range, Action, Prominence, Status of the location/setting, Personalisation, Influence and Controversy were considered important by both editors and journalists in their selection and presentation of news. This was also confirmed by the results from the content analysis (see Figure 4 for the news values in the news). However, a news item did not have to possess the highest number of news values to become the lead (see Bar chart 2).

However, much as news values are important in the gatekeeping process, they do not necessarily guarantee the selection of a given news item for publication. This is because the process is influenced by several factors and pressures. Such factors include but are not limited to the interests of the public, interest of the news organization and the type of its ownership (in some

media organisations), national developmental agenda, day and/or time of publication as indicated

by Editor 1:

“I can tell you that, when selecting stories for Fridays and Saturdays, we always have it that as a weekend, we have to give things that are as you called it soft. For example, if a man goes to steal so that he can marry another woman, it will be selected because we feel that people need to rest or relax and enjoy themselves. It will be different from news that will be selected for the weekdays.”

This was confirmed by the content, survey and the interviews conducted for the study.



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APPENDIX I

HEADLINES OF THE STORIES CONTENT ANALYZED

National records at risk	6-Jan
President's directive to EOCO worrying	6-Jan
Use lawful means to seek redress	6-Jan
Another female suspect in custody	6-Jan
BNI presents interim report	7-Jan
Blueprint to fight corruption	7-Jan
Attorney-General BNI boss to appear before court	7-Jan
Police impounds arms cache	11-Jan
Swap not on court premises	11- Jan
DSP Mawunyegah Tehoda, DSP Adzei-Tuadzra should be held liable	11-Jan
15 MPs kicked out	23-Jan
Restoring fuel subsidy will not reduce fares	23-Jan
6 in, 3 out	26-Jan
SADA to get GH¢ 200m for projects	26-Jan
Horror in Kumasi	31-Jan
Nkrumah awards for 2 African scientists	31-Jan
PNC congress on Saturday	31-Jan
Woyome for court	6-Feb
Ayariga is PNC flag bearer	6-Feb
Petroleum prices reduced	6-Feb
Former, current officials indicted	3-Feb
Woyome not entitled to payment	3-Feb
EC dismisses rumours	15-Feb
Tuba chief arrested	15-Feb
Reserve 40% for local printers	15-Feb
Man pierces wife's eyes	18-Feb
Mining pit "swallows" 5 persons	18-Feb

Woyome released on bail	8-Feb
4 new vessels for navy	21-Feb
O.B Amoah charged with corruption, causing financial loss	21-Feb
Bright Akwetey damns Minority	21-Feb
Five students before court	23-Feb
Veep launches road safety project	23-Feb
Teachers flee	5-Mar
3 killed in suspected arson attack	5-Mar
Obama greets Mills at White House	9-Mar
Court orders EOCO to freeze Woyome's assets	9-Mar
Train runs over man	9-Mar
The dead Odaw River	13-Mar
We did nothing wrong	13-Mar
Western Region chiefs support relocation of gas plant	13-Mar
No work no pay	21-Mar
CP was overpaid 48m DM in 2001	21-Mar
Schools getting feeding grant	21-Mar
Multiple registration detected	29-Mar
Osafo-Marfo, O. B Amoah fail to restrain EOCO	29-Mar
6 charged with interfering in registration exercise	29-Mar
Jesus Onetouch set free	31-Mar
Fetish priest exposed suspected murderers	31-Mar
Ivorian refugee die in arson attack	31-Mar
Let's protect our peace	9-Apr
Govt pays Gh₵ 1.256 compensation to Bui farmers	9-Apr
Five die in Good Friday accident	9-Apr
Kidney cases on the rise	2-Apr
GMA raises alarm over salary distortions	2-Apr
3 policemen, civilian perish in accident	2-Apr
Govt backs out of STX	12-Apr

Man, 22 jailed for double registration	12-Apr
Prisoners to be registered in fourth phase	12-Apr
Mystery of death of siblings	16-Apr
Joma resident at mercy of weather	16-Apr
BoG sets new base rate guidelines	16-Apr
Ken Agyapong granted bail	20-Apr
Man arrested for registering 15 times	20-Apr
3,829 biometric applicants challenged	20-Apr
One dead 4 injured	24-apr
Aliu Mahama appeals to Dagbon to hatchet	24-Apr
Glo slapped with \$200,000 penalty	24-Apr
Jailbird Kombian indicted for murder of two cops	17-May
Right To Information Bill generates controversy	17-May
TUC hails takeover of Tema Shipyard	17-May
Scrab menace	28-May
Cedi depreciation won't affect food security	28-May
Politicians, public servants connive	30-May
President Mills meets IMF Team	30-May
Korle-Bu doctors want security	30-May
Who is who?	11-May
Student arrested for Asuoeyeboa murder	11-May
Preventing students from writing exams is crazy	11-Many
Reinstate cops	8-May
Don't see postings to deprived areas as punishment	8-May
WASSCE candidates threaten invigilator	8-May
IGP sets up probe	26-May
African leaders urged to follow vision of founding fathers	26-May
Peace rally in Accra	26-may
Extortion culture in police	25-Jun
Veep cautions foreigners in galamsey operations	25-Jun

Prez Mills returns home	25-Jun
Stop fronting for other parties	25-Jun
CPP unveils vision	28-jun
Trumpet achievements of NDC	28-Jun
NPP did nothing wrong on wasted vehicles	28-Jun
Nsawam-suhum road deteriorates	30-Jun
Jogging turns bloody in K'dua	30-Jun
Woyome's woes not over	6-Jun
Two siblings killed by collapsing building	6-Jun
Wulensi MP is dead	6-jun
Victims' families to get help	5-Jun
Two feared dead in kokomba-Bimoba	5-Jun
BRT project in danger	5-Jun
We are now \$24.7m	1-Jun
GM foods pose health hazard	1-Jun
Govt denies NPP claims	1-Jun
State drops treason charges	7-Jul
Parliament acted wrongly in Vodafone deal	7-Jul
Rawlings links with NDP mere speculation	7-Jul
Student arrested for murder of taxi driver	7-Jul
Task force go into action	4-Jul
Takoradi Kokompe youth demonstrate	4-Jul
Judge takes swipe at prosecutors	4-Jul
Amoateng's assets under scrutiny	16-Jul
6 die in Abepotia motor accident	16-Jul
36 Ghana post employees embezzle over GH¢ 1m	16-Jul
Govt ask for GH¢ 2.61b	19-Jul
Minority objects to CI on new constituencies	19-Jul
Kumasi jurors withdraw service	19-Jul
607 registered with immigration	24-Jul

AG, Woyome snubs PAC	24-Jul
Public officials should be held responsible	24-Jul
NEC nominates Mahama	27-Jul
We shall remain loyal	27-Jul
C'tte plans Prez Mills' funeral	27-Jul
Nation weeps	9-Aug.
Amissah Arthur's day	6-Aug
Clothes for Mills in high demand	6-Aug
Road blocks in Accra for funeral	6-Aug
Nation in tears	1-Aug
Mahama selects Amissah Arthur as Veep	1-Aug
Woyome succumbs	25-Aug
GetFund to build hostels for new varsity	25-Aug
NPP starts national campaign	25-Aug
Arrest Woyome	24-Aug
President Mahama picks forms	24-Aug
Creation of new constituencies under threat	24-Aug
Empanel judges now	28-Aug
I shall resolve Dagbon dispute	28-Aug
Methodist varsity cries foul	28-Aug
Confusion rocks parliament	4-Sept
Supreme court fixes Sept. 12	4-Sept
Hard road to school	14-Sept
Victims to receive compensation	14-Sept
My commitment to peace non-negotiable	14-Sept
No way! Supreme court refuses injunction	20-Sept
Couple shot dead	20-Sept
Rawlings endorses Mahama	20-Sept
Anyinam accident claims Graphic driver's life	24-Sept
We're not involved	24-Sept

Independent MPs fall at primaries	24-Sept
CI 75 matures	26-Sept
Cote D'Ivoire closes border again	26-Sept
To go or not to go	26-Sept
CI 78 in limbo	29-Sept
I'll accept verdict of electorate	29-Sept
Five NACOB officials quizzed	29-Sept
EC sets date	5-Oct
NDC launches manifesto	5-Oct
Parliament rejects result	2-Oct
Trust hospital turns away NHIS patients	2-Oct
I'm ready to resign	2-Oct
Power cuts over	17-Oct
Samia against MPs' salary increase	17-Oct
Mastermind of wee export to Heathrow busted	17-Oct
Begoro palace burnt	11-Oct
Two car snatchers shot dead	11-Oct
Court of appeals rules against	11-Oct
Respect students faith	27-Oct
Four children burned	27-Oct
Lightening kills students at Wiemoase	27-Oct
GH¢ 10 m fund to support youth employment	29-Oct
4 swing regions to decide	29-Oct
Don't just talk peace	30-Nov.
Another twist to GH¢ 20,000 birthday cash	30-Nov.
Two children burnt to death in fire outbreak	30-Nov
Chief Imam warns zongo youth	27-Nov.
Minors on register can lead to conflict	27-Nov.
Imani predicts danger in 2012	27-Nov
Multiple names on register	21-Nov

The final clash of wits	21-nov
Beware of flashpoints	21-Nov
Make Ghana proud	26-Nov
11 die in accident near Dormaa	26-Nov
3000 can't vote in Kasena-Nankana	26-Nov
Black Wednesday	8-Nov
Prez Mahama, Akufo-Addo suspend campaign	8-Nov
Martey is national best farmer	3-Nov
Youth advised to venture into Agric	3-Nov
Ghana votes today	7-Dec
You're in contempt	1-Dec
"Daily Graphic" wins award	1-Dec
Nana Konadu "dismissed"	1-Dec
NPP heads for court	12-Dec
World leaders congratulate Mahama	12-Dec
Result reflect will of the people	12-Dec
PPP calls for reforms	13-Dec
Don't violate people's rights	13-Dec
Transition team inaugurated	13-Dec
BoG stops 7 companies	18-Dec
Speaker calls on MPs to sustain national unity	18-Dec
Argentine ship case before court of appeal	18-Dec
11 leaders to attend	31-Dec
Calm returns to Alavanyo-Nkonya	31-Dec
'Fuel situation to normalise'	31-Dec

APPENDIX II

CORDER:

NEWS SELECTION AT THE *DAILY GRAPHIC*
CONTENT CODING SHEET

Number.....

Date.....

Headline.....

By-line.....

Position of the news item/prominence.....

News type.....

News topic..... News focus/direction.....

News factors present

F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
F11	F12	F13	F14	

APPENDIX III

GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW OF NEWSPAPER GATEKEEPERS/EDITORS

1. News has been defined in so many ways by several scholars. How do you see news in the context of the *Daily Graphic*?

2. What is the *Daily Graphic's* understanding of news values? How would you rate the following news values according to their importance in the selection of news for the front page?

	Extremely important	Quite important	important	Not important	Other
status of the setting/location					
Influence					
Risks and threats					
Prominence					
Personalization					
Concreteness of activity (Action)					
Range					
Surprise					
Damage/failure					
Controversy					
Aggression					
Demonstration					
Sex (sexuality/eroticism)					
Continuity /follow up					

3. What factors influence news selection at the *Daily Graphic*? In your specific case, what criteria do you consider in the selection of news for the front page?
4. What general editorial policy framework do you operate here? How far does this affect what you publish on the front page? Do you recall any instances where the editorial policy influenced your news selection?
5. Different reasons may account for the selection and presentation of a given news story as the lead. What would you say are the most important reasons?
6. In your personal assessment of what is usually chosen to be the lead news story, do you have any specific news topics you prefer to be the lead news over others?
8. When did you join the *Daily Graphic*?
9. How many years have you worked as a journalist?
10. What is your highest academic level?



APPENDIX IV

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NEWS GATHERERS

This study seeks to investigate the criteria for news selection at the *Daily Graphic*. It is being conducted by a graduate student of the School of Communication Studies, Legon.

Thank you for your co-operation.

1. Which of the following news values are important to you when writing news for publication on the front page? Please indicate your choice by selecting one appropriate answer against each news value.

	Extremely important	Quite important	important	Not important	Other
status of the setting/location					
Influence					
Risks and threats					
Prominence					
Personalization					
Concreteness of activity (Action)					
Range					
Surprise					
Damage/failure					
Controversy					
Aggression					
Demonstration					
Sex (sexuality/eroticism)					
Continuity /follow up					

2. What would you say are the most important reasons for which you submit a given news story to the editor?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Are there any specific news topics you prefer to be news leads over others? Please elaborate your answer.

.....
.....
.....

4. Is there any policy governing news selection at the Graphic?

.....

5. What is your job title?

6. What is your sex? (Please tick the appropriate box)

Male

Female

7. Which category of age do you belong to? (Please tick the appropriate box)

18 or below

19-29

30-41

42-51

52-61

62 and above

8. When did you join the *Daily Graphic*?

9. How many years have you worked as a journalist?

10. What is your highest academic level?

Primary

JHS

SHS

Tertiary

Other

11. What is your major?

Electronic/broadcast

Print journalism

journalism

Other (please specify).....

12. What is your beat?

