

**ISSUES OF CREDIBILITY IN RADIO NEWS:
SUNYANI RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SKY
FM AND RADIO BAR NEWS BULLETINS**

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
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AWARD OF A MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN
COMMUNICATION STUDIES**



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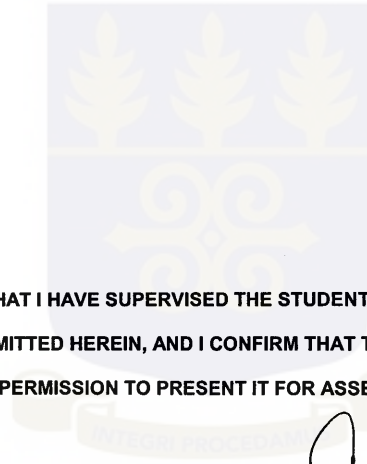
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**I DECLARE THAT I HAVE PERSONALLY, UNDER SUPERVISION, UNDERTAKEN
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DEDICATION

**I HUMBLY DEDICATE THIS WORK TO MY PARENTS,
MR. & MRS. ALBERT EKOW ESSIEN,
TO MY HUSBAND, KWADWO
AND
TO MY DAUGHTERS,
MAAME ADWOA AND MAAME ESI**



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine Sunyani residents' perceptions of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* news bulletins. Specifically, it was to determine which of the radio stations' news bulletins listeners perceived as more credible. The measures of credibility used were objectivity, fairness and balance. The study also sought to find out whether factors such as style of news presentation, importance of news and a listener's gender influenced credibility and preference of the news bulletins of the two radio stations.

A combination of research methods, a survey, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews was used to obtain in-depth information that answered the questions posed in the study. While the survey measured the spread of views, the focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews provided data to mostly support and occasionally challenge the survey findings.

Findings showed that Sunyani residents perceived both stations' news bulletins as credible. *Sky FM* news bulletins were, however, perceived as more objective, fair and balanced while on the whole *Radio BAR* news bulletins were perceived as more credible or believable. Analysis also revealed that objectivity, fairness and balance were not major issues listeners considered in judging the credibility of the news bulletins of the radio stations. They rather found the style of news presentation a more important issue to consider in judging the credibility of the news bulletins.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

This study sought to find out audience perception of news bulletins of two radio stations in Ghana: *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* in Sunyani. As background to the study, this introductory chapter first discusses the apparent importance and significance of news in mass communication, especially for radio, traces the history of radio in Ghana, outlines radio's unique characteristics and examines the issue of credibility in radio news. The chapter also describes the two radio stations used in the study, explains the research problem, and outlines the objectives and hypotheses of the study. The chapter further provides operational definitions of terms and concepts used in the study.

News is one of the major components of mass communication and one of the sources of information by which people get to know about what is going on around them. Any new information one gets to know from some mass medium – newspaper, radio, television or the Internet – may be termed as news (although it may not have been presented as news). According to Lule (2001: 3), “news comes to us as a story, the telling of a happening, written or spoken with the intention of entertaining or informing.”

The formal presentation of news (on radio or television) is the news bulletin, which is usually made up of several news stories. One need not necessarily listen to news bulletins or read news stories from the print media or the Internet: news can also be obtained from a radio programme or discussion or even an advertisement.

As long as what is heard, read or seen is new and of interest to the reader/listener/viewer, it could be called news. To Jeffres (1986: 21),

News is the consequence of the human desire to know the state of the surrounding social and physical environment. News in general existed before there was any institution – such as the mass media – for disseminating it. In the fifth century B.C., Sophocles wrote, *No man delights in the bearer of bad news*. News is a valuable commodity of social exchange and the urgent need for news arises in all social organisations, from the family to complex bureaucracies

Matthew Spencer (in Koomson 1995: 5), however, defines news as “any accurate fact or idea that will interest a large number of people”, while Hulten and Nelson (also in Koomson 1995: 5) have offered another definition of news as “anything that interests you and you didn’t already know”. In the Ghanaian context, the Ghana News Agency (1994: 23) defines “news as any new information which must be of public interest”. A political scientist, Doris Graber, suggests, as noted by Bennett (1996), that news is not just any information, or even the most important information about the world; rather, news tends to contain information that is timely and familiar (stories drawing on familiar people or life experiences that give even distant events a close-to-home feeling).

All of the above definitions share one criterion: the element of public interest. This means news must be of interest to the public; otherwise it would no longer be news. According to Koomson (1995) whatever a journalist offers as news should therefore have the underlying ingredient of serving the public interest. Journalists should try to know their audience in terms of their honest needs and prudent wants in order to ensure that they satisfy the criterion of public interest in their production of news.

News is very important in mass communication since most of the media of mass communication consider news a key content. According to Thalheimer (2000), reports of an American Radio News Survey commissioned by the Radio-Television News Directors Association and Foundation (RTNDA/F) showed that news is an important reason why people select a radio station. The study revealed that radio was both the most widely available news source and a personal medium. Although television remained the preferred news medium, the study found that most people had greater contact with radio throughout their day. For example, about one-third of adults turned to radio for their news when they got up and were getting ready for their day. Thus, news is very important to radio listeners and is also important to the functioning of radio stations.

Similarly in Ghana, radio is the common source of news for most people (*Ghana Free Expression Update*, 2001), perhaps because of its unique characteristics. Radio is the source of news for both the literate and the illiterate. In a study conducted by the Media Foundation for West Africa in March 2001 in Ghana, radio turned out to be the main source of news and current affairs for most of the respondents¹. About two-thirds of the respondents said they depended largely on local radio stations for news and educational programmes.

1.1 The Emergence of radio

The radio, an electronic medium, is one of the channels of mass communication through which messages are transmitted to a large and diversified audience. According to Folkerts *et al* (1998), radio was the first national electronic mass medium in America. The authors find it difficult to pin the exact starting point of



radio in history; but they acknowledge that one person did not invent radio. Rather, a variety of inventors contributed to specific aspects of radio development. These radio inventors include James Maxwell, Heinrich Hertz and Guglielmo Marconi (Heibert *et al.*, 1988) from whose research scientific advances in the fields of electricity and magnetism, the basis for radio broadcasting and transmission, developed. By the late 1920s, the medium had achieved a high degree of programme sophistication and was on the verge of entering a new stage of development. According to Folkerts *et al.* (1988) radio became a mass medium during the 1920s. The famous British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which spawned radio broadcasting in Ghana, first radio broadcast was on December 19, 1932.

Technologically, there are three basic kinds of radio transmission systems: short wave (SW), amplitude modulation (AM) and frequency modulation (FM) (Heibert *et al.*, 1988). FM radio uses a much higher band of frequency (from 88 – 108) than SW and AM radio and generally produces better signal qualities. FM is ordinarily free from static, fading and interferences as its waves travel over short distances in a straight line, within the line of sight of the transmitter. This makes it possible for many FM stations situated far apart geographically to share the same frequency. On the other hand AM and SW waves travel in curves and can, therefore, travel over long distances. Since 1975, the fortunes of FM radio have been increasing while those of AM and SW have been decreasing (Dominick, 1993).

Heibert *et al.* (1988) describe radio as a mass medium with a highly fragmented audience and revenue base. It is also a local medium in terms of sources of audience and income. According to Folkerts *et al.* (1988), despite the introduction of newer technologies (such as television and lately the Internet), people

throughout the world still use radio more than any other mass medium for information and entertainment. Even in the United States, where television seems to dominate the mass media, radio retains a significant audience (Folkerts *et al.*, 1988). According to Mytton (1993), it was estimated that there were 2,400 million radio receivers and 1,300 million television sets in the world with an estimated population of 5,026 million. This works out to one radio set to every two people and one television set to every four. Mytton (1993) however noted that there were disparities in the distribution of radio sets, since there were more radios in the developed world while there was one radio set to about ten people in the developing countries. Karikari (1994: 1) also notes that: "radio today is as indispensable to the existence, cohesion and development of modern society, as oxygen is to the survival of living beings."

Perhaps the survival of radio in the face of challenge from television and the Internet could be attributed to its unique characteristics. According to Smith (1990), as yet, no medium matches radio for its ability to do on-the-spot reporting. This is because a radio reporter needs little equipment and can easily telephone a report from the scene of a news event, even getting it on air live. A television reporter in Smith's (1990) view can also do on-the-spot reporting but not alone as camera operation usually requires at least one other person on the scene.

The radio receiving set is also mobile and ubiquitous and can be listened to everywhere – in cars, kitchens, and bedrooms, outdoor and indoor. According to Karikari (1994), radio's accessibility in terms of affordability and ubiquitous message transmission especially to the rural and non-literate population is incomparable. Also, unlike the newspaper or the Internet where one has to stop one's activity in order to

watch or read, radio (and television) can be listened to as a secondary activity. Radio could be used as background while driving, studying, cooking and even jogging. Radio again has another unique characteristic of being personal – it brings the speaker into the room just as though he/she were there in person (Heibert *et. al.*, 1991). Language use on radio is usually conversational and easy for people to understand. In Karikari's (1994) view radio is the most effective mass medium for development because any language at all can be used to transmit messages to the audience.

1.2 Radio in Ghana

Radio broadcasting in Ghana began on July 31, 1935, through the efforts of the then Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Arnold Hodson. The new broadcasting service, named *Station ZOY*, relayed mainly news of some selected programmes originating from the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* station in London. In 1939, with the outbreak of the Second World War, *Station ZOY* expanded its broadcasts into four languages – Twi, Fante, Ga and Ewe². The main aim was to present war news in these languages. In 1954, government accepted the recommendations of a committee it had appointed, and *Radio ZOY* became the Gold Coast Broadcasting System. The new service established its own division (independent of the *BBC*) in 1956; then after Ghana attained independence in 1957, the station became known as the Ghana Broadcasting System.

Later, the organization became the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation with the station name *Radio Ghana*. Currently, the corporation's national radio networks are *Radio One*, *Radio Two* and about ten FM stations. The *Radio One* service is the

local language network. It has two distinct wings, the main language wing and the rural radio wing. The rural radio wing had (until 1995) relay stations in all the regions and their staff concentrated on programmes specially prepared for rural people. The main wing builds programmes for general consumption. *Radio Two* was commissioned in February 1967 and is a channel for commercial broadcasting. Its programmes are predominantly music but it also carries news. The language of broadcast is predominantly English.

Accra FM was one of the pioneer FM stations to be inaugurated in 1986. It had an FM transmitter donated by the German government and started as a purely music station sometimes referred to as *Radio Free Music* (Asamoah, 1985). The station also broadcast news and advertisements. Another pioneer FM station in the country was the Upper Regional Agricultural Radio (URA-Radio) based in Bolgatanga (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998). In 1995, the *Accra FM* became known as *Radio GAR* and is now known as *UNIIQ Radio*. In the same year, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Research Department produced figures that indicated that the number of radio receiver sets in the country was 3.5 million and the potential radio audience was 12.5 million with the actual radio audience of 10.1 million. The number of listeners per, set according to the study, was three.

Thus, for many years since the beginning of radio broadcasting in Ghana, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation was in sole control of radio news in the country. In 1995, however, the wave changed as independent broadcasting in the country began, in conformity with the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of ownership of means of expression – print and electronic (Sakyi-Addo, 1996). According to Sakyi-Addo (1996), a total of up to 37 frequencies

were initially allocated for commercial radio and television broadcasting – 10 for radio and 26 for either free-on-air or pay-per-view wireless cable rebroadcast television. Six of the FM radio stations were for operation in Accra and four in Kumasi.

As at October 1998, a total of 41 private individuals and bodies had received authorization to operate radio broadcasting stations in Ghana³. Today, there are even more independent radio stations (about 60), which are located in all the regions in the country. The relay stations of the GBC in the regional capitals have all been phased out to give way to regional FM stations. In the Brong-Ahafo region, there are ten FM stations, namely: *Classic* and *ASTA* in Techiman, *Royals* in Wenchi, *ADARS* in Kintampo, *Chris* and *Shalom* in Berekum, *Jewison* in Sampa, *Aduana* in Dormaa, and *Sky* and *Radio BAR* in Sunyani.⁴

Two of these stations, *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*, were purposively selected for this study since they are the only two stations located in the capital of the Brong-Ahafo region (at the time of conducting the study from March-December 2002). These two stations are profiled next.

1.2.1 Sky FM

Sky FM is a privately owned radio station located at the centre of Sunyani town, in the Brong-Ahafo Region. It was the first privately owned radio station to start transmission in the regional capital, Sunyani. The station transmits on the 96.7 MHz frequency and is part of a limited liability company, the Sky Broadcasting Limited. It is co-owned by Mr. Nicholas Agyei-Kyeremeh and Mr. Mohammed Bemmah, both citizens of the Brong-Ahafo region. The station was given its license to operate on

April 16, 1996 and it started transmission on the first of December, the same year. It broadcasts 21 hours (from 4am to 1am) daily.

Sky FM started with a 50-watt transmitter during the first year of transmission but at the time of this study it had a 1000watt/1kw transmitter⁵. Sunyani was then its main coverage area but its signals could be received in about nine other districts in the Brong-Ahafo region namely, Tano, Dormaa, Asutifi, Asunafo and Berekum districts. The others were Wenchi, Techiman, Nkoranza, and Jaman districts. *Sky FM* broadcasts in both Twi and English although more programmes are broadcast in Twi than those broadcast in English. The objectives of the station, according to the station manager⁶ were to:

- inform, educate and entertain listeners;
- help keep the pace of development in the Brong-Ahafo Region in line with the pace of national development;
- make information dissemination to its listeners efficient and problem-free, and to keep the listeners abreast with development in the rest of the world, through an efficient news networking.

Sky FM had a staff strength of twenty-eight, made up of seven women and twenty men⁷. Three of these were newsroom staff, nine administrative staff and thirteen disk jockeys and presenters. Only one of the three newsroom staff was a professional with a diploma in journalism from the Ghana Institute of Journalism. He was the news editor who compiled the news bulletins and translated them from English into Twi. The other two newsroom staff had the GCE "A" Level qualification. *Sky FM* broadcasts news as well as educational, musical, religious and sports programmes.

1.2.1.1 Sky FM News Format:

Until August 2001, the station broadcast ten news bulletins daily on weekdays. Of the ten news bulletins, six were locally compiled while four were news broadcast from the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* and *Deutsche Welle (DW) Radio*. Of the six local (radio) newscasts, two were broadcast in Twi while the other four were in English. The subject of the news was political, social and sports while the spread was international and local in nature. News sources for the station were the Ghana News Agency, the Internet, local events, newspapers and magazines. There were international radio stations such as the *BBC* and *CNN*, and other radio stations in Ghana including *Joy FM* in Accra and *Luv FM* in Kumasi.

In August 2001, the station entered into an agreement with Multi-Media Limited to broadcast its news bulletins (then compiled by the three stations, *Joy*, *Luv* and *Adom*) on *Sky FM* provided news compiled by *Sky FM* news staff would also be included in the news bulletins. Thus, the news broadcast on *Sky FM* became a compilation of news from *Joy FM* in Accra, *Luv FM* in Kumasi, *Adom FM* in Tema and *Sky FM*. Twelve news bulletins were broadcast daily. Two of these were news translated into Twi from English and broadcast at 10a.m. and 3p.m. daily from Monday to Friday.

1.2.2 Radio BAR

The second station that was selected for this study, *Radio BAR*, is a state-owned station, which transmits on 93.5MHz. It was, before 1997, one of the relay stations of *Radio One* (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation) that was transformed into an FM station. *Radio BAR* started operating as an FM station on October 7, 1997. A

few district assemblies (about five out of the thirteen districts in the region) contributed four million cedis each towards the establishment of the station. Soon after *Radio BAR* started transmission, lightning hit the newly installed equipment and the station went off the air for eight months.

Radio BAR, like *Sky FM*, is located in Sunyani town. *Radio BAR* possesses a 5kw/5000 watt transmitter, which reaches effectively, almost the entire region except the Atebubu and Sene districts where signals can only be received by a good or powerful car radio or the mounting of an aerial. The station signals are received in parts of the Ashanti, Western and Northern regions as well. *Radio BAR* broadcasts in both Twi and English. Its programmes are about 30 percent English and 70 percent Twi.

The objectives of the station are to⁸:

- foster unity,
- inform the public of government policies,
- serve as an outlet for the peoples' views and opinions.
- articulate public view for the attention of government and relevant bodies and
- entertain through music and entertainment programmes

Radio BAR (at the time of this study) had a staff strength of 56. Seventeen of these were DJ's or producers or presenters. Seven were administrative staff – the administrator, his assistant, two typists and three cleaners or labourers. There were three newsmen/women, and the rest (about 29) belonged to the engineering department. Two national service persons or students on attachment assisted the three newspeople in writing and compiling news stories from time to time. The news staff had the following educational background: Diploma in journalism (from the

Ghana Institute of Journalism, GIJ), and an advanced certificate (diploma) in journalism (from India). The last had a combined GCE "A" Level and special training in broadcasting from GBC training school. Reporters most often typed their own stories but the unit also had one typist who helped in typing the news stories.

Radio BAR's programmes were educational, entertainment, religious, social and musical⁸. Most of them were presented in the straightforward talk form or interview form with "phone-ins." More than half of the programmes (about 80%) were sponsored by business organizations, mainly retailing shops. The programmes were usually packaged and presented alongside musical interludes and a presenter hosted each programme except the "*Ade akye abia*" (Morning show in Akan) programme, which was hosted by two presenters.

1.2.2.1 Radio BAR News Format:

Radio BAR broadcasts news in both Akan/Twi and English. The station depended on its mother network (*Radio Ghana*) for the major national bulletins at six and seven o'clock in the morning; one in the afternoon at one o'clock and six and eight o'clock in the evening everyday. *Radio BAR* also broadcast the current affairs or news programme called "*Ghana Today*" at 3.30 every afternoon from Monday to Friday. At ten o'clock in the morning each day from Tuesday to Friday, either "*News in Brief*" or "*Financial News*" was broadcast in English. The main local news bulletin was broadcast at 12 noon in English from Monday to Friday. The station's news team compiles this bulletin. At three o'clock every afternoon from Monday to Friday, the news was broadcast in Twi. The news sources for the station⁸ were official and unofficial events that occurred in the region as well as activities involving the police,

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chiefs and opinion leaders. The outfit also had stringers across the region, at district capitals, and a few outside the region. Newspapers, the Internet, international magazines such as *Newsweek*, *Time* and *West Africa* and world stations such as *BBC*, *CNN* and *DW* radio were also some of the *Radio BAR* news sources.

1.3 Credibility of news

This study was about the credibility of news because credibility is seen as an important aspect of news. According to Johnson and Kaye (1998), past studies suggest people are less likely to pay attention to news media whose news they do not perceive as credible. Fatt (1999) states that credibility is the believability of a person or medium as measured by another person or persons. According to Fatt (1999), there are three main components that make up credibility: competence, trustworthiness and dynamism. Competence, Fatt (1999) explains, is a communicator's knowledge and expertise about the communication, while trustworthiness is a measure of the communicator's honesty and sincerity. Dynamism is the communicator's energy and confidence in communicating.

Gaziano *et al.* (1986) identify other measures of credibility as objectivity, accuracy and fairness. These three concepts are related and difficult to distinguish but are all-important in the judgment of news credibility (Koomson, 1995). Koomson (1995) defines objectivity as a conscious attempt not to inject bias into a news report; accuracy as the facts of an account in terms of correctness of the details; while fairness is presenting both sides of an event or being balanced. According to Altschull (1974) as long as news reports are not objective, they can neither be fair nor accurate or credible. News that is objective, accurate and fair is credible or

believable or trustworthy. What one thinks or perceives about news usually depends on how credible it is; people are more likely to listen to news bulletins that they consider credible.

1.4 Problem Definition

Radio broadcasting in Ghana has been transformed since the middle of 1995 into an ocean of aural delight. After many years of having little or no choice in terms of radio programming and variety of radio-stations, the Ghanaian radio listener has now encountered a new phenomenon – choice (Dotse 1996: 14)

Although the phenomenon of choice of news media has its many advantages, including the fact that one is not forced or obliged to listen to a particular station because it is the only station available, there is, however, the problem of choice of a particular radio station depending on how credible the station's news is.

In Sunyani, residents interested in radio news were for many years restricted to news relayed to them from *Radio Ghana* only. In 1997, for the first time in the life of Sunyani, its residents had a choice between the two FM stations, one state-owned and the other privately-owned. Since *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* had both been in existence for more than three years broadcasting news to the people of Sunyani, it was useful to know how their listeners perceived their news bulletins.

This study, thus, sought to find out what Sunyani residents thought about news bulletins on *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*. It was important to know whether all the different categories of listeners found news bulletins on both radio stations credible or not and to determine which of the two stations news bulletins they found more credible in terms of objectivity, fairness and accuracy. The study further sought to

determine how listeners perceived the newsworthiness and importance of the stories broadcast.

1.5 Objectives

The main aim of this study was to determine which of the two radio stations', *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR*, news bulletins were perceived by listeners as more credible and why. In order to accomplish this main aim, the study first sought to establish how often listeners listened to the news bulletins on both radio stations and why, and which of the two radio stations' news bulletins listeners preferred listening to and their reasons for doing so. Which type of news listeners preferred (for example, local or foreign, Twi or English) and why such news was preferred, was also important to the study.

The study was also to establish what listeners liked and disliked about the news bulletins of both radio stations and why; which station's news bulletins were the major source of news for listeners and why; and which style of news presentation was more preferred and why. The study further sought to find out what journalists in Sunyani understood by news and its credibility, and their views and perceptions of the news bulletins of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*. This was to establish the possibility and extent of influence on such views on the news product.

1.6 Hypotheses

To achieve the above stated aims and objectives of this study the following hypotheses were tested:

1. The importance attached to news is likely to be related to one's preference or patronage of a radio station's news.
2. The perception of credibility of news is likely to be related to the patronage or preference of a radio station's news bulletins.
3. The style of news presentation is likely to be related to the perception of credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.
4. Each of the measures of credibility, objectivity, fairness and accuracy, is likely to be related to the perception of the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.
5. Gender is likely to influence the interpretation of news credibility.
6. There is likely to be a relationship between respondents' ages and how credible they perceive a radio station's news bulletins.

1.7 Significance of the study

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000: 320) the programme director of *WARW – FM* in Washington, D.C., Phil LoCascio once commented as follows:

Research is the only way to find out about a target audience and what they want from a station. Research helps determine when we must adjust our business to meet new demands. This is important because changes in broadcasting can happen in a matter of minutes. We have no factories to re-tool and no raw materials to order and we must have accurate information very quickly.

Research into broadcasting must be very important to merit such comments from a radio station's programme director. Bittner (1980) noted that broadcasters, besides discovering what people think of their communication, were also interested in finding out what people think of their programmes. One way of determining this,

according to Bittner (1980), was to conduct image surveys to obtain an in-depth look at how audiences perceive the programming. Thus, many broadcast companies are now following the "Find out what people want and give it to them" philosophy (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000: 320).

Perhaps this is because of the realization of what feedback can do for the companies. Feedback, the reversal of the communication process in which the original source becomes the receiver and the original receiver becomes the source (Dominick, 1993), is a vital element in any communication process since without feedback it is often difficult to know whether the message one tries to communicate has really been understood. According to Dominick (1993), feedback is useful to the source because it allows the source to know how well it is doing. Similarly, it is useful to the receiver because it allows the receiver to attempt to change some element in the communication process. However, the news bulletin, unlike other radio programmes in which listeners are allowed to phone-in to give immediate feedback, is a one-way communication process that does not allow immediate feedback.

This study would, therefore, serve as a form of feedback to editors and reporters who compile the news in the newsrooms of the two radio stations. Findings will help the news people know how effectively the news is being communicated and, therefore, guide their news compilation to meet the needs of the listeners. The listeners too would be contributing to change in the news bulletins. Hopefully, the findings of this study would help media practitioners understand listeners' perceptions of news and credibility, so that they could work towards improving the quality of their news bulletins and the image of their media houses. Thus, findings would enable editors and journalists to understand "what the people like and give it to them."

1.8 Operational Definitions

The following definitions were assigned to the specific terms used in this study. These meanings were, therefore, not necessarily the common or general meanings of these terms.

- **Sunyani resident:** Anyone, who lived in Sunyani, was 18 years old or more and listened to radio news. (People who are 18 years or more are eligible to vote in Ghana and are considered old enough to make wise decisions and criticisms).
- **Listener:** Anyone, who lived in Sunyani, was 18 years or more and listened to radio news.
- **Credibility:** This refers to the extent to which news is believable. It also means news that is unbiased/objective, accurate/factual and balanced/fair.
- **Objectivity:** The conscious effort not to inject personal bias or subjectivity into a news report.
- **Accuracy:** Correct details and facts.
- **Fairness:** Presenting both sides of the event or being balanced in one's account.
- **Trustworthy:** Truthful or reliable.



- **Believable:** Credible
- **News bulletin:** A formal news presentation of any of the two radio stations excluding those relayed directly from foreign news stations such as *DW* and *BBC*.
- **Newsworthiness:** Referred to what made news, news. A story is newsworthy if it satisfies any of the criteria for the selection of news (as discussed in Chapter Two) and is good enough to be broadcast as news.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has provided the background to the study by briefly discussing news and radio as an important source of news. The emergence of radio and radio's unique characteristics, the history of radio in Ghana, and the issue of credibility in radio news were briefly recounted. The chapter also gave a background to the two radio stations used in the study, described the research problem and objectives, outlined the hypotheses and explained the significance of the study. With this backdrop, the theoretical perspectives that relate to this study are discussed in the next chapter.

1.10 End notes

1. The Media Foundation for West Africa published a summary of the study in its magazine, *Ghana Free Expression Update*. March/April 2001.
2. The history of radio broadcasting in Ghana as provided in this section, unless otherwise stated, was obtained from the following publications:
Ernest Asamoah (ed.) (*Fifty*) *50 years of Broadcasting in Ghana: Golden Jubilee. July 1935 – 1985*. Accra: Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, 1985.
Sam Thompson (ed) *GBC at 60: Sixty Years of Broadcasting in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, 1995.
3. J.R.K. Tandoh (October, 1998). "Radio Pluralism and allocation of frequencies in Ghana", A seminar paper presented at the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.
4. This was the case in April 2002, when data for the study were collected. However, at the end of the study in July 2003, there were more stations in the region. There was at least, *Space FM* in Sunyani, and another in Drobo.
5. The study was conducted between April and December 2002. Information about the station was obtained in April 2002.
6. Station objectives were obtained in an interview with the then station manager, Mr. Phillip Kwaw, on April 9, 2002.
7. The then station manager, Mr. Phillip Kwaw, in an interview on April 9, 2002, also gave information about staff strength.
8. Information about the station including the objectives was obtained during an interview with the news editor, Mr. Vincent Amengor, on April 10, 2002.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

The central ingredient of the news media (especially the newspaper, radio and television) is what we call “news” (Tunstall 1977: 23). “News” therefore deserves special attention since it is also one of the few original contributions of the mass media (McQuail, 1987). News is also the main activity by which a large part of the journalistic profession defines itself. According to Tuchman (1973-74) it appears that news judgment is the sacred knowledge and the secret ability of the news people; what differentiates them from other people. McQuail (1987) asserts that media institutions can barely exist without news and news cannot exist without media institutions since newsmaking is not something that can occur in isolation. Radio provides a machinery for distribution of news.

Media Awareness Network (2003) defines news as:

- o Something told as having just happened; information about something that has just happened or will soon happen.
- o A report of a current happening or happenings in a newspaper, on television or radio.

Cardowine’s (1987: 77) list of definitions of news as offered by news people and academics includes:

- News is a report of anything timely that interests a number of people.
- News is the difference between the world yesterday and the world today.
- News is what the well-trained reporter finds satisfaction in gathering.
- News is surprise, an unexpected happening
- News = People + Events + Reader interest
- News springs from *sur*, *sura*, *suraya* (music, liquor, women)
- News equals women, wampum and wrongdoing.

- News is N.E.W.S. – North East West South – and information from these and all points between.
- News is something someone wants suppressed.
- News is anything and everything interesting about life, and materials in all their manifestations.
- News is a departure from the normal.
- News is anything that interests a large part of the community and has never been brought to their attention.

Thus, there seems to be no common, universal definition of news although numerous journalists have tried to define news. Most of the definitions (according to McQuail, 1987) are based on intuition and innate judgment of what news is. According to Mcquail (1987), the two “founding fathers” of the concept or sociology of news, both journalists, drew on their own experiences in answering the question of the nature of news. The first, Walter Lippman (1922 in McQuail 1987: 204), focused on newsgathering, which he saw as a search for the “objective, clear signal which signifies an event”. He described news as a report of what is noticeable (or worthy of notice). The second early commentator on news, Park (1940), paid much more attention to the essential properties of news. Park (1940: 32) first compared news with another form of knowledge, history, which is also a record of past events, and placed news on a continuum that ranged from “acquaintance with” to “knowledge about”. As a result of his comparison of news with history, Park (1940: 32) described news as:

- timely, (or about very recent or recurrent events),
- unsystematic (or deals with discrete happenings),
- perishable (lives only when the event themselves are current or for the purpose of record),
- unusual or unexpected and predictable (since it is not only the unexpected which gets into news but the things that one fears or hopes for that make news).

In another history related interpretation, Galtung *et al.* (1965: 64) saw "news" as actually "olds".

Although there is no universal definition of news, there are certain common elements that run through most definitions of news. The production of news and audience perceptions of news is also known to involve certain processes of selection, which may be explained by models of communication. Some media theorists such as Larson (1994) and Severin *et al* (1979) also believe news has an agenda-setting role or property whereby it sets the agenda or topics for people to discuss, worry and think about. There is also little doubt as to the vital nature of truth or credibility to the news genre. In Smith's (1973: 174) view, without an attribution of credibility by the audience, news could not be distinguished from entertainment or propaganda. The uses and gratifications that people derive from news may also be important in their attribution of credibility to news.

This chapter therefore attempts to discuss those theoretical perspectives that have guided research on the views and perceptions of news, related to this study. The theories, models and ideas or perspectives discussed include: "the model" of news values, Gerbner's model of communication, credibility, the uses and gratifications theory and the agenda setting theory.

2.1 The News Values "Model"

Jeffres (1986) notes that efforts to define news often tend to dissolve into lists of events or occurrences. One example he gives of an unmistakable news event is: "When a dog bites a man, that is no news, but when a man bites a dog, that's news" (Jeffres, 1986: 197). Thus, anything that is unusual or bizarre could be termed as

news. The raw material of news, according to Jeffres (1986), is limitless, unpredictable and infinitely variable and as a result journalists look for various criteria in deciding if occurrences merit their classification as “news”. The criteria Jeffres (1986) posits for selecting news are timeliness and proximity, progress and disaster, eminence and prominence, conflict, novelty, consequences and human interest. Similarly, Masterson (1998) in his doctoral thesis came up with a three-part theory about what makes news or the newsworthiness of an event or occurrence. Masterson’s (1998: 87) three-part theory is, that:

1. There are three core elements (interest, timeliness and clarity) that must be present for any information to become news, anywhere, anytime.
2. There are further criteria that determine the information’s level of newsworthiness, with the six major ones being: consequence, proximity, conflict, human interest, novelty and prominence.
3. These elements and criteria are essentially the same everywhere.

According to Masterson (1998), the three core elements (interest, timeliness and clarity) are absolute. If any of the three is missing that information cannot become news. Furthermore, Masterson (1998) contends that the six major news criteria are universal, in that they are the dominant six everywhere, even where their sequence is not quite the same. Masterson (1998) states that many researchers, including Mencher (1997), De Fleur and Dennis (1981) and Weaver (1984), have also explored reasons for news being news and have come up with news criteria which overlap and which are similar to his (Masterson’s) findings. Jeffres (1986) and Masterson (1998) explain their criteria for selecting news as follows: (The explanations are augmented here by suggestions from other authors).

- **Timeliness** – This is one criterion in deciding what is news, which emphasises on news being current, recent and immediate; “something you did not know

before" (Roshco 1975: 9). Thus, historical events that are brought to the knowledge of contemporary scholars are news as well as breaking news or events that have just occurred or are still occurring.

- **Proximity** – This is another criterion for the selection of news, which refers to that which is near or familiar. It has two components, geographic and psychological. Geographically, proximity is a measure of where the information comes from (Masterton, 1998). An item that originates locally is usually more newsworthy than one from a distance. People want to know about their own community first. For example, a distant two-car accident with four dead may not be considered news but the same accident in one's town is news. News has psychological proximity when it has a direct, personal effect on the receiver (Hough 1980: 3).
- **Progress and/or Disaster** – When new inventions, new remedies or new devices appear, they are usually newsworthy. Sometimes such progress or triumphs may lead to disaster (Applegate, 2001) and these are equally newsworthy. For example the triumph of Accra Hearts of Oak over Kotoko in a football match at the Accra Sports stadium on May 9, 2001 led to a stadium disaster in which several people died and for weeks news about the event remained in Ghanaian news bulletins. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods are also newsworthy since they change the status quo.
- **Eminence and prominence** – These mean that whether a statement or an action is news or not depends on who says it or does it (Masterton, 1998). What a president or prime minister or prominent public figure says or does makes news whereas what an unknown citizen says or does, does not, unless

for some other reason. Big names make big news even if what they do is trivial at times.

- **Conflict** – Most conflicts are newsworthy (Jeffres, 1986). A conflict is not just physical violence associated with war (Masterton, 1998), but includes any difference of opinion, including physical (sport), legal (court cases, crime), intellectual or psychological (such as clashes in political, economic or social theories, or debates over issues such as atomic energy). According to Masterton (1998) radio as a medium rates conflict highest of all criteria across the world (with television rating it a close second).
- **Novelty** – This refers to items about things, which are new, unusual or different (Masterton, 1998). The old adage by John Bogart (1918) that when a dog bites a man that is not news because it happens so often; but when a man bites a dog, that is news, fits here. Coincidences, unusual habits, novel ways of making a living and superstitions also fall under this criterion for selecting news. An event that is not “common experience” has the element of novelty.
- **Consequence** – This is a measure of the importance (or impact) of the information to those who receive it; how it affects their finance, their way of life, their education, their future; in any way at all. Consequence tends to be a measure of all the other news values rather than an intrinsic characteristic of the news event itself (Applegate, 2001). It may appear in stories of conflict, progress, disaster or other news values. Effects of government actions, inflation, expected results of occurrences such as war or famine are examples.
- **Human interest** – Many stories with none of the above characteristics are often viewed as having human interest because they affect people

emotionally; for example, helping the blind. People want to know about other people even if they are not important people. The characteristics of news, according to McQuail (1987), are derived to a larger extent than is sometimes recognized, from much older traditions of story-telling and it has been suggested by Darnton (1975 in McQuail 1987: 206) that our conceptions of news result from "ancient ways of telling stories". The tendency for news reports to be cast in the form of a narrative, with principal and minor actors, connected sequence, heroes and villains, beginning, middle and end, has often been noted (McQuail, 1987). Fiske *et al.* (1978) have termed the tendency of the media to incorporate earlier story-telling forms in news as the *bardic function*, a function that cuts across the line dividing *reality* from *fictional* content. News is generally more likely to be of human interest because human interest, according to Curran *et al.* (1981), is vital to the economics of news and it helps us to understand the nature of news values.

The above characteristics of news link events and situations to members of the audience, and the more characteristics contained in a single occurrence, the stronger the connection with the audience.

According to Rowler (1991), there are two succinct but excellent accounts by Stuart Hall and Greg Philo of the processes of selection and transformation of news which were essentially the theory, which underpinned many research projects on news that have been reported in the last ten years. Hall (in Rowler, 1991: 12) stipulated that:

The media do not simply and transparently report events, which are naturally newsworthy in themselves. 'News' is the end product of a

complex process, which begins with a systematic sorting, and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories.

Philo (in Rowler, 1991: 13) also put it this way:

'News' is not self-defining. 'News' is not 'found' or even 'gathered', so much as made. It is a creation of a journalistic process, an artefact, a commodity even.

Rowler (1991) added that the media select events for reporting according to a complex set of criteria of news values: so news is not simply that which happened but that which could be regarded and presented as newsworthy. The more newsworthiness criteria an event satisfies, the more likely it is to be reported. Thus, the newsworthiness of a news item is also likely to affect audience (receiver's) perception of the news.

Galtung and Ruge (1965: in Rowler, 1991) also formulated a widely accepted analysis of news values, a "model" of news values, shown in the following list of factors:

(F₁) frequency, (F₂) threshold, (F₃) ambiguity, (F₄) meaningfulness, (F₅) consonance, (F₆) unexpectedness, (F₇) continuity (F₈) composition, (F₉) reference to elite nations, (F₁₀) reference to elite people, (F₁₁) reference to persons and (F₁₂) something negative.

According to this model, (F₁) "frequency" means an event is more likely to be reported if its duration is close or similar to the publication or broadcast frequency of the news medium. For example, the publication or broadcast of unemployment figures on a certain day is more newsworthy than the long term issue of unemployment itself. Likewise, (F₂) "Threshold" refers to the "size" or "volume" needed for an event to become newsworthy. For example, a car crash involving ten vehicles will get more attention than one involving two.

F₃ - F₅, "unambiguity", "meaningfulness" and "consonance" relate to the reader's or listener's ability to make sense of an event. In Ghana for instance, news items concerning other West African countries are more commonly reported than items concerning India. However, "relevance" can override this. An accident in a chemical plant in India, for instance, though geographically and culturally far away, would be relevant to people in Ghana because similar risks may exist in this country. Criterion (F₆) "unexpectedness" states that an event is more newsworthy if it happens without warning and/or is unusual (such as the sudden and unexpected collapse of a bridge).

Of (F₇) "continuity", Galtung and Ruge (1965) stated that once something had hit the headlines and had been defined as "news" then it would continue to be defined for some time as news even if the amplitude was drastically reduced. (F₈) "composition" refers to the balance or makeup of the news bulletin: an item will be more or less newsworthy depending on what else is available for inclusion in content at a particular time.

Galtung and Ruge (in Rowler 1991: 15) stress that the last four factors, (F₉ - F₁₂) are "culture-bound factors influencing the transition from events to news". F₉, "reference to elite nations", encodes a superpower ideology of the dominating status of North America, Japan, Europe and Russia in world political and cultural affairs. As for elite person's (F₁₀), Rowler (1991) notes that the media's infatuation with the Princess of Wales (Princess Diana), for example, was a perfect illustration of that preoccupation. Also, Rowler (1991) regards (F₁₁) "reference to persons" as dangerous. He warns that the obsession with persons, and the media's use of them as symbols, prevents serious discussion and explanation of underlying social and

economic factors. For example, the brick-throwing rioter is imagined over and over again while unemployment and the poverty of social services are rarely emphasized. F₁₂, "negativity", is a value that is very different from natural – there is no natural reason why disasters should be more newsworthy than triumphs since one would expect people to prefer hearing about those events that are pleasant than those that are unpleasant.

The above news values according to Rowler (1991) are all socially constructed values. Thus, in determining the significance of events, the media and their audience make reference, explicitly or more usually implicitly, to what are variously called, in cognitive psychology and in semantics, "frames", "paradigms", "stereotypes", "schemata" and "general propositions". Rowler (1991: 18) defines a stereotype as "a socially-constructed mental pigeon-hole into which events and individuals can be sorted, thereby making such events and individuals comprehensible". According to him, people construct the world in this way and a person's relationship with the media makes a major contribution to this process of construction. The occurrence of a striking event will reinforce a stereotype, and the firmer the stereotype, the more related events are likely to become news. According to Rowler (1991), because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from a particular angle - social, economic or political, for instance. Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position. Thus:

News values are rather to be seen as qualities of (potential) reports. That is to say, they are not simply features of selection but, more importantly, features of representation; and so the distinction between 'selection' and 'transformation' ceases to be absolute: an item can only be selected if it can be seen in a

certain light of representation, and so selection involves an ideological act of interpretation (Rowler, 1991: 19).

2.2 Gerbner's model of communication (1956)

George Gerbner produced a model to help explain the communication process – a general-purpose model of communication, which also shows that real events are subject to conventional processes of selection (Fiske, 1990). This model may thus be used to explain the communication process involved in the selection of news. According to Fiske (1990) the main advances over Gerbner's model are two: it relates the message to the "reality" which it is "about" and thus enables us to approach questions of perception and meaning. It sees the communication process as consisting of two alternating dimensions – perceptual or receptive, and the communicating means and control dimension.

In Gerbner's model (Fiske, 1990), the process of communication begins with an event E, something in external reality, which is perceived by M. M can be a machine. M's perception of E is percept E_1 . This is the perceptual dimension at the start of the process. According to the model, the relationship between E and E_1 involves selection because M cannot possibly perceive the whole complexity of E. If M is a human, the selection is complex since human perception is not a simple reception of stimuli, but is a process of interaction.

Human perception itself, according to Bootzin *et al* (1991), is the brain's attempt to describe objects and events in the world, based on sensory input (what we hear, smell, see, taste and touch) and knowledge derived from past experience. "Meaning" is derived from the matching of external stimuli with internal concepts. Failing to see meaning in what is perceived puts one into a state of disorientation.

The matching, according to Fiske (1990), is controlled by culture. This, he notes, means people of different cultures will perceive reality differently. Perception then is not just a psychological process within the individual; it is a matter of culture.

The audience gives meaning to messages selectively, according to the principles of selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention (Jeffres, 1986). These principles state that people attend to messages with which they tend to agree and also recall such messages readily. For instance, people would selectively expose themselves to certain types of programmes because they like them. Similarly, the perceptions one holds before listening to a news item may affect the way one reacts. As a result of selective perception, one may retain only those portions of an address with which one agrees (Bittner, 1980). One may describe this behaviour as impression or experience being brought to bear on selection.

Thus, this model gives meaning to how news is communicated and the fact that perception of credibility of news is to a large extent influenced by selective perception and retention.

2.3 The Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications theory explains how people use the media and the gratifications they derive from such media behaviour (Wimmer, 2000). This theory is relevant to this study because the uses to which people put the media and the gratifications they receive from such media use are likely to affect their perceptions of the media content – news in this case. Besides, news itself may be a gratification people derive from the radio. Indeed, perspectives of the uses and gratifications theory have helped researchers understand audience perception of media content.

Rosengren (1972), for example, suggested that uses and gratifications research might be profitably connected with the long-established tradition of enquiry into public perception of various media, and the dimensions according to which their respective images and qualities are differentiated.

The uses and gratifications theory has its roots in the 1940s, when researchers became interested in why people engaged in various forms of media behaviour such as radio listening (Wimmer, 2000). For example, Herzog (1944) identified three types of gratification associated with listening to radio soap operas: emotional release, wishful thinking and obtaining advice. These early studies, according to Wimmer (2000), had little theoretical coherence since many were inspired by the practical needs of radio broadcasters and other media managers to know the motivations of their audience, in order to serve them more efficiently.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a new phase of research guided by this theory began with emphasis on identifying and operationalising the many social and psychological variables, presumed to be the antecedents of different patterns of consumption and gratification. For example, Gerson (1966) concluded that race was important in predicting how adolescents used the media. Many studies conducted during this period reflected a shift from the traditional effects model of mass media research to the functional perspective (Wimmer, 2002). According to Windahl (1981), a primary difference between the uses and gratifications approach and the traditional effects approach is that a media effects researcher usually examines mass communication from the perspective of the communicator, whereas the uses and gratifications researcher uses the audience member as a point of reference.

After reviewing the results of approximately 100 uses and gratifications studies, Palmgreen (1984) stated that a rather complex theoretical structure had begun to emerge. He proposed an integrative gratifications model that suggested many antecedent variables such as media structure, media technology, social circumstances, psychological variables, needs values and beliefs. All these relate to the particular gratification pattern used by the audience.

Kartz *et al.* (in Rubin *et al.*, 1998) stated that over the years, the uses and gratifications perspective of mass communication research had focused on reasons why people use the media. This perspective had three major objectives: to explain how the media are used by individuals to satisfy their needs; to understand the motives for media use; and to identify the outcomes that follow needs, motives and media use. Thus, news credibility may be an outcome of needs, motives and media use. According to a study by the Centre for New Media Research and Education at Bond University in Australia, much of the fundamental theoretical support revealed by the literature came from the uses and gratifications approach. The literature suggested that audiences were likely to use those media that served their needs most closely.

Rubin (1986) pointed out that even though theory development had progressed, the uses and gratifications approach still had a long way to go. Similarly, according to Wimmer (2000), Swanson (1987) called for more research to encourage the theoretical grounding of the uses and gratifications approach. Specifically, Swanson (1987) urged that research focus on (1) the role of gratification seeking in exposure to mass media, (2) the relationship between gratification and the

interpretive frames through which audiences understand media content, and (3) the link between gratifications and media content.

2.4 The Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory of the media proposes that the public agenda – or what kinds of things people discuss, think and worry about – is powerfully shaped and directed by what the news media choose to publicise (Larson, 1994). According to Wimmer (2000), this means that if the news media decide to give the most time and space to covering the budget deficit, this issue will become the most important item on the audience's agenda. In other words, the agenda setting function of the mass media is to select and emphasise certain issues and thereby cause those issues to be perceived as important by the public (Severin *et al.*, 1979). Agenda-setting research, thus, examines the relationship between media priorities and audience priorities in the relative importance of news topics.

The agenda-setting theory argues that the media not only inform people but also inform them about what they should think about. Ansah (1993) agrees with the agenda-setting argument when he says the media, to a large extent, set the agenda for public debate and sometimes determine the direction of such debate. In other words, the media set an agenda for our thought processes; they tell what is important and what we should know and need (Bittner, 1980). Thus, by means of news, for instance, the media are persuasive in focusing public attention on specific events and persons. According to McCombs (1992), both the selection of objects for attention and the selection of frames for thinking about objects are powerful agenda setting

roles: news tells us what to think about and how to think about it. The media through the agenda-setting role influence our perception of issues.

Wimmer (2000) traces the notion of agenda setting by the media back to Walter Lippmann (1922) who suggested that the media were responsible for the pictures in our heads. In recent years, the most popular subjects in agenda-setting research have been (1) how the media agenda is set and (2) how the media choose to portray the issues they cover.

There have, however, been some criticisms of the agenda-setting theory. Perry (1996) criticised this model on the bases that it had failed to provide convincing evidence of causal relationship between the media agenda and the public's agenda. Another major criticism offered by McQuail (1994) is that the theory has difficulty establishing a correspondence between the issues people consider to be important and the importance the media attaches to those issues. McQuail (1994) suggests that in actual fact the media do not really set the agenda but rather serve as a mirror of reality for people. The media only reflect what happens in the environment or in society.

2.5 Issues of Credibility

Though this study generally looks at listeners' perceptions or views about the news bulletins of two radio stations, the focus or emphasis is on news credibility. This section thus discusses various definitions of the term "credibility" and the criteria various researchers have used in measuring credibility.

The Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1976) defines credibility as "worthiness of belief." It notes that something is credible if it is capable of being

believed, worthy of belief, entitled to confidence or trustworthy. For news to be considered credible, therefore, it must be trustworthy or believable. The kind of news the media produce, and the expertise with which they do it, is expected to have some influence on the credibility of news. According to Bittner (1980), two factors that affect the way people perceive broadcast messages, particularly news are source credibility and media credibility.

2.5.1 Source Credibility

Source credibility is the credibility of the original source of the communication (Bittner, 1980). In the case of a politician's broadcast address, for instance, source credibility would be the credibility of the politician. If one perceives the politician as highly credible, the chances are that the person's reaction to the politician would be favourable. Research, Bittner (1980) notes, has assigned many subordinate factors to source credibility, among them, dynamism, trustworthiness and competence. Infante (1980), for instance, used these three dimensions to measure source credibility. Infante (1980) operationalised trustworthiness as honest, and sincere; competence as skilled, qualified and informed; and dynamism as bold, active and aggressive. Source credibility, Bittner (1980) further explains, lies partially in the source and partially in how the source is perceived by the audience. In other words, how broadcast messages affect one is related to how one perceives the source of those messages. This means that if a listener perceives news that is broadcast by a radio station as credible, then he/she is more likely to perceive the radio station (the source of the news) as also credible.

Fatt (1999) states that paralanguage or paralinguistic factors such as volume, rate, pitch and pronunciation have a strong effect on the audience or receiver in the process of communication. Thus, in broadcasting, a communicator's voice is a major determinant of the receiver's first impression and final impression or perception. Volume, according to Fatt (1999), represents more than a level of sound. A person with a weak voice is usually perceived as lacking confidence, which lowers credibility. A strong voice, on the other hand, shows great confidence and higher credibility. The rate and pitch at which someone speaks are also vital to understanding a message and to the credibility of the communicator (Fatt, 1999). According to Fatt (1999), if a person speaks too slowly, the audience will likely lose interest and the speaker's credibility would drop. On the other hand, speaking too quickly makes a voice unintelligible and also leads to lower credibility. Pronunciation (Fatt, 1999) is perhaps the most obvious dynamic feature of the voice vital to credibility of a source. A speaker with poor pronunciation is perceived to be lower in competence, trustworthiness and dynamism than a speaker with good pronunciation. So for this study, one may expect that factors such as voice, pronunciation, rate of speech of newscaster, (or the mode of presentation of the news) would influence the credibility of the news.

2.5.2 Media Credibility

Media credibility refers to how one perceives the overall credibility of a medium, such as a local radio station (Bittner, 1980). Media credibility, Bittner (1980) states, can also determine the effect of a broadcast message. He posits two types of media credibility: intermedia credibility and intramedia credibility. Intermedia

credibility, Bittner (1980) explains, is the relative credibility of various media, such as determining that television is more credible than radio or the newspaper. Intramedia credibility on the other hand is the relative credibility within the same medium, such as the credibility between two radio stations. Over a number of years, studies on media credibility have asked questions such as, "In the face of conflicting news reports, which medium would you be most likely to believe: television, newspapers, radio, magazines or other people?" Bittner (1980) notes that such studies fail to allow for the many possible intervening variables, which truly reflect the characteristics of media credibility.

In this study, the focus was on intramedia credibility since perceptions of two radio stations were sought. Various measures of credibility as discussed below were used to determine how listeners perceived the news bulletins of two radio stations.

2.5.3 Measures of Credibility

Researchers have utilized a variety of measures in their quest to understand news credibility in mass communication. Gaziano and McGrath (1986) identified twelve dimensions of news credibility. These included fairness, bias, completeness, accuracy, respect for privacy, watch for people's interests, concern for community, separation of fact and opinion, trust, concern for public interest, factuality and level of training. Furthermore, Gaziano's (1987) analysis of four major credibility studies found twelve operationalisations of credibility.

These definitions of credibility included believability, accuracy, completeness and covering up facts, trustworthiness and reliability, being unbiased, balance of coverage, fairness and objectivity. The other operationalisations were characteristics

of press performance, such as invasion of privacy, covering up stories and overall evaluations of how well media perform, independence of media from special interests, or organisations or institutions. Power/influence of media in the community or society, relationship of news media to government, honesty and ethical standards, professionalism and training of people in the media were also other definitions Gaziano (1987) found in his analysis.

Gaziano (1987) noted that these measures had also been used in studies by Hovland and Weiss (1951), Meyer (1988) and others. Gaziano and McGrath (in Rubin, 1994: 234) observed that media credibility, thus, comprises:

fairness, (un)bias, telling the whole story, accuracy, respect for privacy, watching out after people's interest, concern for community well-being, separation of fact and opinion, trustworthiness, concern for public interest, factuality, and reporter training level.

Rimmer *et. al.* (1987) used trustworthiness, fairness, bias, completeness, respect for privacy, representation of individual interests, accuracy, concern for community well-being, separation of fact and opinion, concern for public interest, factual foundations of information published and qualifications of reporters to measure credibility. Meyer's (1988) index for believability comprised five dimensions, namely; fairness, bias, completeness, accuracy and trustworthiness. Ognianova (1998) utilized nine semantic differential items to measure news story credibility. They were factual/opinionated, unfair/fair, accurate/inaccurate, trustworthy/untrustworthy, balanced/unbalanced, biased/unbiased, reliable/unreliable, thorough/not thorough, and informative/ not informative. Wanta *et. al.* (1994) on their part used believability and affiliation indices to evaluate media credibility. The believability index was built around media manipulation of public opinion, getting facts

straight, dealing fairly with all sides of an issue, and separation of facts from opinion. Affiliation was measured with concern for community well being, watching out for reader interests, and concern for public welfare.

2.5.4 Objectivity, fairness and accuracy

Objectivity, fairness and accuracy are the three measures that seem to cut across all the measures of credibility used by various researchers in evaluating news credibility. According to Stone (1992), accuracy, fairness and objectivity are the distinct elements that define news and that separate news from fiction. Talking about news without mentioning these three is therefore like scaling a rugged mountain peak barefoot: that climb cannot be successful (Stone, 1992). Likewise, Mencher (1997) states that very important characteristics or attributes of all news stories are accuracy, fairness (or balance) and objectivity. Hiebert *et al* (1991) also discuss objectivity, accuracy and balance as the three main criteria of news quality. The news media (according to Hiebert *et al*, 1991) frequently defend themselves against charges of libel and bias by claiming their reports are credible because they are objective, accurate and balanced or fair.

The emphasis of this study is, thus, mainly on these three measures of credibility – objectivity, fairness and accuracy which seem to cut across the various measures already discussed and which the researchers mentioned place emphasis on. Other measures of credibility such as trustworthiness, respect for privacy and concern for community well being also seem to be incorporated in the three – objectivity, fairness and accuracy. The following sub-sections explain and discuss

accuracy, fairness and objectivity in detail, since they provide a theoretical framework for this study.

2.5.4.1 Accuracy

Stone (1992) notes that accuracy forms the basis of objectivity and fairness. "Without accuracy, the entire news loses its credibility and dependability with the public" (Stone, 1992: p.11). Accuracy includes the exact pronunciation and spelling of names, correct dates and times and right person quoted. Every fact must be exactly right to ensure accuracy (Stone, 1992).

Mencher (1992) refers to accuracy as verifying every information before it is used. For a story to be accurate, it must not contain any errors. Direct observation therefore, according to Mencher (1992), is the surest way to obtain accurate information. However, when the reporter cannot directly observe, then it is important for him/her to make efforts to check the accuracy of the information through verification and by seeking out documents and records. Hiebert *et al* (1991) refer to accuracy as being vigilant for detail and perpetually skeptical of those who would deceive or exaggerate in order to twist and distort the truth.

Similarly, in Bittner *et al.*'s (1977) view, accuracy in radio journalism is fundamental and a station that does not strive to be accurate could quickly lose its credibility and its listenership. So the most elementary form of accuracy in radio journalism or writing a news story is to obtain the basic facts and to cross-check these facts before using them. According to Bittner *et al.* (1977), competition can play an important role in the commitment to accuracy. Radio journalists with the means to instantaneous broadcast of news are faced with an awesome responsibility

to collect accurate information in relatively short periods of time and under the stress of competition. Being accurate and last with a story, however, is more important than being first but wrong.

Thus, if listeners realised that a radio station's news stories always turned out to contain wrong information, they would no longer believe the stories and this would greatly affect the credibility of the station's news. It was therefore important to consider accuracy as a measure of credibility in this study.

2.5.4.2 Fairness

Fairness or balance, according to Heibert *et al* (1991), refers to telling all sides of the story. The journalist is supposed to be dedicated to the proposition that "only from balanced reporting of both sides of a story will the people be able to discover the whole truth" (Hiebert *et al*, 1991: p.14). Mencher (1997) similarly explains balance and fairness in news stories as giving all sides in a controversy. Mencher (1997: p. 45) lists the guidelines of "*The Washington Post*" on fairness as:

- No story is fair if it omits facts of major importance or significance. So fairness includes completeness.
- No story is fair if it includes essentially irrelevant information at the expense of significant facts. So fairness includes relevance.
- No story is fair if it consciously or unconsciously misleads or even deceives the reader, listener or viewer. So fairness includes honesty.
- No story is fair if reporters hide their biases or emotions behind such pejorative words as "refused", "despite", "admit" and "massive". So fairness requires straightforwardness ahead of flashiness.

2.5.4.3 Objectivity

As a vital element of the issue of credibility in news, several scholars have tried to discuss objectivity. Objectivity refers to news being a factual report of an event as it occurred without the bias of the reporter or attempt on the part of the journalist to make any one view more influential than another (Hiebert *et al*, 1991). Chamley (1963, in Applegate, 2000: p. 29) defines objectivity as: "the news that comes to the consumer untainted by any personal bias or outside influence that would make it appear anything but what it is." Accordingly, Dunlevy (1998 in Breen 1998: p.120) refers to the dictionary meaning of "objectivity" as "being concerned with or expressing the nature of external reality rather than personal feelings and beliefs, dealing with facts without distortion by personal feelings or prejudice and eliminating subjectivity from judgements".

Thus, being objective, Dunlevy (1998) explains, means concentrating on matters independent of the mind, to present an external world that is either observable or verifiable, especially by scientific methods. Similarly, according to Mencher (1997), objectivity refers to the news writer not injecting his/her feelings or opinions into the story. To Mencher (1997) unfair and unbalanced journalism might be described as a failure in objectivity.

When journalists talk about objectivity they mean that the news story is free of the reporter's opinion or feelings, that it contains facts and that the account is from an impartial and independent observer. Stories are objective when material in them is borne out of evidence (Mencher, 1997: 47).

Mencher (1997) equates objectivity with credibility. He explains this equality by citing the comments of an Italian chemist, Primo Levi who wrote books on his experiences in a Nazi concentration camp. Asked why his books seemed so

dispassionate, Levi said he had deliberately assumed the calm and sober language of the witness and not the lamenting tones of the victim or the irate voice of someone who seeks revenge. Levi emphasized that he felt his account would be more credible and useful the more it appeared objective and the less it sounded overly emotional. This was because only in that way would a witness in matters of justice perform his/her task of preparing the ground for the judge, the judge being the readers in his case.

Phillips (1978 in Breens, 1998) also concludes that the journalistic notion of objectivity boils down to a set of canons based on vague notions of balance, fairness, lack of bias, accuracy and neutrality in newsgathering and editing. In other words, the other measures of credibility already discussed are closely related to objectivity.

According to Dunlevy (1998), objectivity has been one of the most important values in Western journalism for more than 60 years and many journalists still say they like to be objective. American journalists embrace the ideal of objectivity as one of the fundamental norms of their profession (Lichtenberg, 1997). Similarly, according to the *Code of Ethics* of the Ghana Journalists Association (1994), Ghanaian journalists, while free to take positions on any issue, are expected to draw a clear line between comment, conjecture and fact. The Ghanaian journalist is also expected to write and report the truth bearing in mind his/her duty to serve the public who also have the right to unbiased, accurate, balanced and comprehensive information. Contrary to this code, however, a Ghanaian study on the media (Gadzekpo and Denkabe, 1996) revealed that participants felt the concept of objectivity was a myth as every step a journalist took in reporting an incident was a

decision based on values. According to respondents in the study, a journalist's selection of material was therefore subjective and his/her reportage slanted.

Tracing the idea of objectivity historically, Dunlevy (1998) believes it was spread by the wire services and that these services adopted it for commercial reasons. During the 19th century, most political news was presented in either partisan or interpretative style; but a wire service that wanted to sell news to many newspapers reflecting various political views had to be non-partisan. It had to stick to facts and leave judgement to the papers. Accordingly, as newspapers came to rely increasingly on wire news, they began to imitate its practices, partly because their own audience was becoming diverse too (Dunlevy, 1998).

Applegate (2001) believes that the rationale behind objectivity lies in the libertarian concept of market place of ideas where rational individuals form their beliefs based on their access to ideas and information. According to Applegate (2001), the notion of objectivity actually found its way into newspapers during the first half of the 20th century, as reporters and editors realised that opinion had no place in news stories. During this period, a national press emerged in New York as newspapers with the help of radio and television captured readers and listeners across the nation. The standard news story, or "straight news" story, which called for the chronicling of facts – objective factual reporting, dispassionately setting forth a series or group of facts with all authorities and sources noted – had become the standard form of news for both the newspaper and radio by the beginning of World War I (Applegate, 2000).

There have, however, been several criticisms of "objectivity" in news. One critic, Burrows (1977: 39) noted:

Total objectivity is impossible in news reporting because we bring our emotions and prejudices to what we perceive... Even a reporter who makes desperate efforts at impartiality faces two problems. First he must not only decide which information to put in the story, but which to leave out. The part that is left out might make the story more objective... Second, he must decide which element of the story gets the most "play" and relegate the rest to lesser play. News judgement is the decisive factor, but even the soundest judgement does not mean that all important elements in a story will be represented in exact proportion to their real part in it.

Koch (1990) also claimed that news is not objective because it could be shown to be consistent, following a general pattern of presentation accepted, and journalism in all its forms is highly predictable in the way it organises information. In other words, Koch (1990) claims that reporters cover events in set ways. Charney (1963) points out two conflicts in objective reporting. One is that reporters are humans and as humans they cannot be totally objective. The other is that facts alone cannot present the true picture or understanding of life.

When objectivity collides with complexity, a good reporter should help the consumer see the objective facts in perspective; he should provide relevant background information to clarify the complicated news events. (Charney, 1963:27)

According to Applegate (2001) some journalists (like Burrows) believe there is no such thing as objectivity. Kessler *et al.* (1989) for instance note that objectivity is a false and impossible ideal which all media writers claim in some way although they are all wrong. Other journalists believe that since we live in such a complex society, objective reporting does not allow the journalist to properly cover the issues. Maraldi (1990) wrote: "Objective reporting does not allow for a lengthy repetition of what was reported before; it is episodic and fragmented, and the necessary connections to previous episodes are often lost".

Pippert (1989) further noted that objectivity is often held up as a journalistic ideal, but emphasis on objectivity can obscure the truth at times. This is because objectivity may become the mere presentation of two sides of an issue in a way that distorts the proportionate importance of each. Hiebert *et. al.* (1991) illustrate this with the case of a senator in Wisconsin who kept making charges he could not substantiate against others. The news media in an attempt to be objective reported those charges made against these people and these people denied the charges, Both sides of the stories were told, which means the media gave a fair and balanced coverage of the news, but the reporters could not inject their opinion that the senator was lying. Irreparable damage was therefore done to the accused.

Minor (1970:194) asserts:

If there is a single dominant shibboleth in contemporary journalism, it is "objectivity". In tandem with full disclosure, its canons occupy a place in the presumed hierarchy of journalistic ethics comparable to medicine's Hippocratic oath. Unfortunately, it is a principle observed most often in the breach or to avoid the perils of seeking the truth, and it is often prostituted as an excuse for superficiality or as a cover for the less true.

In other words, according to Minor (1970), objective reporting should not just be a matter of balance in a story; a journalist should interpret the issues for his reader/listeners. So, objective reporting is not enough, interpretative reporting is needed (Applegate, 2001).

The critics say journalism is not objective; it cannot be objective and should not be (Lichtenberg, 1997). Yet, those who believe objectivity is impossible often hold it to be an undesirable and even dangerous ideal – a strategy of hegemony used by some members of society to dominate others (Mackinnon, 1982). According to

Lichtenberg (1997), the various criticisms might seem to make sense since the arguments are based on the facts that:

- Experience continually shows we do not know how to decide who is right
- No one can totally escape his or her own biases; and therefore no one is completely objective and
- Anyone who sincerely thinks there can be a true and objective account of things is deluded by a faulty understanding of the relationship between mind and the world.

However, Lichtenberg (1997) argues that the criticisms really do not make sense for the following reasons: First, the sincere complaint that a piece of journalism is not objective makes sense only against the background assumption that objectivity is possible but why bother complaining about the inevitable? Second, the insistence that journalism cannot be objective makes superfluous the view that objectivity is undesirable why bother denouncing the impossible? Third, the assertion that objectivity is not desirable makes senseless the complaint that journalism should not be objective.

Lichtenberg (1997) further argues that the most fundamental interest in objectivity is an interest in truth. Therefore, to claim that a piece of journalism is not objective is to claim that it is short of providing the truth or the whole truth. To deny that objectivity is possible is to deny that there is any way of getting at the truth and therefore it makes no sense to think there is any such thing as truth. Thus, Lichtenberg (1997) has tried to show that although the critics of objectivity may make sense, they themselves do not abandon "objectivity". In Lichtenberg's (1997) view, those who purport to reject objectivity are really rejecting objectivity explicitly while

relying on it covertly or confusing objectivity with something else (like neutrality) or criticising practices or methods commonly, but perhaps mistakenly, thought to attain objectivity.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined ways in which theoretical perspectives and ideas relate to news, and its credibility, as a communication phenomenon. Some of the perspectives considered included what really makes a piece of information news – the “model” of news values. An overview of Gerbner’s model of communication has also thrown more light on the communication process involved in the selection and perception of news. Discussions on credibility have dwelt on how various researchers have defined and measured credibility (in news) with the emphasis on fairness, accuracy and objectivity. A look at the uses and gratifications and agenda setting theories has also shown that these theories in one way or the other may play major roles in news and also influence the credibility of news and how people perceive news. The following chapter attempts to review the literature or studies related to the issue of perception and credibility of radio news.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews studies related to this research. Some of the factors the researcher considered in reviewing the studies included the objectives, theoretical issues, methods used, findings, problems and conclusions drawn. The studies have been categorized into studies from the world (particularly the western world) and those from Ghana.

3.1 Studies from the Western World

According to Mcgeever (1996), reviews of studies by the London Radio Joint Audience Ltd. in 1996 showed that radio station formats influence audience preference for particular radio stations. One such study revealed that those radio stations with identical formats tended to have relatively low patronage. According to the study, the reason for this was that identical radio formats confused the listeners and gave them no alternative to choose from. While radio stations with specialized formats were able to build listener loyalty, stations that tried to be “Jack-of-all-trades” gave the opportunity to specialized stations to operate, consequently losing their potential audiences.

Another study conducted by the Elway Research Inc (2001) showed that Washington citizens were concerned about “balance and fairness” of their local radio stations (www.wanewscouncil.org). The telephone survey of 600 adults of Washington, titled “Citizen views of local news media”, was sponsored by the Washington’s News Council – an independent, non-profit state-wide citizens

organisation whose mission is to help maintain public trust and confidence in the news media by promoting fairness, accuracy and balance and the Daniel J Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington.

Conducted on June 5-8, 2001, with a margin of error of $\pm 4\%$ at 95% confidence level, the nationwide survey found that there was "good news" and "bad news" for local news media – newspapers, television and radio. According to the study, Washington's citizens paid close attention to their local media and most believed the media did a good or excellent job of covering important community issues. Television ranked highest at 57% as the medium that did the best job of covering important communication issues, followed by newspaper (54%) and radio (46%).

The respondents were, however, more skeptical of the accuracy, a dimension of credibility that concerns this study, of things they read or heard in the news. About three-quarters (76%) said they were more skeptical about the factual accuracy of things they read or heard in news. About half said local news did only a fair or poor job of correcting errors; and most people (89%) agreed that news outlets too often sensationalised news stories to attract readers, viewers and listeners. More than half of the respondents (56%) ranked television news highest in accuracy of facts in their stories, followed by newspapers (48%) and radio news (45%).

The survey results also suggested a variety of ways news outlets could bolster public trust. Almost all the respondents (94%) said the job of news organisations was to get the facts right, not to interpret those facts. This result thus opposed Applegate's (2001) assertion that objective reporting was not enough since interpretative reporting was also needed. About three-quarters of the respondents

said the media increased their credibility when they publicly corrected errors, underpinning the centrality of accuracy in credibility.

Another survey conducted by the Gallup Organisation in 1985 noted that there is “no credibility problem for the media”, but there is a problem of the media’s perceived independence (Radolf, 1986 in Wells 1987: 334)

This survey was commissioned by the Times Mirror Co. and was conducted to resolve some of the “puzzling inconsistencies” of earlier research and to “expressly uncover the public’s most basic attitudes towards the media” (Radolf, 1986 in Wells: 334). The survey found strong public support for the media’s role as the watchdog of government. The survey established that if credibility is defined as believability, then credibility is in fact one of the media’s strongest pursuits. The survey found that print news organisations were not seen as any more or less believable than electronic organisations. The survey further noted that in 1930, polls done for *Fortune* by Roper found about one person in three expressed reservations about the accuracy of the media.

Gallup found the numbers unchanged in its 1985 survey. A little more than half of the respondents (55%) stated that the news media get the facts straight while about a third (34%) believed that the media were often inaccurate. About half of the respondents (53%) noted that the news organisations were often influenced by powerful people and organisations compared with a little above one-third (37%) who viewed the media as pretty independent. Nine out of twenty respondents (45%) believed news reporting was politically biased, compared to about seven out of twenty (36%) who felt it was not. More than half (53%) of the respondents observed that news organisations were fair to only one side in their report while about a third

(34%) said the media were fair to all sides. More than half of the respondents (54%) viewed news organisations as honest or morally good compared to less than one-fifth (13%) who viewed them as immoral.

The belief that news organisations have no regard for people's privacy continued to be one of the most widely held criticisms of all. Close to three-quarters (73%) of the respondents said news organisations were likely to invade privacy while less than a quarter (21%) felt the news media respected people's privacy. The criticism that the media dwelt too much on bad news also persisted. Two-thirds said the news media paid too much attention to bad news while one-third said there was not too much attention paid to bad news. The "need for attracting a big audience" was the leading factor cited for the media's failure to do a good job of reporting (23%), followed by pressure from special interests (21%), not keeping opinions out of stories or not being objective (17%) and government keeping the story from the media (11%).

The Radio and Television Directors Foundation (RTNDF) also conducted a national survey of the radio news audience from January to February 2000 in an effort to better understand the role that radio played in American lives (Thalhimer, 2000). The project evaluated the public's perception of news on radio, compared radio news at the time of the study with available benchmarks and considered what radio news might become in the future. The research instrument was designed by Statistical Research Inc (SRI), which made over 10,000 calls to complete 1,229 interviews with randomly selected adults between the ages of 18 and 64. The survey, with a margin of error of ± 3 percent, revealed that radio was the most widely available news source and a very personal medium listeners found credible.

The study showed that many people had greater contact with radio than with other news media. More than three-quarters of commuters relied on radio for news while travelling to and from work and at work. One-third of workers used radio to get most of their news. The survey also found that older respondents preferred radio news while younger respondents did not necessarily prefer radio news but however got a greater portion of their news from radio. Radio news was perceived as an easy and relevant way to stay abreast with the day's events. Furthermore, news was an accepted and expected part of radio programming. It ranked second after music as a reason why people tuned in to a radio station. The study also found that the African-American and Hispanic audiences listened to radio more than the general public.

The survey further revealed that listeners believed the greatest strength of radio news was its coverage of local issues. More than nine in ten respondents believed that an important function of radio news was to inform about community events. People were roughly 40 percent more likely to say that local news rather than national news was very important to their selection of a radio station.

In terms of credibility, that is, accuracy, relevance and bias, radio news rated lower than both local and national television. And in terms of perceived relevance and bias, radio news rated lower than even the Internet. When faced with conflicting versions of the same news story, about a third of the listeners (36%) reported being most likely to trust national television news, followed by local television news (24%), newspapers (15%), radio (11%) and the Internet (7%). One theory for the lower rating of radio news was that listener impressions of radio news had been coloured by the strong voices of on-air personalities inherent in talk radio.

The respondents however proposed that radio news had a good future. More than half of the listeners said they paid close attention when news came on. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of those surveyed agreed that the quality of radio news programming was improving.

Johnson and Kaye (1998) in another study compared credibility of the Internet with the traditional media such as television and radio. The study surveyed Web users online to examine whether they viewed World Wide Web publications as credible as their traditionally delivered counterparts – radio, television, and newspaper. A total of 308 people completed the survey during a four-week period from October 23 to November 20, 1996. The results showed that credibility was crucial for the Internet. The study found that the on-line media tended to be judged more credible than their traditional versions. However, both the on-line and traditional media were judged only as somewhat credible.

3.1.1 Sources of news

The Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) contracted the Centre for New Media Research and Education at Bond University to conduct research on the relative influence exercised by sources of news and current affairs in shaping community attitudes. The study consisted of a comprehensive literature review, a probabilistic national community survey and a series of six focus groups in urban and regional towns in Australia.

The literature reviewed in this study suggested that most adults consumed a daily diet of news and current affairs that amounted to between one and two hours of reading or listening, from a variety of media. The order of preference was television,

followed by radio and newspapers. The literature again suggested that audiences were changing quickly, and that newer media might have been influenced by that change. Perceived levels of credibility were neither high nor low. The cause of lower credibility included journalists use of sources on one side of an argument but not the other, increasing dependency of public relations materials by news managers and an increasing focus on profitability amongst media managers, owners and controllers.

Influence of the media on society was gauged in the literature by the media's ability to affect public opinion and set the public agenda of the day. According to the literature, news and current affairs sources contributed substantially to public opinion, attitudes and agenda. There was evidence too that public opinion about news and current affairs events was often centred on what people thought their peers thought important. The literature further indicated that the influence of news and current affairs was moderated by a number of factors including age, cognitive capacity and background.

The (ABA) survey was conducted in November 2000 using a computer-assisted telephone interviewing system, with 1,620 Australian adults drawn from a national sample representative of the population. The survey covered nearly 100 individual questions grouped into nine sections including coverage of uses and sources of news and current affairs, preferences for media credibility and bias in news and current affairs. The response rate was 52% and the gender mix was 52% female and 48% male. The margin of error was $\pm 2.4\%$. Six focus groups immediately followed the national survey.

The findings showed that half of Australian adults spent at least one hour a day watching, listening to and reading news and current affairs. Free-on-air television remained the most used source for news and current affairs with nearly 88% Australians using it, followed by 76% each listening to radio and reading newspapers. Another finding was that Australian audiences believed the business interests of media organisations wielded the greatest influence on what they read, heard or saw in news and current affairs. Most Australians believed the news and current affairs media were credible although many felt they were not as credible as they should have been. The most credible sources were the public broadcasters, while the least credible were commercial broadcasters. Nearly all the respondents believed their preferred source of news and current affairs had at least some influence on public opinion. Of most concern to the respondents was sensationalised reporting in news and current affairs. Intrusive reporting ranked second highest, followed by biased content and inaccurate reporting. Nevertheless, sensationalised reporting was recognised as an effective tool to draw public attention to particular services.

Gaziano and McGrath (1986) also found that television and radio were more popular sources of news and information than the newspapers or magazines when study participants were to choose only one news source. Despite this preference for the electronic media, however, the researchers reported higher credibility scores for newspapers.

The Institute of Communication Research in the School of Mass Communication in Texas also conducted a study in April 1995 on "Media preference and believability among rural respondents for news and advertising information." The

study measured the believability of the mass media and identified the mass medium of preference for news and advertising among 492 rural or nonmetropolitan respondents in Texas. The telephone survey method was used.

Results suggested that rural or nonmetropolitan respondents utilized different media for different types of information; however, respondents seemed to prefer and believe television more than the other media. For instance, a large majority of the respondents said they received most of their daily local and state news from television (66%), followed by newspapers (19%), radio (13%), magazines (1%) and other media (1%). There were also differences in media use based on respondents' demographic variables. More males (19%) than females (9%) used radio and a slightly higher proportion of males (21%) than females (20%) used newspapers.

The study also found differences' based on income levels, among respondents' use of the media. The higher the household income of the participant, the more likely he/she was to rely on newspapers than television, radio and magazines. Respondents in this study thought that the television was the most believable medium when there was conflicting information about local news, state news and national health news.

3.2 Studies from Ghana

A survey conducted by the Media Foundation for West Africa in March 2001 showed that radio remained the most effective medium for exchanging ideas among rural folks and for nurturing democratic values in Ghana (*Ghana Free Expression Update*, March/April 2001). The study involved six radio stations from selected regions of the country and a total of 1200 respondents. The findings showed that all

(100%) the respondents listened to radio as compared to only three out of ten people who read the newspapers. Almost three-quarters of the respondents (70%) preferred programmes in their local languages. About 16 out of 20 (80.2%) of the respondents indicated they had radio sets in their homes. Radio also dominated as the main source of news and current affairs. About two-thirds (64.5%) of the respondents said they depended largely on local radio stations for news and educational programmes while three-fifths (60%) said they always preferred the station within their locality.

Another study on media preference showed that demographic indices are important factors that influence audience preference of the media in Ghana. Obeng-Quaidoo *et al.* (1984) carried out this research in two different communities in Accra. The objective of the research was to find out if any differences existed in the mass media habits and media preferences of the people in the communities and whether such differences could be related to their social status. The study showed that social status had an influence on the level of patronage of radio programmes. Respondents in the middle-income bracket listened to news and current affairs programmes more frequently than respondents in the lower-income bracket.

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) Audience Research Department conducted a survey between June and August 1995 to investigate listeners' perceptions of the corporation's radio news bulletins. Questionnaires were mailed to 200 respondents but the response rate was only 43% since only 86 questionnaires were returned. In describing the news, more than half of the respondents (47 out of 86) indicated the GBC news bulletins were believable while a little more than a quarter of the respondents (28%) indicated the news was fairly believable. About a tenth (15 out of 86) of the respondents were undecided. About three-quarters of the

respondents also said the *GBC* news bulletins were unbiased, interesting and informative. Results further showed that about three-fifths (54 out of 86) of the respondents would believe *GBC* if there were conflicting stories about the same event, while about a quarter (20 out of 86) indicated they would believe the local newspapers. Respondents, however, seemed to find news on foreign radio stations more credible than the *GBC*.

About half of the respondents (48%) indicated they would believe foreign radio stations if there were conflicting stories about the same event, while only a little more than a quarter of the respondents (28%) indicated they would believe the *GBC*. The rest were either undecided or did not believe in either foreign radio stations or the *GBC*. The main reason given for finding foreign radio more credible was that the *GBC* was not independent and so its news seemed to be biased towards the government of the day.

In another study, Ansu-Kyeremeh (1996) found that, as far as a small university community in Ghana was concerned, foreign radio had a role in truthful reporting. Truthful media reporting was defined in his study as the accurate presentation of facts: facts that were fair, well balanced, unbiased and objective.

The study sought to find out audience perceptions of truth and credibility against the backdrop of the reporting of an extraordinary event (the president's alleged assault of his vice-president) of national and international political significance. Data were collected through interviews with 97 randomly selected respondents from among the residents of the staff homes of the University of Ghana, Legon, campus. Results showed that a sizable proportion of respondents in the study placed a high premium on radio as an important source of news since almost

half (48.9%) listened to the unannounced live interview of the vice president on the *BBC* via *JOY FM*. Furthermore, a fifth of those who did not hear the interview first hand got to know about it from radio reports.

Using the *BBC* as an example of foreign radio, respondents were asked a series of questions to gauge their perceptions. Close to two-thirds (61%) of the respondents found the *BBC* stories believable while only about a tenth (10.8%) did not. However, nearly half (48%) also felt the *BBC* sometimes lied, although about one-fifth (22%) believed the *BBC* never lied.

Comparing the *BBC* to the *GBC*, many respondents could not tell from their experience whether the *BBC* was more truthful than the *GBC*. The study additionally revealed that the *BBC* – *JOY FM* arrangement in which *JOY FM* broadcasts live the *BBC* programmes and news indicated that international radio stations stood to benefit in the increase in audience size in similar arrangements since the majority of respondents in the study listened to the live interview on the *BBC* via *JOY FM*.

3.3 Summary

This chapter reviewed studies related to this research. One study showed that many Australians believed the news and current affairs media were credible, although many also believed they were not as credible as they should be. Credibility of radio news in terms of accuracy, relevance and bias was rated lower than both local and national television. In other studies, balance and fairness (key aspects of credibility studied in this research) of local radio stations seemed to be the concern of respondents. More than half of the respondents in one study believed that the media were often accurate as against about a third who believed the media were often

inaccurate. Ghanaian studies showed that radio was the main source of news and current affairs. Respondents however seemed to find foreign radio more credible than the local.

Like most of the studies reviewed, the survey method was the main method used in this study to obtain the required data. However, other methods, as discussed in the next chapter, were also used in this study to add depth to the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

Both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were used in this study. Babbie (1992:109) describes this combination approach as "triangulation". According to Babbie (1992) the use of several different research methods to test the same findings, or triangulation, is a valuable research strategy because each method has particular strengths and weaknesses.

Similarly, Denzin (1989) notes that no single method is ever free of rival causal factors, neither can a single method completely reveal all the relevant features of empirical reality of testing or developing a theory. According to Denzin (1989) therefore, a combination of methods in a single investigation stands a better chance of providing valid propositions. Obijiorfor (1995) also states that the adoption of different methods of data collection enhances quality and accuracy of findings since the different methods serve to complement each other, thereby bringing out issues and patterns that a single method might gloss over. Anderson (1997) sums it all up by noting that the advantages of combining methods can be considerable since it can allow a particular topic to be approached from different angles, thus enhancing the validity of the whole analysis.

In this study, therefore, a survey, a quantitative research approach, which involved the selection of a representative sample from the population and the administering of questionnaires to this sample to obtain information, was first conducted. Next, qualitative research methods, in the forms of focus group discussions with members of the population in question and individual in-depth

interviews of selected journalists within the same population, were also used to elicit in-depth information that enriched the findings of the survey. The focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews were used to encourage respondents to expound on viewpoints that might help the researcher to gain an understanding of the issue at stake. Information obtained (from the qualitative research methods) was also used to verify, validate and comment on information obtained from the survey.

This chapter describes the sampling procedures, the research instruments and the kinds of data analyses executed in the various research methods used in this study. All data was collected between April and December 2002.

4.1 The Survey

The survey method involved the use of probability sampling to obtain a relatively large sample that was representative of the entire population. A sample that is representative of the population is adequate for testing purposes and results could be generalized (Wimmer and Dominick, 2000). This method also enabled the researcher to do both descriptive and inferential analyses. The following sub-sections describe in detail the use of the survey method.

4.1.1 The Population

The population for the study was residents of Sunyani East Constituency in the Brong-Ahafo Region since the two radio stations investigated were both located in this constituency. (The Sunyani East Constituency is the Sunyani Town and its immediate environs). This population was chosen because radio signals from Sky

FM and *Radio BAR* are clearer in this constituency than those of other stations in the Region; hence the residents were more likely to listen to these two radio stations. The population was part of the Sunyani District. This area according to the Preliminary Report of the 2000 Population Census of Ghana had a total population of 178,731, comprising of 88,764 males and 89,967 females. The report shows that the ratio of males to females in the area is 98.7:100, which means there is an approximate gender balance.

4.1.2 The Sample

A probability sample of 200 respondents was used in this survey. The sample was obtained using a multi-stage sampling procedure. First, with the aid of a table of random numbers, a sample of 20 polling stations was randomly selected from the (list of) 89 polling stations in the 18 electoral areas in the Sunyani East Constituency. Ten people were then selected from each of these polling areas and interviewed.

4.1.3 Selection of Respondents

To choose respondents, the researcher began by standing at one end of the major street of each polling area. Starting from the first house on the right, the researcher proceeded to interview any adult (anyone above 18 years) living in the house, who said he/she listened to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins (or both) and, who was willing to be interviewed. The researcher entered every other house on this side of the road until five houses were selected and five respondents interviewed. This procedure was repeated on the other end of the same street.

In selecting the respondents, the researcher alternated between male and

female to ensure representativeness in terms of gender balance in the sample as reflected by the census figures.

4.1.4 Sampling Error

A sampling error of ± 6.9 at 95% confidence interval was used in the survey. This meant the survey was 95% (one chance out of twenty) certain that any percentage listed for all the 200 respondents would not be more than 6.9 percentage points – plus or minus – off the actual percentage for the whole constituency. Sampling error is an important concept in all research areas because it provides an indication of the degree of accuracy of the research (Wimmer *et al.*, 2000). The sampling error used in this study was calculated using the proportions formula (for the 95% level of confidence) used by David H. Weaver (in Stempel *et al.*, 1994):

$$\text{Sampling error} = \pm 1.96 \times \sqrt{0.25 \div N}$$

(where N is the sample size).

4.1.5 Demographic characteristics of respondents

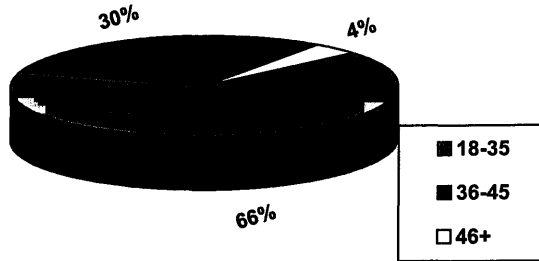
- **Gender and Age**

The proportion of male respondents and that of female respondents was the same (50% each), similar to what pertained in the ABA study in the literature reviewed.

Thus, there was gender balance among the respondents, reflecting what supposedly pertained in the population.



Chart 1: Age of respondents



The chart on the age of respondents (Chart 1 above) shows that the majority of respondents (66.5%) were aged between 18 and 35 while about one out of twenty-five (3.5%) were 46 years and above. About a third (30%) of the respondents were middle-aged, between 36 and 45 years.

▪ **Occupation**

Chart 2: Occupation

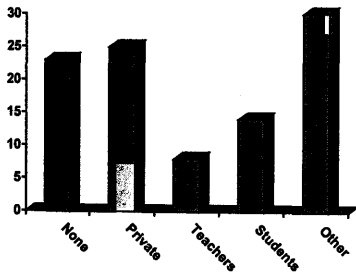


Chart 2 shows that close to one-quarter (23%) of the respondents were unemployed or had no occupation while exactly one-quarter (25%) indicated they were either traders or business people or tailors or hairdressers or farmers or fishermen (private business). About a third (30%) indicated other occupation. About seven out of fifty (14%) were students while the smallest proportion of workers in the sample were teachers (8%).

- **Education**

Chart 3: Education

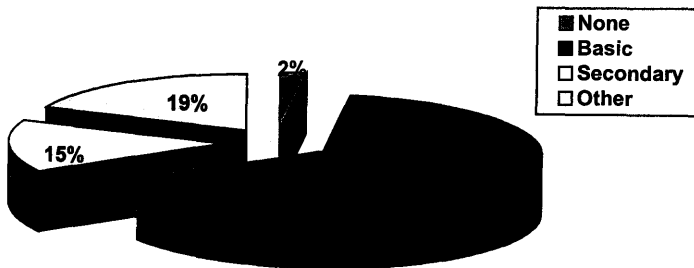


Chart 3 above shows more than half (64%) of the respondents had had basic education (primary/JSS/technical), while about three out of twenty (15%) had had secondary education or above. Very few respondents (about one out of fifty – 2%) had had no education and a little less than one-fifth (19%) indicated they had had other education.

- **Income**

The income (monthly salary or wage) of the respondents seemed to be rather low. Most of the respondents did not receive any income at all and of those who did receive some income, most of them received income that was less than half a million cedis.

Chart 4: Income

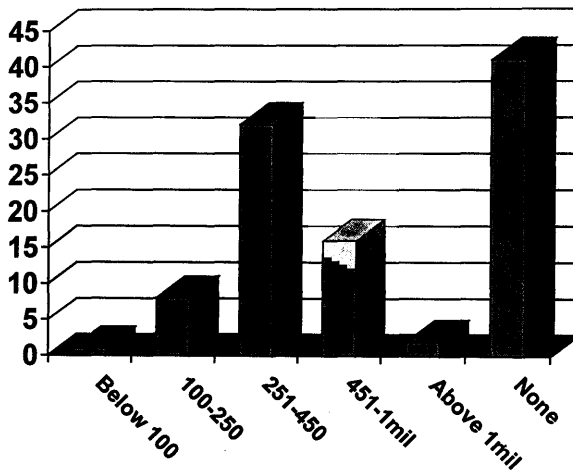


Chart 4 above shows a little above two-fifths of the respondents (41%) had no income while about one-third (32%) received income between ₵251,000 and ₵450,000. Only one out of fifty (2%) received income above one million cedis. Fewer than two out of twenty-five respondents (8%) received between ₵100,000 and ₵250,000, and barely one percent of the respondents received below ₵100,000 or did not know.

4.1.6 The Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire, which was made up of mainly 52 close-ended questions and one open-ended question. The close-ended questions included three screening questions and five questions on demographic characteristics. The main questions were divided into three sections, namely: general questions on media habits, perception of *Sky FM* news bulletins and perception of *Radio BAR* news bulletins. The questionnaire was administered through face-to-face interviews. This involved sitting face-to-face with each respondent, reading out the questions in the order in which they appeared in the questionnaire and ticking or writing down the answers respondents gave to each question.

4.1.7 Data Analysis of the survey

The data obtained were coded, using a coding guide and analysis was undertaken with the aid of the SPSS software package. Analysis was both descriptive and inferential. Charts, graphs, tables, frequencies and percentages were generated from the data. In addition, the Chi-square and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

4.2 The Focus Group Discussions

A focus group discussion, also called group interviewing (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000), is a research strategy for understanding audience attitudes and behaviour and provides an in-depth and interactive way of gathering data. By using this method the researcher was able to obtain information from groups of respondents in an open and

conversational manner, without the respondents feeling threatened or inhibited in any way. The respondents were allowed to talk freely and the researcher asked further questions based on responses given, for better understanding. The responses given by one person or persons in a group stimulated others to think along certain lines that might not have been elicited in an individual in-depth interview or a survey. This researcher, thus, did not only obtain information from what was said but was also able to observe and note relevant facial expressions and other non-verbal behaviour such as gestures and signs which helped the researcher to understand better some of the comments made.

4.2.1 Sampling

The non-probability sampling method was used to select four groups of respondents based on gender. With the aid of a recruitment screener, the researcher recruited an all male group, and all female group and two-mixed gender groups. The screener contained questions that helped to include only people who lived in Sunyani, were 18 years old or more, listened to either Sky FM and/or Radio BAR news bulletins and to eliminate respondents who had already been used for similar research (those who had taken part in focus group discussions in the last six months). This last criterion was important because the researcher did not want to include people who thought they knew too much about research in the discussion. The researcher wanted only genuine people with original ideas. All the respondents were between 18 and 45 years old.

The mixed gender groups were made up of four males and four females each, while there were seven respondents in the all-male group and eight in the all-female

group. The groups were determined based on gender because the researcher's concern was to find out whether males and females had the same or different perceptions about *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* news bulletins.

4.2.2 Data Collection

The researcher collected the needed information by conducting in-depth group discussions with each of the groups sampled. Each discussion lasted a minimum of 45 minutes. All the discussions were recorded on audio tape.

The researcher moderated the discussions with the aid of an interview guide of a list of topics and open-ended questions. The researcher was at liberty to ask the questions in any order (not necessarily in the order in which they appeared in the interview guide), since certain responses required follow-up questions which might have been in other sections of the interview guide. The interview guide was divided into four main sections, namely: general knowledge about news, credibility of *Sky FM* news bulletins, credibility of *Radio BAR* news bulletins and recommendations. Questions on news credibility dwelt on such measures as fairness, accuracy and objectivity.

To establish rapport with the respondents, the researcher made use of name-tags so that respondents could address each other by name. The researcher also employed the services of a note-taker, who with the aid of a note-takers guide took notes during the discussions. This was to ensure that the researcher paid undivided attention to responses given so that she could ask further probing questions based on the answers given.

4.2.3 Data analysis

The discussions recorded were first transcribed and data were analysed based on the transcriptions and notes made. All topics covered in the discussions were evaluated, bringing out the similarities and differences in opinion within and across groups. Quotations were also used to highlight differences in opinion and to capture the feelings of each group.

4.3 The Individual In-depth Interviews

Unlike the focus group discussions the individual in-depth interviews involved interviewing the respondents one person at a time, and not as a group. However, like the focus group discussions and unlike the survey, the researcher was at liberty to obtain information from each (individual) respondent in an open and conversational manner, without the respondent feeling threatened or inhibited in any way. The respondent was allowed to talk freely and the researcher could ask further questions based on responses given, for better understanding. The researcher did not have to stick to the rigid way of asking questions as in the survey. The following subsections thus give details about how the individual in-depth interviews were conducted.

4.3.1 Sampling

Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used to select six journalists from the six media institutions in the Sunyani East Constituency for this part of the study. The institutions were The Ghana News Agency, the *Daily Graphic*, the *Ghanaian Times*, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*. Four of these institutions were state-owned and two private. With the aid of a screener or a

recruitment guide one journalist from each of these institutions was interviewed. The recruitment guide enabled the researcher to purposely select respondents who were formally trained journalists (or had had some academic training in journalism) of the above institutions, lived in Sunyani, had not been researched in the past six months, listened to either *Sky FM* and/or *Radio BAR* and were willing to be interviewed. All the respondents were male and above 30 years old. This was because there were no trained female journalists in any of the institutions. The rationale behind interviewing journalists was to seek insight into how journalists understood news credibility and its importance, since they played a major role in the production of news.

4.3.2 Data collection

The researcher collected in-depth data by conducting face-to-face interviews with each of the respondents. Each of these interviews lasted a maximum of 30 minutes. Interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide. The interview guide (unlike the questionnaire used in the survey) allowed the researcher to probe for further explanations. It was divided into three main sections: general knowledge on news, news credibility and recommendations. Each section contained an average of six questions. The researcher took notes during the interviews and also audio recorded them.

4.3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analysed based on the notes and transcriptions of the recordings. Similarities and differences in opinion between respondents were noted and

quotations were also used to bring out some of the strong feelings and views of the respondents.

4.4 Summary

This chapter described in detail how the method of triangulation, a combination of research methods (namely a survey, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews), was effectively used to collect data and information for this study. The next chapter presents the findings from the application of the three methods.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The main aim of this study was to find out whether listeners perceived news bulletins on *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* as credible or not, and which of the two station's news bulletins was perceived as more credible in terms of fairness, accuracy and objectivity. The study further sought to establish whether other issues such as which of the two stations was the major news source of listeners; which station's news bulletin listeners preferred and why; what listeners liked and disliked about the news bulletins of both radio stations and why; and which style of news presentation was more preferred and why, had any bearing on the credibility of the news bulletins of the radio stations. The study also sought to determine what selected journalists in Sunyani understood by news and its credibility, and their views and perceptions of the news bulletins of the two radio stations to help put the perceptions of the respondents in the survey and focus group discussions into better perspective.

This chapter is a summary of the responses from all the three methods used in this study. The survey findings are considered the main findings, which are further enhanced by the findings of the focus group discussions and those of the individual in-depth interviews. The findings by these two methods did not seem too different from those of the survey; so they were mainly used to support and only occasionally used to challenge the survey findings. The findings of the focus group discussions showed that there was little difference in the responses given within and among groups. This means that though the groups were based on gender, gender was not an issue with regard to the various views and perceptions, as there was not much

difference in the responses the males and the females gave within and among the groups.

This chapter has two main parts (each with subsections). One part focuses on media habits. The other is about news credibility. The chapter ends with some suggestions respondents of the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews gave to improve the news credibility of the two radio stations.

5.1 Media Habits

Some general questions were posed in the study to gain general knowledge about the media habits of the respondents with the emphasis on the habits pertaining to their use and patronage of the two radio stations' (*Sky FM* and *Radio BAR's*) news bulletins.

These questions sought to determine whether radio was considered a major source of news for most of the respondents and how often they listened to radio news. They further tried to find out which of the two stations listeners preferred and why, and whether news was an important reason why listeners listened to the two radio stations.

5.1.1 News Sources

The major source of news for most of the respondents (67%) in the survey and all the respondents in the focus group discussions was radio. The respondents of the focus group discussions reasoned that radio was their major source of news because they could not afford to buy the newspapers everyday and did not have time to watch television news. In the individual in-depth interviews with journalists, about half of the

interviewees indicated the newspaper as their major source of news since they could read at their own convenience. Radio was, however, mentioned by these journalists as their first source of news everyday though they obtained more detailed news from the newspapers, daily. The other journalists, who believed radio was their major source of news, said this was because they could obtain news intermittently throughout the day while doing other things. Secondly, they found radio news to be more current and one did not need to make any effort to listen or concentrate, unlike the newspaper and the television for instance.

The referral to radio as major source of news by most respondents in the study, thus, supported the findings of the survey by the Media Foundation for West Africa in March 2001 (reviewed in Chapter Three), in which radio dominated as the main source of news and current affairs among the rural folk in Ghana. This finding also agreed with the findings in Ansu-Kyeremeh's (1996) study, which showed that a sizeable proportion of the respondents (of an elitist audience in Ghana) placed a high premium on radio as an important source of news. Similarly, outside Ghana, the RTNDF (2000) survey showed that more than three-quarters of American commuters relied on radio for news while travelling to and from work and at work. Older respondents in the RTNDF (2000) survey also preferred radio news and the younger respondents further obtained a greater portion of their news from radio.

In Australia, however, the ABN (2000) survey revealed that the television was the most used source of news and current affairs, followed by radio and the newspapers. Gaziano and McGrath (1986) also found the television and radio were more popular sources of news and information than the newspapers and magazines.



Chart 5: Major Source of news

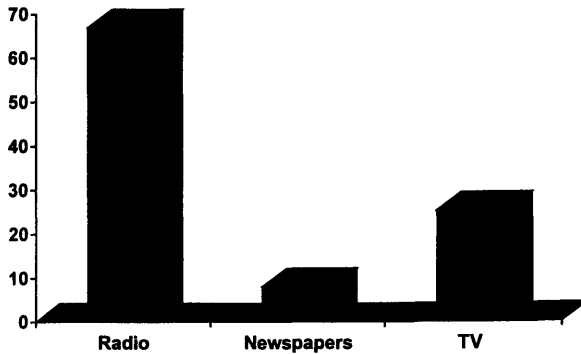


Chart 5 shows that next to radio as major source of news for respondents in the survey was the television, since a quarter (25%) of the respondents chose the television and only about one-tenth of the respondents (8%) said the newspaper was their major source of news.

About three-quarters (74%) of the respondents, also indicated they listened to radio news very often, that is every day or almost every day, while about one-fifth (19%) indicated they listened to radio news often or quite often (or at least two days in the week.) Less than one-tenth (7%) of the respondents indicated they listened to radio news rarely or did not know how often they listened to radio news.

Findings of the survey further showed that of those who said radio was their major source of news, more respondents (about a third (31%)) said they listened to *Sky FM* while just a little above one-quarter (27%) indicated they listened to *Radio BAR*. The majority, over two-fifths (42%), said they listened to both stations. Of

all the respondents, a little more than a quarter (28%) indicated they listened to *Sky FM* while about a third (32%) specified *Radio BAR* and two-fifths (40%) both.

5.1.2 Importance of news

Since the focus of the study was the issue of credibility of news, the researcher reasoned that it would be important to know what news meant to the respondents and whether news was so important to radio so as to talk or worry about its credibility. Respondents in the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews were therefore asked to define news (a major concept of this study).

The focus group discussions came out with news as “happenings” - something that had happened or was still happening in society. The media people interviewed said news was “*information which tells people what has really happened, and it must contain facts and figures.*” They stressed that news must contain facts and figures in order to make it more credible. News was also said to be something one had not heard before or any new information.

The various definitions and criteria for selection of news given by the respondents were similar to those provided by the various researchers such as Cardowine (1998), Masterson (1997) and Mencher (1998) as indicated earlier in the theoretical framework of this study. This meant that perhaps the Ghanaian respondents in this study and the foreign researchers had similar understanding of what news was.

To the question of whether news was an important reason why respondents listened to the two radio stations, respondents in the survey seemed to think news was, indeed, a very important reason why they listened to radio, since the majority of

them (four-fifths or 80%) indicated so. Less than one-fifth (16%) indicated news was not an important reason why they listened to the radio stations and very few (only 4%) did not know whether news was an important reason why they listened to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR*.

Similarly, the majority of participants in the focus group discussions indicated that news was a very important reason why they listened to radio and also that news was, indeed, very important to the existence of a radio station. They reasoned that one of the aims of every radio station had to be to inform listeners and to keep them abreast with whatever was happening, and that was achieved through the dissemination of news. Besides people depended mostly on radio news because they could not afford to buy newspapers everyday or some people simply could not read or afford a television. It was also noted that news created awareness and that the radio was the cheapest source of news for most people in Ghana. One person noted: *"If news were eliminated from radio, most people would not have any source of news"*. Another asserted, *"A radio station without news is not complete and many people would not tune in to such a station."*

The journalists interviewed had similar opinion. They noted that radio was one of the most effective means of mass communication in our society on which the bulk of Ghanaians, most of whom were illiterate, depended for news. They also believed that news was the heart of every radio station because radio was the first source of news for most people everyday. These findings support the RTNDF (2000) survey in which respondents seemed to think news was an important function of radio. The respondents of that study thought news was very important to their selection of a radio station.

On the question of whether news was important to the selection of a radio station, the interviewees said news was important because, most often, they themselves tuned in to certain radio stations at certain times of the day only because of the type of news at that time (local news, foreign news or a relay from *BBC*). When asked to indicate which of the two radio stations presented news that was more important to them, a little more than half (52%) of the survey respondents indicated *Radio BAR*, while just over two-fifths (42%) chose *Sky FM*. The rest (about one-twentieth of the sample or 6%) said they did not know which station's news was more important to them.

Asked whether radio news had a chance of survival with the improvement in information and communication technology, the common opinion among respondents of the focus group discussions and the interviewees was that radio would surely survive any improved information communication technology, especially the television and the computer or the Internet. Reasons given included the fact that radio was relatively the cheapest source of information and news for most people in Ghana. Besides, radio was portable (as a result of technology miniaturization) and therefore could be carried and used anywhere. Both literates and illiterates were said to benefit from radio, unlike the newspaper, which was also portable but was limited to only those who could read and those who could afford to buy.

Radio news was in addition said to have a good chance of survival against that of television and the Internet (or the computer) because they were far more expensive than radio and most of the poor in the country could not afford them. Besides, one needed no speciality to operate the radio to get news while on the other hand, one had to be trained (to be computer literate) in order to use the Internet for

news. One also needed electricity to operate either the computer or the television but one did not necessarily need electricity to operate the radio, and therefore radio would survive in even areas where there was no electricity. Another reason given for the survival of radio news was that radio had the advantage of reaching people in any language and could be listened to while doing other things such as driving. Radio was, therefore, becoming more convenient to use than other improved communication technology, so radio news would always survive.

5.1.3 News preference

Although this study was basically about news and its credibility, the researcher deemed it important to know what kind of news respondents preferred on the two radio stations. Respondents were therefore asked to indicate which station's news bulletins they generally preferred since there was the likelihood that they would prefer news stories they found more credible. Questions on the various types of news (such as, news in English or Twi, foreign or local news, national, entertainment, sports and current affairs news) they preferred were also asked.

Results showed that about equal proportions of respondents of the survey indicated they preferred either Sky FM (47%) or Radio BAR (45%) news bulletins while less than one-tenth (8%) indicated they did not know which station's news they preferred listening to, perhaps, simply because they had no preference.

Respondents of the survey gave various reasons for their preference of a particular radio station's news bulletins, including links they had with other radio stations such as *Joy FM*, *Luv FM*, *Adom FM* and *GBC*, detailed and good presentation, style and the timeliness of the news. Among those who said they

preferred listening to *Sky FM* news bulletins, more than one-quarter (27%) of them indicated it was because of the station's link with *Joy FM*, *Luv FM* and *Adom FM*. The same reason was given by most of the respondents of the focus group discussion for their preference of *Sky FM* news bulletins. According to these respondents, because the news bulletins were compiled by all four radio stations (*Joy*, *Luv*, *Adom* and *Sky*) and broadcast at the same time on all four, the news usually contained stories from all the places where these radio stations were located (Accra, Kumasi, Tema and Sunyani), and the respondents were happy with this arrangement. The news bulletins also contained live interviews or actualities, which the respondents found very appealing. They described *Sky FM* news as genuine as a result of the use of actualities.

The survey results further showed that a lesser proportion of respondents, less than one-fifth or 17% of those who indicated they preferred *Radio BAR* news bulletins said so because of the radio station's link (or arrangement) with Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (*GBC*) in which *Radio Ghana* news feeds were broadcast live on *Radio BAR*. This, perhaps, meant that *Sky FM*'s link (or arrangement) with outside stations might have had a greater influence in its news being preferred than *Radio BAR*'s link with an outside station. Respondents of the focus group discussions who indicated they preferred *Radio BAR* news bulletins because of its link with the *GBC* said the arrangement made *Radio BAR* news more current and reliable. They added that *Radio BAR*'s affiliation with the *GBC* made their news contain more information about the Brong-Ahafo region since *GBC* had correspondents all over the region.

Table 1: Preferred news bulletins and Reasons

| Reasons | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Link with Joy</i> | 25 (27%) | 4 (4%) |
| <i>Link with GBC</i> | 1 (1%) | 15 (17%) |
| <i>News is current</i> | 23 (25%) | 6 (7%) |
| <i>Detailed & good present.</i> | 12 (13%) | 27 (30%) |
| <i>Other</i> | 33 (34%) | 38 (42%) |
| Total | 94 (100%) | 90 (100%) |

Additionally, (as shown in Table 1) exactly one-quarter of those who said they preferred *Sky FM* news bulletins indicated they did so because the news were current as against less than one-tenth of those who chose *Radio BAR* news bulletins for the same reason. Another significant observation was the fact that about a third (30%) of those who preferred listening to *Radio BAR* news did so because of detailed and good presentation of the news.

Table 2: Station Preference by Gender.

| STATION PREFERENCE | GENDER | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | MALE | FEMALE |
| SKY FM | 50 (50%) | 44 (44%) |
| RADIO BAR | 45 (45%) | 45 (45%) |
| DON'T KNOW | 5 (5%) | 11 (11%) |
| Total | 100 (100%) | 100 (100%) |

Table 2 shows that equal proportions of males and females (a little less than half or 45%) indicated they preferred *Radio BAR* news perhaps because they found it to be more credible, while just a little more males than females (about 6% more) indicated they preferred *Sky FM* news. The table thus suggests that gender was not really an issue with regard to preference of a radio station's news bulletins.

Asked which radio station they preferred for national, local, entertainment, sports and current affairs news, the majority of the survey respondents, about three out of every five (60%), indicated they preferred listening to *Radio BAR* for national news as compared to less than a third (30%) who said they listened to *Sky FM* for the same reason. Similarly, slightly more than two-fifths of the respondents (47%) said they preferred listening to *Radio BAR* for local news as against a little more than one-third (37%) who listened to *Sky FM* for local news. On the other hand, close to three-

fifths (58%) of the respondents indicated they liked to listen to entertainment news on *Sky FM* while only one-fifth (20%) of the respondents specified *Radio BAR* for entertainment news. Also, more than half of the respondents (52%) preferred *Sky FM* for current affairs or political news as against about a third (35%) who preferred *Radio BAR* for the same type of news. More respondents (more than two-fifths or 45%) preferred *Radio BAR* sports news as compared to just about one-third (36%) who liked *Sky FM* sports news.

Further results showed that gender did not turn out to be an issue to consider with regard to the above choices. For example, results revealed that while more than half of the males (63%) chose *Radio BAR* for national news; a relatively similar proportion of the females (58%) also chose *Radio BAR* for the same type of news. Similarly, while about a third of the male respondents chose *Sky FM* for national news, just about the same proportion of females (29%) also chose *Sky FM* for national news.

The survey results also showed that with regard to which station's news they preferred if news were broadcast at the same time on both stations and if news was fresh, about equal proportions of respondents indicated they preferred either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR*. Just a little less than half of the respondents indicated they would prefer *Radio BAR* in both cases (49% and 47% respectively) and a similar proportion (46% and 49% respectively) indicated they would listen to *Sky FM* for such news.

Assuming style of news presentation was likely to influence credibility of the news bulletins, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had any news preference due to the style of presentation of the news. A little less than half of the survey respondents (46%) indicated they preferred *Sky FM* news presentations while

exactly half (50%) indicated they preferred *Radio BAR*'s style of news presentation. On the other hand, half (50%) noted they preferred *Sky FM* headlines as against a little less than half (46%) for *Radio BAR* headlines.

The survey results further showed that more respondents preferred listening to the local news than foreign news on both stations. However, far more respondents, almost three-quarters (72%) indicated they preferred the local news on *Radio BAR* as against only one-fifth (22%) who preferred foreign news, while almost equal proportions of respondents (46% and 41% respectively) said they preferred either the local news or foreign news on *Sky FM*. Respondents' preference for local news on *Radio BAR* might, perhaps be explained by Thalhimer (2000) who in the RTNDF survey noted that the greatest strength of radio was its coverage of local news. The RTNDF survey showed that people were about 40% more likely to say that local news rather than national news was very important to the selection of a radio station.

About equal numbers of respondents indicated they preferred either news in Twi or English on *Radio BAR* whereas far more respondents indicated they preferred the news in English on *Sky FM* than the news in Twi. Almost half of the respondents, 48% and 47% respectively, indicated they preferred either English news or Twi news on *Radio BAR*. One out of every twenty (5%) respondents did not know which language of *Radio BAR* news they preferred. This perhaps suggests that language did not matter in respondents' choice of *Radio BAR* news. On the other hand, about two-thirds of the respondents preferred the English news on *Sky FM* while only about one-fifth (22%) preferred the news presented in Twi. This suggests that perhaps language mattered in the choice of *Sky FM* news. Also, perhaps respondents preferred news in English better because they were not receiving enough news in the

local language, as respondents in the focus group discussions seemed to imply when they recommended that *Sky FM* should broadcast more news in the local language.

Respondents were further asked to indicate which one news item on the two radio stations news bulletins they liked or disliked most. Results showed that current affairs or political news turned out to be the one news item most respondents liked on *Sky FM*, while unusual stories and sports turned out to be the news items most (about one-fifth or 22%) of the respondents did not like. Close to half of the respondents (46%) liked current affairs news most on *Sky FM* while about a tenth (9%) said they did not know what they liked on *Sky FM* news. And, as much as about one-fifth (21%) of the respondents did not know the one news item they did not like most.

Likewise, more than half of the respondents (53%) liked current affairs/political news most on *Radio BAR*, while a quarter (25%) disliked the unusual stories. Also, a little less than one-fifth (17%) said they disliked current affairs most while just a little more than one-tenth, liked unusual happenings. About one-fifth (22%) indicated they liked sports news most on *Radio BAR*, while close to a quarter (24%) indicated they did not like sports news. Only about one-twentieth indicated they liked entertainment news most while close to one-fifth (19%) indicated they did not like entertainment news.

5.2 News Credibility

This section is an account of the results of the main focus of this study, the credibility of the news bulletins of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*. In the section, explanations of news credibility offered by the journalist respondents are presented.

Whether respondents thought credibility was important, views on what factors made a news story credible and whether radio news was generally credible are also noted. Respondents perceived credibility of the news bulletins of the two radio stations in terms of objectivity, fairness and accuracy is also described in this section. This section is thus sub-divided into three: Meaning and importance of news credibility; News credibility in terms of fairness, accuracy and objectivity and News credibility as believability.

5.2.1 Meaning and importance of news credibility

This part of the study sought to give insight into the journalist respondents' understanding of news credibility and its importance, since they played a major role in the production of news in the area of study (Sunyani and its environs).

According to the journalists interviewed, news credibility was the public's acceptance of the news media. However, that acceptance, they claimed, depended on a number of important factors. First, the source of the news had to be reputable. They therefore implied that source credibility was very important in news credibility. The important factors to consider in source credibility, suggested by Infante (1980) were dynamism, trustworthiness and competence. The journalists did not however mention these. They rather noted that it was important to mention name(s) of the source(s) and not rely on anonymity. It was also important to use at least two sources, so that people could draw a balance and know how credible the news was. The story did not have to be one-sided; there had to be a balance or fairness in the reportage of facts. Fairness, according to the journalists, also meant one did not have to say anything that would unduly intensify the sorrows of victims.

Another important factor mentioned was to use accurate or correct facts and figures in news stories. The journalists further noted that accuracy was important in a good and credible news story because it ensured that the story was compact without any loopholes, and all the details present. Being accurate in their view meant doing thorough investigations and getting all the correct facts together before writing the story. Thus, credibility entailed giving only the true facts or reporting the truth and nothing but the truth.

News credibility, according to the journalists, also meant not adding your own ideas to the story. In other words, to maintain credibility in news one had to be as objective as possible by not putting in one's own opinion or by not being biased in any way. *"When you are writing, you go straight to write without taking sides. You have to make sure you are not being subjective in writing the story. So objectivity is what makes the story credible,"* one respondent reiterated. Objectivity, according to the journalist respondents, was important in a credible story because it would ensure that a story did not inflame passions in anyway to disturb the peace in the community or nation. To ensure credibility the language used must also not "colour" or seem to exaggerate the bare facts. *"For news to be credible, the raw facts must be provided. Don't comment,"* stated one of the journalists.

One journalist noted that for a news story to be credible it must also satisfy the five Ws and one H criteria, namely: Who, What, Where, Why, When and How. In other words, all these questions must be answered in the story. Presentation of the story, according to another journalist was also equally important in news credibility. According to him, as already mentioned, no commentary should be added to the raw facts of the story in its presentation in order to make the story more credible. In radio

news also, the voice, language, pronunciation, and tone of presentation had to be very clear and understandable in order to enhance credibility of the stories. It was reasoned that radio was transient; so the listener could not possibly go back to ask for further explanations immediately; so, as much as possible the news story had to be written and read in a way that the listener would understand immediately. The newsreader had to sound confident and sure of what he/she was saying in order to add credence to the story.

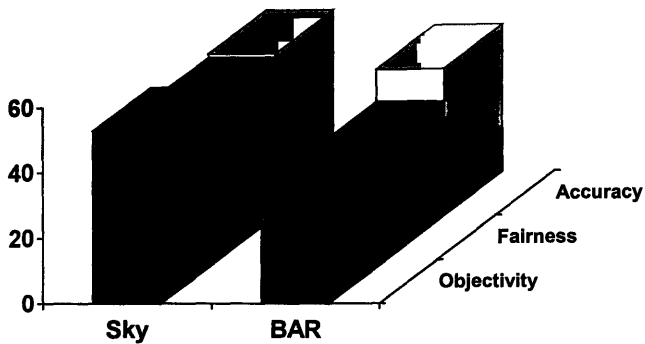
The journalist respondents further noted that credibility was very important in news because if the news story was not seen or considered credible, it would not be taken seriously. One respondent explained that the one who wrote a credible story was himself/herself seen as a credible and trustworthy person. Thus, credibility enhanced the reputation of the news source or medium. For the maintenance of one's reputation, therefore, it was important to present a credible story.

On the issue of credibility of radio news, the respondents did not dispute the fact that radio news was generally credible. One reason given was that there was usually very little time on radio to add anything to the bare facts of a story, unlike print where one could easily add some comment. Besides, radio made use of actualities, which made the news stories more believable or trustworthy. Also, all the ingredients (news criteria) one expected to find in news were always there in radio news. The respondents however stated that there were few instances when the news writer or journalist might have gone astray.

5.2.2 News Credibility in terms of Fairness, Accuracy, and Objectivity.

Respondents were asked to indicate which of the two radio stations news bulletins they found more fair, accurate and objective.

Chart 6: News credibility of station in terms of objectivity, fairness and accuracy



The survey results (illustrated in Chart 6) suggested that most respondents found *Sky FM* news bulletins more objective, fair and accurate than *Radio BAR* news bulletins. More than half of the respondents (53%) thought *Sky FM* news was more objective (unbiased) while only a little above a quarter thought *Radio BAR* news was more objective.

Again, almost half and exactly half (49% and 50%) of the respondents thought *Sky FM* news were more balanced (fair) or more accurate (contained more correct facts) respectively. On the other hand less than half of the respondents (35% and 45%) thought *Radio BAR* news was more balanced or more correct respectively.

This observation may be explained by Dunlevy's (1998) view that objectivity is usually adopted for commercial reasons. Thus, since *Sky FM* was a commercial station, objectivity, therefore, probably meant a lot to it and the listeners seemed to think so too.

In the focus group discussions, however, while about half of the respondents in each group considered *Sky FM* more biased, the other half considered *Radio BAR* more biased. Reasons given for *Sky FM* being less biased or objective included the fact that *Sky FM* was a privately-owned station, and therefore, tried not to put in any opinion in news stories in order to avoid lawsuits, but because *Radio BAR* was state-owned, it also tried not to say much against the government, thus becoming more biased in such attempts.

On the other hand, those who said *Sky FM* news was more biased gave the reason that stories sometimes seemed to be exaggerated or "coloured", simply because most of the reporters in *Sky FM* were untrained as compared to those of *Radio BAR* who were better trained and qualified. One respondent insisted that she believed news were facts and not opinion so both stations news were not and could not possibly be biased.

In the individual in-depth interviews, most of the interviewees did not consider *Radio BAR* news as objective as that of *Sky FM* because being state-owned they seemed to tow the line of government quite often. According to the respondents, however, whatever the radio stations put out was what they had really worked to attain. They acknowledged that people particularly accepted *Radio BAR* news and believed whatever was put out simply because it was a state radio and that

acceptance was a culture acquired over years of the sole existence of state radio in the region. "*They can be lying but people accept it,*" was one particular remark.

On fairness, one of the mixed groups of the focus group discussions indicated that both stations were equally fair in their news and featured both sides of stories equally. The reason for this opinion was that they had so far not heard of anyone complaining of being treated unfairly in the news of either radio station. The all-female group on the other hand perceived *Sky FM* as the station whose stories were more balanced, giving equal attention to all parts or sides of a story. The all-male group also indicated that although *Radio BAR* was their main source of news, *Sky FM* news bulletins were more balanced perhaps for the simple reason that it was a private-owned radio station, and therefore, had to be more careful in what they broadcast in order to avoid lawsuits that could cost the station millions of cedis. The other mixed-gender group similarly indicated that *Sky FM* news bulletins were more balanced than *Radio BAR* because *Radio BAR* sometimes seemed to tow the line of government since it was state-owned.

Findings of the focus group discussions further indicated that most of the respondents thought *Radio BAR* news was more accurate than *Sky FM* news because *Radio BAR* was state-owned and had better trained and qualified personnel to ensure that facts were accurate. The station also had better facilities to check and cross check facts. However, the respondents also said *Radio BAR* had the tendency of holding back some details.

The respondents who indicated that *Sky FM* news were more accurate, however, admitted that *Sky FM* news were sometimes inaccurate but the station always came out to apologise and correct those mistakes.

Similarly, the interviewees of the individual in-depth interviews described *Radio BAR* news as more fair and accurate because in their opinion they had better qualified persons or professionals who ensured that these rules were adhered to. The interviewees held that a good news story should be fair, balanced and have accurate facts; that is credible.

5.2.3 News credibility as believability

Although fairness, accuracy, and objectivity were the main measures of credibility used in this study, the researcher also tried to find out which of the two radio stations' news respondents believed and trusted more if the three measures (fairness, objectivity and accuracy) were put together and not considered separately. The findings on this issue of credibility seemed to somewhat differ in the survey, focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews.

In the focus group discussions, the majority of respondents indicted that *Sky FM* was more trustworthy and believable because its links with *Joy Fm*, *Luv FM* and *Adom FM* enabled listeners to benefit from live interviews (or actualities) during news bulletins. These actualities, the respondents noted, made it easier for them to believe the news stories. On the other hand, the few respondents who said *Radio BAR* was more trustworthy and believable explained that perhaps it was so because the station had better trained personnel who sounded more professional and sure of what they said.

On the other hand, in the survey, findings showed that despite *Sky FM*'s higher credibility when objectivity, balance and fairness, were considered separately,



respondents found *Radio BAR* news more believable and more trustworthy (when the three criteria were seemingly considered together).

Chart 7: Believability and Trustworthiness

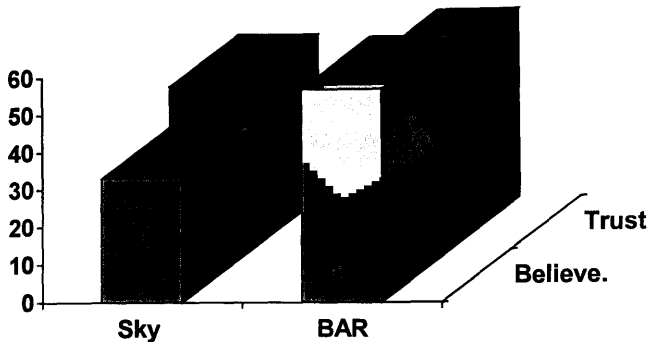


Chart 7 shows that more than half of the respondents (56%) found *Radio BAR* news more believable while only a third (33%) found *Sky FM* news more believable. In a similar manner, half of the respondents (50%) found *Radio BAR* news trustworthy or reliable while less than half (44%) found *Sky FM* news trustworthy.

In the individual in-depth interviews, the interviewees were asked which of the two radio stations they were likely to believe more if they learnt from both stations at the same time that a prominent person in government was a kleptomaniac and was seeking treatment at some undisclosed facility: assuming that at the time of breaking the news there was no one connected to the individual available to comment. All the interviewees said they would believe *Radio BAR* more, simply because it was a

government medium, financed by the state and, therefore, it was usually more cautious when coming out with a story. On the other hand, because *Sky FM* was a privately-owned station, for commercial reasons, it was more likely to be less cautious in an attempt to come out first with such news to impress its listeners, including advertisers and sponsors. This explanation rather seemed to be the opposite of Dunlevy's (1998) belief that the idea of objectivity was spread by the wire services who adopted it for commercial reasons.

Questions were also asked to find out whether believing the news stories (or finding the news stories believable) was the most important reason why respondents chose to listen to the news bulletins of either radio station. Results showed that in choosing to listen to *Sky FM* news bulletins, the believability of the news stories was not so important to the survey respondents, since it was fourth in the list of reasons given for choosing to listen to *Sky FM* news. On the other hand, the believability of the news stories on *Radio BAR* seemed to be an important reason why a great proportion of the respondents chose to listen to *Radio BAR*. This reason was second in the list of reasons given by respondents for choosing to listen to *Radio BAR* news.

Only three out of every twenty (13%) of the respondents indicated that they listened to *Sky FM news* because it was believable. On the other hand, close to a third of the respondents (31%) indicated they chose to listen to *Radio BAR* news bulletins because they were more believable.

Other reasons given for choosing to listen to either station's news bulletins besides the believability of the stories were that the stories were educative, important or interesting. Not far from a third of the respondents (29%) indicated they chose *Sky FM* news because they found it important while about one-fourth (23%) found it

educative. On the other hand, about one-third (34%) of the respondents chose to listen to *Radio BAR* news because they were more educative, while less than one-fifth (16%) said they listened because they found the news important.

The researcher also thought it important to know whether believability of the news stories was the one thing respondents liked most (or disliked most) about the news bulletins of either radio station. The survey results showed that for *Sky FM* news only about one-fifth (18%) of the respondents indicated the believability of the stories was the one thing they liked most about the news. Most of the respondents (about one-quarter or 24%) indicated they rather liked the voice of the newscasters, while about a fifth (18%) indicated they liked the language of the news.

Likewise, only about four out twenty-five (16%) of the respondents indicated that the one thing they liked most about *Radio BAR* news was its believability. Most of the respondents, about a third (34%), said the one thing they liked most about *Radio BAR* news was the language, while a little more than one-fifth (22%) said they liked the voice. This means that the believability of the stories was not the one thing most of the respondents liked about the news bulletins of the two radio stations.

Respondents were further asked to rank the **believability, bias, balance, reliability, and style of presentation** of the news bulletins of the two radio stations. Results showed that in terms of how **believable** respondents regarded *Sky FM* news, close to two-thirds (62%) said it was believable and about one-fifth (22%) said it was very believable. Only about one out of every twenty respondents (4%) said it was not believable or not believable at all. The rest, about a tenth (12%) said they did not know how to rank believability of *Sky FM* news.

Almost half (48%) of the respondents perceived the *Radio BAR* news as believable while a little more than two-fifths (43%) perceived the news as very believable. Barely one out of every fifty (2%) rated the news, not believable. Thus, both stations' news were highly rated as believable although that was not the one thing they liked most about the news bulletins.

In terms of **unbias or objectivity**, about two-thirds (64%) termed *Sky FM* news as unbiased while about a tenth (12%) said it was very unbiased. About a tenth also said it was biased or very biased. About two-fifths (39%) of the respondents ranked the *Radio BAR* news as unbiased, while more than a quarter (28%) described it as very unbiased and as much as one-fifth described it as biased.

In rating the **balance** of *Sky FM* news, about half (51%) of the respondents indicated it was balanced while about one-fifth (22%) claimed it was very balanced. Just about one-fifth (21%) also said it was not balanced and less than a tenth (6%) said they did not know. Likewise, a little more than two-fifths (42%) of the respondents described *Radio BAR* news as balanced, while about a third (31%) described it as very balanced. Almost one-fifth (19%) said the news was not balanced.

Furthermore, on **reliability**, a little more than a half (53%) rated *Sky FM* news as reliable with about a third (31%) rating it as very reliable. Only about a tenth (11%) said it was not reliable and one-twentieth (5%) said they did not know. About a half of the respondents (49%) said *Radio BAR* news was very reliable while close to a half (47%) said the news was reliable. Less than one-twentieth described it as not reliable (4%).

Again, more than half (56%) of the respondents described style of presentation of *Sky FM* news as good while a little more than a quarter said it was very good. Similarly, more than half of the respondents (57%) rated style of presentation of *Radio BAR* news bulletins as good and a third (34%) rated it as very good. Only one-twentieth (6%) rated it as not good.

In the case of the individual in-depth interviews, the respondents were generally not impressed with the *Sky FM* news presentation. They said the newsreaders did not sound professional at all because their reading was generally not the best and their pronunciation was bad. It should be noted that pronunciation, Fatt (1999) indicated, was the most dynamic feature of the voice vital to the credibility of a source. The interviewees explained the reason for such observation of *Sky FM* news as probably because the newscasters were not trained and did not possess the required qualifications. The respondents said some of the news presented were stale or not current, and the news bulletins did not contain enough local stories or stories about the community or the region. Another reason given for poor presentation was the bad sound quality of the news broadcast.

Radio BAR news bulletins were described as impressive in presentation. " *I like the way their stories are presented,*" one respondent stated. The newsreaders of the station were credited with being confident and better than the *Sky FM* newsreaders and their better performance was attributed to their link with GBC, which meant the newsreaders were given some in-service training at GBC.

The individual in-depth interviewees further commented on the newsworthiness of the news stories. While the majority of the interviewees described *Sky FM* news stories as newsworthy as a result of the station's links with

other radio stations outside the region, one person rated it 50% newsworthy because they did not always give the people much of what the people expected to hear (that is, news about their community or region). He described the news as "a bit porous." *Radio BAR* news, though, was described as newsworthy. The station's news bulletins were said to relatively contain more local news (news of happenings within the Region) and national news.

5.3 Suggestions to improve news credibility

Participants in the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews made some suggestions that could help improve the credibility of the news bulletins of the two radio stations examined in this study.

In the focus group discussions, respondents recommended that both stations should broadcast news in the local language more often since most people in Sunyani and its environs spoke and understood the local language (Twi) better. The argument was that if more news were broadcast in the local language, it would encourage more people in the area to listen to news and benefit from its usefulness. Secondly, respondents recommended that both stations should have more live interviews (or actualities) within their news bulletins in order to enhance the believability or credibility of the news bulletins. The stations were also advised to link up with more radio stations from the other regions in the country so that listeners could benefit from news from all over the country.

Sky FM was advised to engage professional journalists to train its personnel or employ broadcast journalists the station sometimes sounded unprofessional. Again, respondents recommended that *Sky FM* work on its machines in order to improve the

sound quality of its news broadcasts. The respondents commended *Radio BAR* on the way their newsreaders read and recommended that *Sky FM* newsreaders learn to improve upon the way they read and pronounced words.

Similar recommendations were made in the individual in-depth interviews. *Sky FM* was encouraged to provide in-service training to its personnel (especially the newsreaders) to help them improve upon their performances. One journalist remarked that *Sky FM* should do away with employing family members (who were usually not qualified personnel) as staff. He held that it was important to get the organisational chart and job descriptions right, so that employees would know their various roles.

Another important recommendation was for *Sky FM* management to motivate their workers to put out their best. By motivation they did not only mean financial motivation or improvement in logistics but also boosting the morale of employees by relating well with them. It was further suggested that *Sky FM* improve its machines because its sound quality was poor resulting in few areas in its reach within the Region getting its signals clearly.

The interviewees further recommended that *Radio BAR* also needed more personnel. This was because the station's signals were supposed to cover the entire Region, yet most of the time they did not have enough local stories that would interest people all over the Region especially in the remotest parts. As a state-owned radio station, it was expected to be capable of employing enough people to reach and cover news in all the 13 districts of the Region. One journalist recommended that as a result of the upsurge of other private radio stations in the region, *Radio BAR*

should be privatised in order to meet the competition squarely, without any undue advantage over the others.

5.4 Summary

The survey results have shown that respondents perceived *Sky FM* news bulletins as more objective, fair and accurate although *Radio BAR* news bulletins were, on the whole, seen as more believable and trustworthy. Respondents also rated each of the two news bulletins highly positive or favourable in terms of believability, unbiased, reliability and balance. Thus, both radio stations' news bulletins were seen as credible by a majority of respondents.

The more general opinion in the focus group discussions was that *Radio BAR* news bulletins were more accurate or more correct in facts, but *Sky FM* news bulletins were more believable and trustworthy. And in the individual in-depth interviews, respondents said it was important for a credible news story to be balanced, contain correct facts and figures and be unbiased, as well as answer all the five Ws and one H questions. The interviewees described *Radio BAR* news as more credible than *Sky FM* news because *Radio BAR* was a state-owned station and therefore more cautious in coming out with its stories.

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

The findings of the study are analysed and discussed in this chapter in an attempt to examine or test the hypotheses posed at the beginning of the study. The tests of hypotheses, in particular, are based mainly on the findings of the survey. Some of the answers to the research questions are, however, explained and supported by the findings of the focus group discussions and the individual in-depth interviews. The chapter is divided into sections based on the hypotheses formulated for the study.

6.1 Importance of news and patronage of a radio station

Since news was a key concept in this study, one aim was to find out whether the importance of news was in any way related to the patronage of a radio station's news bulletins.

In the focus group discussions, participants indicated that news was important to the existence of a radio station and that news was also an important reason why they listened to a radio station. The respondents noted that one aim of every radio station should be to inform listeners and to keep them abreast with what was happening through the dissemination of news. This view was similar to that of the RTNDF (2000) survey in which respondents indicated that an important function of radio was to inform listeners (especially about local issues and community events) through news. The focus group discussion participants noted that they depended mainly on radio for news since in their opinion it was the cheapest source of technologically mediated news. Other forms of news were either too expensive or

not convenient. News was also important in their opinion because it created awareness. According to them, many people would not listen to a radio station without news.

Similarly, findings from the individual in-depth interviews of the journalist respondents supported those of the focus group discussions on this issue. The journalists noted that radio news gave people, literate and illiterate alike, the opportunity to know what was happening around them and far away from them (often) instantaneously. Thus, news itself was an important use and gratification obtained from radio. The journalists further noted that the type of news a radio station broadcast was important to the selection of that radio station because they themselves, for instance, tuned in to a station depending on the type of news they expected to hear. This opinion is also similar to one in the RTNDF survey (2000) in which findings showed that news was important to the selection of a radio station.

The survey also showed that the majority of respondents, four-fifths, thought news was an important reason why they listened to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR*. Furthermore, as much as about one-third (29%) of respondents said they chose to listen to *Sky FM* news bulletins because it contained more important news.

Thus, all the various findings of the study showed that the respondents thought news was an important reason why people listened to a radio station, and, therefore, the importance of news seemed to be an issue with regard to patronage or preference of a radio station. Accordingly, a hypothesis was tested to determine whether the relationship, if any, between importance of news and patronage or preference of a radio station was significant or not. The following is a test of this hypothesis.

Test of Hypothesis One:

The hypothesis tested was:

H₁: The perception of the importance of news is related to one's preference or patronage of a radio station's news.

The reason for this hypothesis, as indicated above, was that news seemed to be an important and expected part of radio programming and most people seemed to depend on radio for news. Accordingly, it was quite probable that people would not tune in to a station without news, or they would tune in to only stations which broadcast news they preferred. Besides, the RTNDF (2000) survey for instance, showed that news was ranked second to music as a reason why people tuned in to a radio station. The same survey also showed that more than half of the listeners said they paid close attention when news programmes came on. Also, since the majority of respondents (four-fifths) indicated news was an important reason why they listened to a station, the researcher believed people were more likely to tune in to a station that presented news that was more important to them.

The level of significance set for this test was 0.05 and the null hypothesis was:

H₀: There is no relationship between the perception of the importance of news and one's preference or patronage of a radio station's news.

Two tests, as presented in Table 3 and Table 4, examine this research hypothesis.

Table 3: Preferred news bulletins By News importance in choice of station

| Which station's news bulletins do you prefer? | Is news an important reason why you listen to either <i>Sky FM</i> or <i>Radio BAR</i> ? | | | Total |
|---|--|-----------|------------|------------|
| | Yes | No | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 71 (45%) | 20 (61%) | 3 (37.5%) | 94 (47%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 78 (49%) | 10 (30%) | 2 (25%) | 90 (45%) |
| Don't know | 10 (6%) | 3 (9%) | 3 (37.5%) | 16 (8%) |
| Total | 159 (100%) | 33 (100%) | 8 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

Four cells (44.4%) have expected count less than five

$$\chi^2 = 13.849$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p = 0.01$$

A cursory look at Table 3 shows that most (close to two-thirds or 61%) of those who said news was not an important reason why they listened to either of the two radio stations, also said they preferred listening to *Sky FM* news bulletins. Less than half (45%) of those who said news was an important reason why they listened to either station also preferred to listen to *Sky FM* news.

On the other hand, about a third (30%) of those who thought news was not an important reason why they listened to either station also preferred *Radio BAR* news, while almost half of those who said news was an important reason why they listened to either station preferred *Radio BAR* news. Thus, the table seems to suggest that the importance of news influenced respondents' choice of a station's news bulletin.

The probability accompanying the Chi-Square value of 13.849 is 0.01, which is less than the level of significance 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The research hypothesis (H_1) is therefore significant, since it is statistically supported by the data.

However, although the research hypothesis is significant and is supported by the data of this study, the Cramer's V value (a measure of the strength of the relationship) of 0.189 suggests that the relationship is not very strong. Perhaps, the weak relationship may be accounted for by the fact that the Table (3) is not the best for this Chi-square test since far more than 20% of the cells had expected frequencies of less than five.

Table 4: Preferred news bulletins By Importance of news to respondents

| Count (Column Percent) Which station's news bulletins do you prefer? | Which station presents news that's more important to you? | | | Total |
|---|---|------------------|------------|------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 70 (83%) | 22 (21%) | 2 (18%) | 94 (47%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 7 (8%) | 78 (75%) | 5 (46%) | 90 (45%) |
| Don't know | 8 (9%) | 4 (4%) | 4 (36%) | 16 (8%) |
| Total | 85 (100%) | 104 (100%) | 11 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

Two cells (22.2%) have expected count less than five

$$\chi^2 = 99.177$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p = 0.00$$

Table 4 shows that more than half of the respondents (104 or 52%) indicated that *Radio BAR* presented news that was more important to them, while less than half (85 or 47%) felt similarly about *Sky FM*. The table further shows that of all those who thought that *Sky FM* presented news that was more important to them, the majority, more than four-fifths (83%), preferred *Sky FM* news bulletins while only about a tenth (8%) preferred *Radio BAR* news. Similarly, of those who thought *Radio BAR* presented news that was more important to them, the majority, three-quarters (75%), preferred *Radio BAR* news bulletins while only about one-fifth preferred *Sky FM* news. The table, therefore, suggests that respondents who found the news of a station more important to them were more likely to prefer that station's news bulletins, and hence perception of the importance of news was likely to be related to preference or patronage of a radio station's news.

The probability accompanying the Chi-Square value (99.177) of this table is 0.00, which is also far less than the level of significance 0.05. The null hypothesis is, thus, rejected. And, the research hypothesis (H_1) that the perception of the importance of news is related to a listener's patronage or preference of a radio station is significant, as it is statistically supported by data in Table 4. The Cramer's V value of 0.498 accompanying this table also suggests that there is a relatively strong relationship between the perception of the importance of news and preference or patronage of a radio station's news.

6.2 News credibility and patronage or preference of a radio station's news

Respondents in the focus group discussions suggested in their responses that credibility was an important issue that was likely to affect one's patronage or preference of a radio station's news. Those respondents who said they preferred *Sky FM* news bulletins for instance explained that they liked the station's news because it sounded more believable as a result of the use of live interviews and actualities. They also said the *Sky FM* news was genuine and truthful. This seemed to imply that credibility was a major issue with regard to their patronage of the station's news. However, although about equal numbers of the respondents said they preferred listening to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins, the majority of them indicated they found *Radio BAR* news more believable.

The journalists interviewed also noted that news credibility extended to medium credibility, in this case the radio station, and this implied preference or patronage of that radio station. The following hypothesis was therefore tested to determine whether there was any relation between credibility and patronage or preference of a radio station.

Test of Hypothesis Two

The hypothesis tested was:

H₂: The perception of credibility of a radio station's news is related to patronage or preference of the radio station's news bulletins.

The reason for this hypothesis is that if someone thought a news story was believable or credible then he or she would want to listen to it. On the other hand, if the news story was perceived as not credible, then it would not be taken seriously and people would not want to listen to it.

The level of significance of this test was 0.05, and the null hypothesis was:

H₀: There is no relationship between the perception of credibility of a radio station's news and patronage or preference of the radio station's news bulletins.

Table 5: Preferred news bulletin By Station's news found more credible

| Which station's news do you prefer? | Which station's news bulletins do you find more believable or credible? | | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|------------|------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 54 (81%) | 36 (32%) | 4 (20%) | 94 (47%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 7 (10%) | 71 (63%) | 12 (60%) | 90 (45%) |
| Don't know | 6 (9%) | 6 (5%) | 4 (20%) | 16 (8%) |
| Total | 67 (100%) | 113 (100%) | 20 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

One cell (22.2%) has expected count less than five

$$\chi^2 = 56.164$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p = 0.00$$

Table 5, developed to examine this hypothesis, shows that the majority (more than four-fifths (81%)) of the respondents who indicated they found *Sky FM* news more believable or credible, also indicated they preferred listening to *Sky FM* news bulletins. Similarly, the majority (more than half (63%)) of those who indicated they found *Radio BAR* news more believable or credible, also indicated they preferred

listening to *Radio BAR* news. Table 5, thus, suggests that the more credible one perceived a news bulletin the more likely he or she would patronize that news bulletin. Therefore, the news credibility of a station had some influence in respondents' choice or preference of a radio station's news bulletins.

The probability accompanying the Chi-Square value in Table 5 is small (0.00) and less than the level of significance. This means the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the perception of credibility of news and preference of a radio station's news, is rejected. Thus, the research hypothesis, H_2 , that credibility is related to a listener's patronage or preference of a radio station's news bulletins, is significant, since it is statistically supported by the available data. The data further suggests that the influence of credibility on preference of a radio station is relatively strong as indicated by the Cramer's V value of 0.375. However, the Table further shows that more than 20% of the cells has expected count less than five, which implies that although the research hypothesis was significant, the table is not the best for testing the hypothesis.

6.3 News presentation and credibility of a radio station's news bulletins

The focus group discussions did not seem to have answers to the question of whether the style of presentation of a news bulletin influenced the credibility of the news. However, the journalists in the individual in-depth interviews mentioned that the presentation of news stories was equally as important in news credibility as objectivity, fairness and accuracy. The journalists suggested they were not as impressed with the presentation of *Sky FM* news bulletins as they were with the

Radio BAR news bulletins. They said the *Sky FM* news presentation did not sound professional – the reading was not the best and the pronunciation was bad.

In the survey, only a little less than half (46%) of the respondents indicated they preferred the style of presentation of *Sky FM* news bulletins while just about half of the respondents (50.5%) indicated they preferred that of *Radio BAR*. In an attempt to find out whether there was any relation between the style of news presentation and the way people perceived the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins, therefore, another hypothesis was tested.

Test of Hypothesis Three.

The hypothesis tested was:

H₃: The style of news presentation is likely to be related to the perception of credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

Table 6: "Station's news found more credible" By " Preferred style of news presentation"

| Which station's news do you find more believable or credible? | Which station's style of news presentation do you prefer? | | | Total |
|---|---|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 58 (63%) | 9 (9%) | - | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 29 (32%) | 84 (83%) | - | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 5 (5%) | 8 (8%) | 7 (100%) | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 92 (100%) | 101 (100%) | 7 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

Three cells (33.3%) have expected count less than five

$\chi^2 = 130.426$

df = 4

p = 0.00

The reason given for this hypothesis was that since the way the news was presented could be described as “the face” of the entire news bulletin or the first thing one noticed about the news, it was likely to affect or influence the way people perceived the entire news bulletin, and hence its credibility. In other words, it was quite probable that those who liked a station’s news presentation would also perceive the station’s news bulletins as more credible.

Like all the other tests, the level of significance was 0.05, and the null hypothesis:

H_0 : The style of presentation of news is not related to the perception of credibility of a radio station’s news.

Table 6 shows that most (about four-fifths (84%)) of those who said they preferred the *Radio BAR* style of news presentation also said they found *Radio BAR* more believable. Similarly, most of those who said they preferred *Sky FM* news presentation (about two-thirds (63%)) also said they found *Sky FM* news bulletins more believable. Table 6, therefore suggests that the style of news presentation influences the news credibility of the station. The probability accompanying the Chi-Square value (130.426) of the table is 0.00, and since this probability is less than the level of significance, 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. The research hypothesis (H_3) that the style of presentation of a news bulletin is likely to influence how credible a radio station’s news bulletin is perceived is, thus, supported by the data and therefore significant.

However, though more than 20% of the cells of Table 6 have expected frequencies less than five, hinting that the table was not a very good one for testing the hypothesis, the Cramer’s V value (0.571) suggests that the influence of style of

news presentation on news credibility is relatively strong. This further suggests that news presentation must be important in the respondents judging whether radio news bulletins are credible or not and must, therefore, be considered as a measure of radio news credibility. This finding seems to support Fatt's (1999) assertion that in broadcasting the style of presentation – in the form of volume, rate, pitch and pronunciation – have a strong effect on the receiver's perception (in this case credibility).

6.4 Objectivity, fairness and balance and the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

Since this study assumed (based on literature reviewed) that objectivity, fairness and balance were measures of credibility, the researcher thought it was important to determine whether these measures also influenced credibility of news in this study. Findings of the focus group discussions suggested that fairness, accuracy and objectivity might not necessarily be main issues when considering the overall credibility or believability of a radio station's news bulletins. The participants generally indicated *Sky FM* news bulletins were more fair or balanced than *Radio BAR* news. On the other hand, they indicated *Radio BAR* news were more accurate. They also indicated that the two stations' news bulletins were equally objective. However, in putting all three criteria together, the respondents felt that *Radio BAR* news bulletins were generally more believable than *Sky FM* news bulletins.

With the individual in-depth interviews, though, respondents indicated that *Radio BAR* news bulletins were more balanced (fair) and accurate but less objective

news presentation on news credibility is relatively strong. This further suggests that news presentation must be important in the respondents judging whether radio news bulletins are credible or not and must, therefore, be considered as a measure of radio news credibility. This finding seems to support Fatt's (1999) assertion that in broadcasting the style of presentation – in the form of volume, rate, pitch and pronunciation – have a strong effect on the receiver's perception (in this case credibility).

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With the individual in-depth interviews, though, respondents indicated that *Radio BAR* news bulletins were more balanced (fair) and accurate but less objective

than *Sky FM*. On the whole, they said *Radio BAR* news was more believable than that of *Sky FM*.

In the survey, findings generally showed that although respondents found *Sky FM* news bulletins more unbiased, balanced and correct in facts, they perceived *Radio BAR* news bulletins as more believable and trustworthy. In an attempt to answer this research question fully, therefore, it was necessary to test whether each of these three criteria influenced the credibility of news bulletins and hence three hypotheses depending on objectivity, fairness and accuracy respectively, were tested.

Tests of Hypothesis Four

One hypothesis tested in this section was:

H_{4a}: Perception of objectivity is likely to be related to perception of the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

The reason for this hypothesis was that objectivity seemed to be one of the important measures used by various researchers to evaluate news credibility as shown in the theoretical framework of the study. Hence objectivity was quite likely to also affect or influence the credibility of the bulletins investigated in this study. Another reason for this hypothesis is based on Phillips' (1978) notion that other measures of credibility such as balance, accuracy, fairness and unbiased were closely related to objectivity and in effect boil down to objectivity. Hence, objectivity should be the number one factor to influence credibility, since Mencher (1997), for instance, equates objectivity to credibility. It was, therefore, assumed that if a news story was objective, then the listeners were more likely to think it was credible or believable.

The level of significance set for this (H_{4a}) hypothesis, like all the others, was also 0.05. The null hypothesis was:

H_0 : Perception of objectivity is not related to perception of the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

Table 7: Station's news found more credible By Station's news found more objective.

| Which station's news do you find more believable or credible? | Which station's news bulletins do you think is more unbiased or objective? | | | Total |
|---|--|------------------|------------|------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 36 (34%) | 17 (32%) | 14 (36%) | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 58 (54%) | 33 (61%) | 22 (56%) | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 13 (12%) | 4 (7%) | 3 (8%) | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 107 (100%) | 54 (100%) | 39 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

One cell (11.1%) has expected count less than five

$\chi^2 = 1.501$

$df = 4$

$p = 0.83$

Using Table 7 to test hypothesis H_{4a} , it is observed that of the respondents who said *Radio BAR* news bulletins were more objective or unbiased, the majority (61%) also indicated they found *Radio BAR* news bulletins more believable or credible.

However, of those who indicated they found *Sky FM* news bulletins more unbiased or objective, more than half (54%), but less than those who chose *Radio BAR* news, rather indicated they found *Radio BAR* news bulletins more believable or credible too. Table 7, therefore, suggests that perceiving news as unbiased or

objective does not influence or affect perception of credibility of news. The table further shows that the probability accompanying the Chi-Square is relatively larger (0.83) than the level of significance (0.05).

This means the null hypothesis is accepted. The data available does not, therefore, statistically support the research hypothesis (H_{4a}) that objectivity is likely to influence how a listener perceives the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins. So, although American journalists embraced the ideal of objectivity as one of the fundamental norms of their profession (Lichtenburg, 1997) and the Ghanaian journalist was also supposed to comply with objectivity in performing his or her role as stipulated in the *Code of Ethics of the GJA* (1994), the survey respondents used in this study (who are unaware of the code of ethics) seemed to have taken that criterion for granted and did not seem to see objectivity as that important in determining the credibility of news stories.

The next hypothesis tested was:

H_{4b} : The perception of fairness is likely to be related to the perception of credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

The reason given for this hypothesis is similar to that of the last hypothesis tested – that fairness seemed to be one of the important measures used by various researchers to evaluate news credibility (as shown in the theoretical framework of the study), and, therefore, fairness was quite likely to also affect or influence the credibility of the two Sunyani radio stations' news bulletins. Besides, this researcher assumed that if a radio news story was fair or balanced, that is, if it related all sides of the story, then the listeners were more likely to perceive it as more credible or believable.

The level of significance for the test of this hypothesis was also set at 0.05 and the null hypothesis was:

H_0 : The perception of fairness is not related to the perception of credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

Table 8 was used as data for testing the research hypothesis.

Table 8: Station's news found more credible? By Station's news found more fair?

| Which station's news do you find more believable or credible? | Which station's news bulletins do you think is more fair or balanced? | | | Total |
|---|---|------------------|------------|------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 35 (36%) | 21 (30%) | 11 (34%) | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 53 (54%) | 39 (56%) | 21 (66%) | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 10 (10%) | 10 (14%) | | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 98 (100%) | 70 (100%) | 32 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

One cell (11.1%) has expected count less than five

$\chi^2 = 5.477$

$df = 4$

$p = 0.24$

Table 8 shows that about equal proportions (more than half in each case) of those who either said they found *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins fair or balanced also found *Radio BAR* news more believable or credible. Similarly, about equal proportions (about a third each) of those who either said they found *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins fair, also indicated they found *Sky FM* news bulletins more



credible. This suggests that respondents did not necessarily think *Radio BAR* news bulletins were more credible because they thought they were fair or balanced. The probability (0.24) accompanying the Chi-Square of the table is also larger than the level of significance and, therefore, the null hypothesis for the test is accepted. Hence, the data in Table 8 did not statistically support the research hypothesis (H_{4b}) that fairness is likely to influence how credible one perceives a radio station's news bulletins.

The third hypothesis tested to establish whether accuracy was actually a measure of credibility in this study, was:

H_{4c} : The perception of accuracy is likely to be linked to that of the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

The reason for this hypothesis was that accuracy was another measure of credibility used by various researchers such as Gaziano and McGrath (1986), (as indicated in the theoretical framework), to evaluate news credibility, and, therefore this researcher believed the same criterion could be tested in this research. Besides, the researcher assumed that if the facts in a radio news story were correct, then people would believe the story more than other stories, which contained incorrect facts.

The level of significance for this hypothesis was once again 0.05 and the null hypothesis was:

H_0 : The perception of accuracy is not linked to that of the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

Table 9 was used as data to test this research hypothesis.

Table 9: Station's news found more credible? By Station's news containing more correct facts?

| Which station's news do you find more believable or credible? | Which station's news bulletins do you think contains more correct facts? | | | Total |
|---|--|------------------|------------|------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 35 (35%) | 26 (29%) | 6 (67%) | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 56 (55%) | 54 (60%) | 3 (33%) | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 10 (10%) | 10 (11%) | | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 101 (100%) | 90 (100%) | 9 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

Two cells (22.2%) have expected count less than five

$$\chi^2 = 5.649$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p = 0.23$$

Table 9 shows that more than half (60%) of those who said *Radio BAR* news contained more correct facts and more than half (55%) of those who said *Sky FM* news contained more correct facts, also said they found *Radio BAR* news more credible or believable. However, if accuracy were to influence perception of a radio station then we would expect that the majority of those who said *Sky FM* news contained more correct facts would also indicate that *Sky FM* news were more believable or credible, but this was not the case as shown in Table 9. The table further shows that the probability (0.23) accompanying the Chi-Square is bigger than the level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and, therefore, the data do not support the research hypothesis (H_{4c}) that accuracy is likely to influence how a listener perceives the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

Table 9: Station's news found more credible? By Station's news containing more correct facts?

| Which station's news do you find more believable or credible? | Which station's news bulletins do you think contains more correct facts? | | | Total |
|---|--|------------------|------------|------------|
| | <i>Sky FM</i> | <i>Radio BAR</i> | Don't know | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 35 (35%) | 26 (29%) | 6 (67%) | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 56 (55%) | 54 (60%) | 3 (33%) | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 10 (10%) | 10 (11%) | | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 101 (100%) | 90 (100%) | 9 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

Two cells (22.2%) have expected count less than five

$$\chi^2 = 5.649$$

$$df = 4$$

$$p = 0.23$$

Table 9 shows that more than half (60%) of those who said *Radio BAR* news contained more correct facts and more than half (55%) of those who said *Sky FM* news contained more correct facts, also said they found *Radio BAR* news more credible or believable. However, if accuracy were to influence perception of a radio station then we would expect that the majority of those who said *Sky FM* news contained more correct facts would also indicate that *Sky FM* news were more believable or credible, but this was not the case as shown in Table 9. The table further shows that the probability (0.23) accompanying the Chi-Square is bigger than the level of significance. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted and, therefore, the data do not support the research hypothesis (H_{4c}) that accuracy is likely to influence how a listener perceives the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins.

6.5 Gender and radio news credibility.

This study also sought to establish whether gender was an issue with radio news credibility. In the focus group discussions, gender did not seem to affect respondents' perceptions of the news bulletins of the two radio stations. The perceptions of male respondents did not seem to differ from those of the female respondents. In the survey, perceptions in the form of trustworthiness, unbiased, accuracy, balance (and others), also indicated gender did not seem to be an issue. However, a hypothesis was tested to determine whether there was any significant relationship between gender and the overall perception of the news bulletins in terms of credibility or believability.

Test of Hypothesis Five

The hypothesis tested is:

H₅: Gender is likely to influence the interpretation of news credibility.

The basic reason given for this hypothesis is that men and women are socialised differently and so they are expected to perceive certain issues differently. Also, the researcher assumed it would be useful and interesting to find out whether there was any relationship between gender and perception of news bulletins. The level of significance to test this hypothesis was 0.05, and the null hypothesis was:

H₀: Gender is not likely to influence the interpretation of news credibility.

Table 10: Station's news found more credible by Gender.

| Count (Column Percent) Which station's news do you find more believable or credible. | Gender | | Total |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 33 (33%) | 34 (34%) | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 59 (59%) | 54 (54%) | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 8 (8%) | 12 (12%) | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 100 (100%) | 100 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

$\chi^2 = 1.036$

df = 2

p = 0.60

Table 10 shows that about equal proportions (one-third) of male and female respondents indicated they found *Sky FM* news bulletins credible. Similarly, about equal proportions (just a little more than half) of both male and female respondents indicated they found *Radio BAR* news more credible or believable. This suggests that gender was not an issue with regard to how credible or believable respondents found a station's news bulletins. The probability accompanying the Chi-Square value (0.60) of the Table is larger than the level of significance, and, hence the null hypothesis is accepted. The hypothesis, H_5 , that a listener's gender is likely to influence the interpretation of news credibility, is accordingly not statistically supported by the data.

Table 10: Station's news found more credible by Gender.

| Count (Column Percent) Which station's news do you find more believable or credible. | Gender | | Total |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| | Male | Female | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 33 (33%) | 34 (34%) | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 59 (59%) | 54 (54%) | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 8 (8%) | 12 (12%) | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 100 (100%) | 100 (100%) | 200 (100%) |

$\chi^2 = 1.036$

df = 2

p = 0.60

Table 10 shows that about equal proportions (one-third) of male and female respondents indicated they found *Sky FM* news bulletins credible. Similarly, about equal proportions (just a little more than half) of both male and female respondents indicated they found *Radio BAR* news more credible or believable. This suggests that gender was not an issue with regard to how credible or believable respondents found a station's news bulletins. The probability accompanying the Chi-Square value (0.60) of the Table is larger than the level of significance, and, hence the null hypothesis is accepted. The hypothesis, H_5 , that a listener's gender is likely to influence the interpretation of news credibility, is accordingly not statistically supported by the data.

6.6 Age and radio news credibility

This study further sought to establish whether age was an issue with news credibility. In the focus group discussions, age was not an issue, as the groups were not formed based on age but only gender. A hypothesis based on the findings of the survey was tested to investigate this problem. The test is as follows:

Test of Hypothesis Six

The hypothesis tested is:

H₆: There is likely to be a relationship between respondents' ages and how they perceived a radio station's news bulletins.

The reason for this hypothesis was that older people have been known to perceive things differently from younger people and the same is likely to happen in this situation also. The level of significance for this test is 0.05, and the null hypothesis is:

H₀: There is not likely to be a relationship between respondents' ages and how they perceive a radio station's news bulletins.

Table 11: Station's news found more credible and Age.

| Count (Col. Pct) Which station's news do you find more believable or credible. | AGE | | | | | Total |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-----|---------------|
| | 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 | 56+ | |
| <i>Sky FM</i> | 31 (48%) | 16 (24%) | 16 (27%) | 4 (59%) | | 67 (34%) |
| <i>Radio BAR</i> | 29 (44%) | 45 (66%) | 38 (63%) | 1 (13%) | | 113 (56%) |
| Don't know | 5 (8%) | 7 (10%) | 6 (10%) | 2 (28%) | | 20 (10%) |
| Total | 65 (100%) | 68 (100%) | 60 (100%) | 7 (100%) | | 200 (100%) |

6 cells (40%) have expected count less than 5

$\chi^2 = 19.759$

$df = 8$

$p = 0.01$

Table 11, developed to test H_0 , shows that the majority (more than half) of the respondents between ages 26-35 and 36-45 thought *Radio BAR* news were more believable. On the other hand, most of the respondents (about a half (48%) and more than half (67%) respectively) aged between 18-25 and 46-55 and above thought *Sky FM* news were more believable. Thus, the majority of the youngest group and the oldest group of the sample thought *Sky FM* news more believable while the majority of those in age groups 25-35 and 36-45 thought *Radio BAR* more credible. The Table therefore, suggests some kind of relationship between age and

perception of news bulletins. The probability (0.01) accompanying the Chi-Square value (19.758) is less than the level of significance. This means the null hypothesis is rejected. The research hypothesis, H_6 , that there is likely to be a relationship between a respondent's age and how he/she perceives a radio station's news bulletins as credible, is, thus, statistically supported by the data. Thus, The Cramer's V value, however, suggests that this relationship is not strong and this may be explained by the fact that the table had 40% of cells with expected count less than five, and therefore the table was not an ideal one for testing the research hypothesis.

6.7 Summary

This chapter provided evidence to either support or reject the hypotheses examined in this study: that news credibility is likely to influence the patronage or preference of a radio stations' news bulletins. It has also shown that the style of presentation of news was an important issue with regard to the credibility of a radio station's news bulletins. Age also seemed to influence news credibility. On the other hand, there seemed to be no relationship between gender and news credibility. Also, objectivity, fairness and accuracy were not likely to influence news credibility.

This analysis paves the way for the conclusion of the study in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

This chapter sums up the entire study. It provides a summary of the findings, states the limitations of the study and suggests some recommendations for further studies and for the improvement of the news bulletins of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* news bulletins.

The main aim of the study was to determine the various perceptions of credibility in the news bulletins of each of the two radio stations, *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*, and also to determine which of the two radio stations Sunyani residents or listeners perceived as more credible in terms of objectivity, fairness and accuracy. The study further sought to determine whether there were any relationships between news presentation, objectivity, fairness, accuracy, age and gender, and credibility.

The findings showed that radio was the major source of news for almost all the respondents. The main reason given for this was that radio was the cheapest source of news and that radio was easy and convenient to use. The majority of respondents (about four-fifths) also indicated that news was an important reason why they listened to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins and therefore news was important to the patronage of a radio station. The findings also showed that about equal proportions of respondents indicated they preferred either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins. Results further showed that more respondents preferred the style of presentation of *Radio BAR* news bulletins than *Sky FM* news bulletins.

Considering each of the three measures of credibility (objectivity, fairness, and accuracy) separately, respondents indicated that *Sky FM* news bulletins were more

objective, fairer and more balanced. However, when the three criteria were considered together, respondents found *Radio BAR* news bulletins more credible or believable. The main reason deduced from this observation was that *Radio BAR* was state-owned and had developed from the sole radio station (*Radio Ghana*) in the Region for many years, so people tended to believe whatever the station broadcast. On the other hand, *Sky FM*, being a commercial and private-owned station, strived to be objective, fair and balanced in order to avoid lawsuits that could financially bring down the station.

Separate perceptions of the news credibility of the two radio stations also showed that both stations' news were perceived as highly credible. The various news bulletins were highly rated in terms of such factors as unbiased, balance, accuracy, believability and trustworthiness.

An analysis of the findings also revealed that there was a significant relationship between importance of news to a listener and preference of a radio station's news bulletin. In other words, the importance of news was likely to influence Sunyani residents' or listeners' choice or preference or patronage of either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins. Data from the study showed that this influence was likely to be relatively strong and that people were more likely to patronize news bulletins, which contained news that was more important to them.

It was also revealed that credibility was likely to influence preference of a radio station's news bulletins. This meant that listeners were more likely to patronize news bulletins that they found more credible.

The analysis further revealed that objectivity, fairness and accuracy were not major issues listeners considered in judging the credibility of a radio stations' news

bulletins. This revelation does not seem to agree with Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) identification of twelve dimensions of news credibility, which included these three. The listeners rather found the style of presentation of news a more important issue to consider in judging the credibility of news. Thus, the style of presentation of news influenced respondents' judgement of news credibility in this study. Listeners were more likely to patronise news bulletins of a station whose style of news presentations they liked.

Results further revealed that gender was not an issue with regard to news credibility. Gender did not seem to influence respondents' perception of which of the two radio stations' news bulletins were more credible or believable. On the other hand, age seemed to be an issue in perceiving which of the two stations' news was more credible or believable. People of different age groups perceived the news credibility of the news bulletins differently.

7.1 Limitations

As in all research, this study had its own limitations. The main limitation was that it did not include the content of the news about which respondents gave their perceptions. The limitation to an attempt to do a content analysis was the fact that *Sky FM* did not keep records of the transcripts of its news bulletins. A content analysis of the news bulletins of the two radio stations would have helped the researcher to know and understand better, reasons why respondents perceived the news the way they did. A content analysis of the news bulletins would have also enabled the researcher to establish whether the news set the agenda as put forth by the agenda setting theory, and whether agenda setting had any relationship with

news credibility. The researcher could have also evaluated the content of the news to establish whether it was truly objective, fair or accurate and compared those findings with the results of the survey, focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews.

Another limitation was that the total number of people used in the focus group discussions was small (since only four groups with an average of eight people in each were used in this study) and therefore findings could not be generalized. The use of a larger number of people, by increasing the number of groups used for the discussions, could have enabled the researcher to generalize some of the findings of the focus group discussions. The focus group discussions should have also included other groups based on other demographic characteristics, such as age and income, (not only on gender) to enable the researcher determine whether or not such characteristics influenced respondents' perceptions.

Some of the tables used in testing the hypotheses of the study had more than 20% of their cells with expected frequencies less than five, and this posed another limitation to this study, since these tables were not ideal for testing the hypotheses.

7.2 Recommendations

Its limitations notwithstanding, this study seems to pave the way for further studies in news credibility. A content analysis of the news bulletins, for instance, would help understand respondents' perceptions better and also know how to improve the content of the news. It is, therefore, recommended that all radio stations keep proper records of their news bulletins to facilitate future research or investigations. *Sky FM* is particularly encouraged to keep records of its news

bulletins so that a sequel to this study could include a content analysis of news bulletins of the two radio stations.

To improve credibility of the news bulletins of the two radio stations it is recommended that particular attention is paid to the presentation of the news, since respondents in this study seemed to consider style of news presentation very important in their judgement of the news bulletins. Particular attention should, thus, be paid to the voice of newscasters, pronunciation, tone, pitch, language and the sound quality of the news.

It is recommended that radio stations pay special attention to the quality of their news personnel by: employing more qualified people or professionals, encouraging their personnel to do further studies and do a lot of in-service training. *Sky FM* is particularly advised to do in-service training for its newsroom personnel (especially the news readers) or encourage them to further their studies, and to employ more qualified people or professionals to help in the production of the news to improve the credibility of their news. The station is also advised to improve its machines to produce a better sound quality that would improve the presentation and hence improve credibility of the news bulletins.

It is further recommended (as suggested by the respondents) that both radio stations broadcast news in the local language more often and include more local stories in their news bulletins. More actualities (or live interviews) should also be included in the news bulletins since respondents seemed to attach importance to these in judging the credibility of the news.

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7.3 Conclusion

Despite radio pluralism in Ghana, little research has been conducted on such important issues as credibility. It is, therefore, hoped that this research would contribute to original knowledge on the issues of credibility especially concerning radio news.

The study has shown that *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* are the major source of news for residents of Sunyani used in the research. The majority of respondents established that news was an important reason why they patronised the two radio stations. Although *Sky FM* news bulletins were perceived as more objective, fair and balanced, *Radio BAR* news were on the whole perceived as more credible or believable. Interestingly, respondents found the style of presentation of news a more important issue to consider in judging the credibility of the news bulletins.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

Table I: Type of news preferred on Sky FM.

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Local | 91 | 46% |
| Foreign | 82 | 41% |
| Don't know | 27 | 13% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |

Table II: Type of news preferred on Sky FM.

| | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Local | 144 | 72% |
| Foreign | 44 | 22% |
| Don't know | 12 | 6% |
| Total | 200 | 100% |

TABLE III: One thing most liked or disliked about *Sky FM* news bulletins.

| | Like | | Dislike | |
|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Language | 35 | 18% | 24 | 12% |
| Voice | 48 | 24% | 36 | 18% |
| Story length | 20 | 10% | 30 | 15% |
| Believability | 36 | 18% | 13 | 6% |
| Way it is read | 25 | 12% | 21 | 11% |
| Nothing | 22 | 11% | 57 | 29% |
| Don't know | 14 | 7% | 19 | 9% |
| Total | 200 | 100% | 200 | 100% |



Table IV: Frequency distribution of one thing most liked or disliked about *Radio BAR* news bulletins.

| | Like | | Dislike | |
|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Language | 68 | 34% | 25 | 13% |
| Voice | 44 | 22% | 31 | 15% |
| Story length | 30 | 15% | 30 | 15% |
| Believability | 31 | 16% | 13 | 6% |
| Way it is read | 10 | 5% | 11 | 6% |
| Nothing | 9 | 4% | 70 | 35% |
| Don't know | 8 | 4% | 20 | 10% |
| Total | 200 | 100% | 200 | 100% |

APPENDIX 2
SUPPLEMENTARY CHARTS

Chart I: Station listened to.

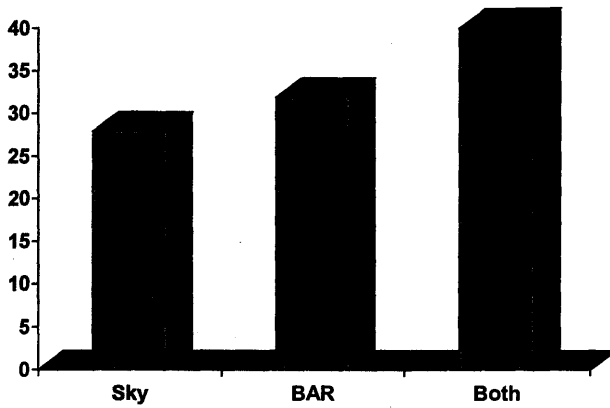


Chart II: Is news an important reason why you listen to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR*?

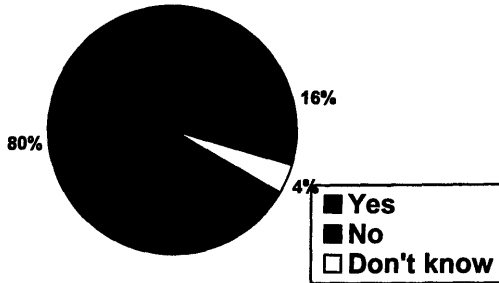


Chart III: Which station's news bulletins do you prefer?

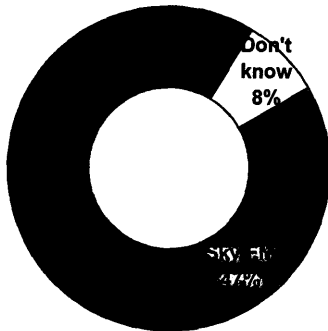


Chart IV: Which Type of News on the Two Stations Do You Prefer?

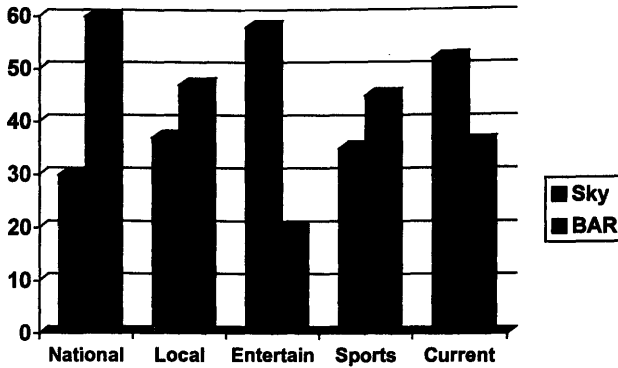


Chart V: Which language of *Sky FM* news presentation do you prefer?

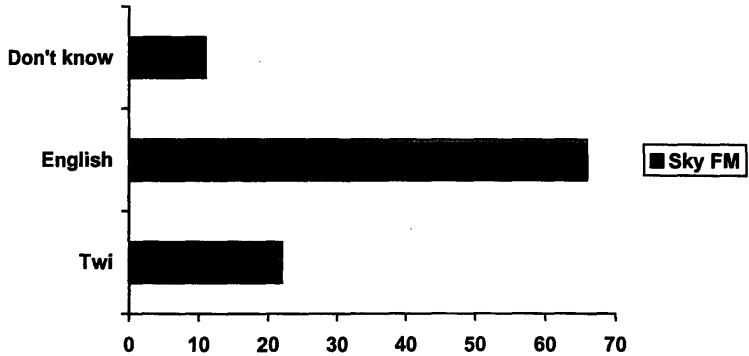


Chart VI: Which language of *Radio BAR* news presentation do you prefer?

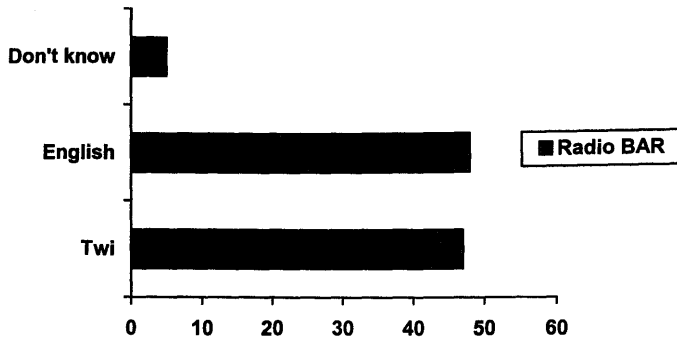


Chart VII: Which one news item do you like most or do you not like most on *Sky FM*?

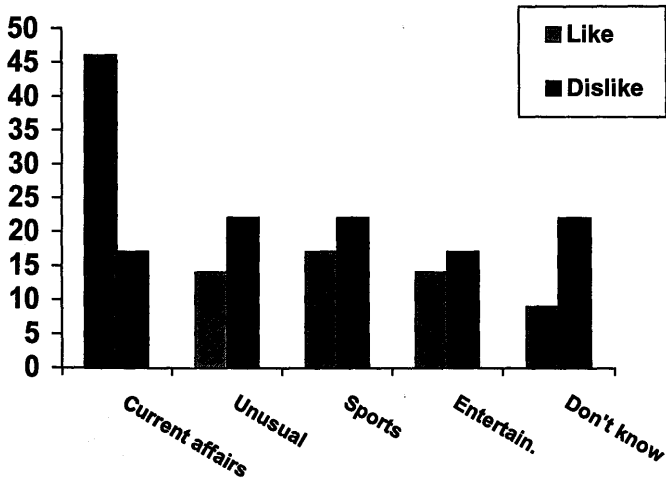


Chart VIII: Which one news item do you like or do you not like most on Radio BAR ?

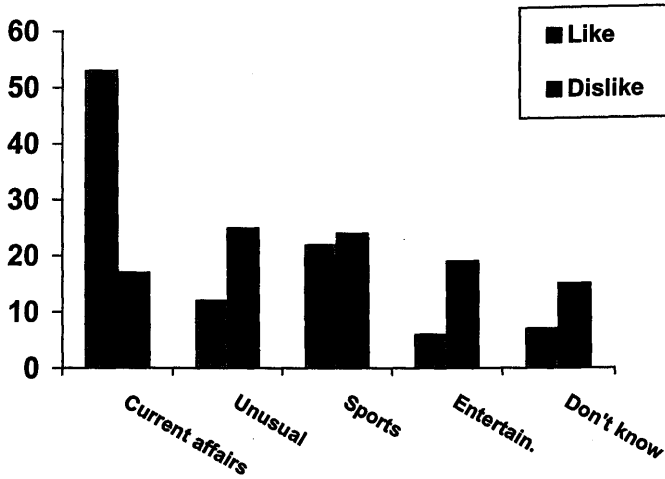


Chart IX: Why do you choose to listen to *Sky FM* news bulletins?

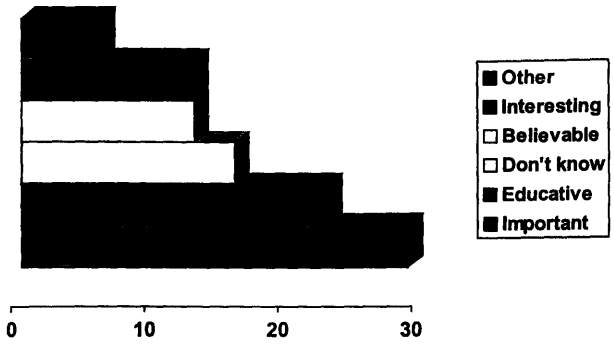


Chart X: Why do you choose to listen to *Radio BAR* news bulletins?

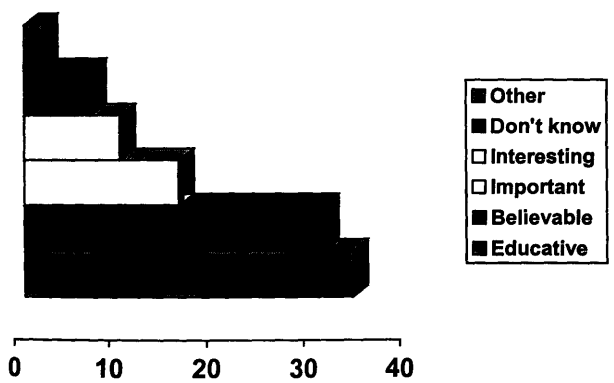


Chart 15: Positive ratings of Sky FM news bulletins

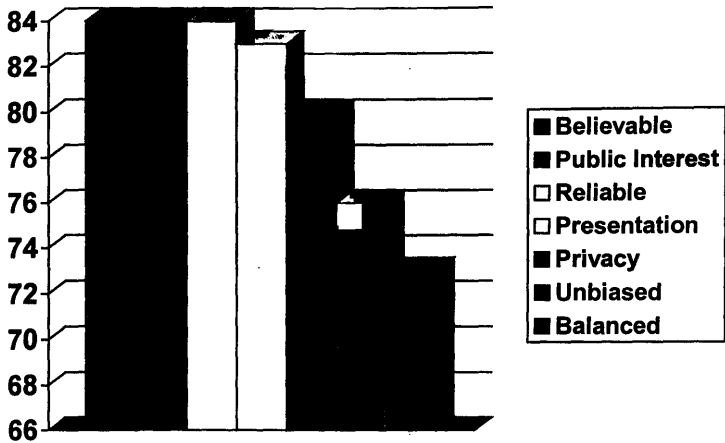
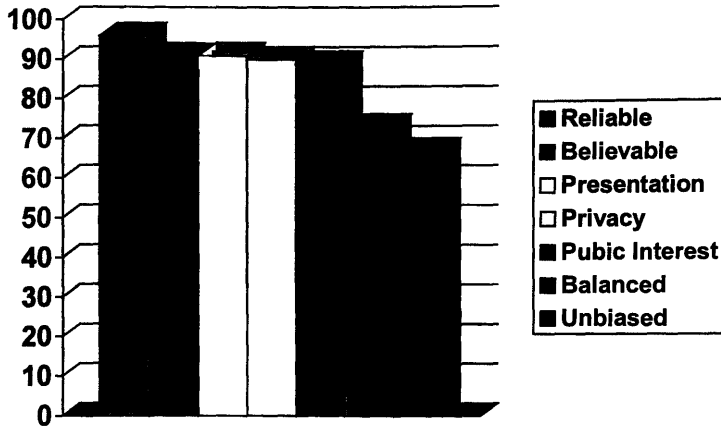


Chart 19: Positive ratings of *Radio BAR* news bulletins



APPENDIX 3
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

ISSUES OF CREDIBILITY IN RADIO NEWS: SUNYANI RESIDENTS PERCEPTION
OF SKY FM AND RADIO BAR NEWS BULLETINS

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am Victoria Adu, an M.Phil student of the School of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, conducting a survey on Sunyani Residents' perception of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* news bulletins.

This study is part of my M.Phil research.

You have been selected at random to answer the following questions on what you think about the news bulletins of both *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* and your responses will be treated as confidential. I kindly entreat you to answer the questions honestly and truthfully for the study to be meaningful and useful.

You can contact me on telephone number 0208191999.

Thank you.

Name of interviewer:

Date of interview:.....

Time of interview:.....

Sampled House no:.....

R1. Electoral Area:.....

R2. Polling Station:.....

R3. Language of Interview:.....



Screening Questions

Are you 18 years or above?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Do you listen to either **Sky FM** or **Radio BAR** news bulletins?

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
-

Please answer the following questions by ticking or writing the answer that best suits your view.

Section A: General questions on media habits

1. Which medium is your major source of news?

- 1. Radio
- 2. Newspaper
- 3. TV
- 4. Other, specify.....

2. Which of the two station's (**Sky FM** and **Radio BAR**) news do you listen to?

- 1. **Sky FM**
- 2. **Radio BAR**
- 3. Both

3. Which station's news bulletins do you prefer?

- 1. **Sky FM**
- 2. **Radio BAR**
- 3. Don't Know

4. Why ?

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

5. How often do you listen to radio news?

- 1. Very Often (Every day/almost every day)
- 2. Often (ie at least four days in the week)
- 3. Quite often (2 – 3 days in the week)
- 4. Rarely (Once in a while)
- 5. Don't know

6. How would you define news? (You could tick more than one answer)

- 1. Current events/happenings
- 2. An unusual/rare occurrence
- 3. An event about a prominent/important /widely known person
- 4. An event that has just happened
- 5. An event in your locality
- 6. An interesting event
- 7. Other, specify.....

7. Is news an important reason why you listen to either **Sky FM** or **Radio BAR**?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

8. Please tell me which of the two stations you would prefer for :

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. National news | 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> |
| 2. Local news | 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> |
| 3. Entertainment news | 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> |
| 4. Sports news | 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> |
| 5. Current affairs/political news | 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> |

9. If news were to be broadcast on both stations at the same time, which station's news would you listen to?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

10. Which of the two stations do you prefer listening to, when there is breaking news or when the news is fresh?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

11. Which of the two stations style of news presentation do you prefer listening to?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

12. Which station's headlines do you prefer?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

13. Which of the two stations news do you think is more unbiased in presentation?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

14. Which of the two stations news do you find more balanced in coverage, ie ensures that the opinions of all parties involved are fairly or equally represented?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

15. Which of the two stations news do you think contains more correct or accurate facts?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

16. Which of the two stations news do you think is more reliable or trustworthy, ie you would confidently quote elsewhere without any doubt of its truth in mind.

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

17. Which of the two stations news do you think has more respect for privacy ie does not infringe on people's rights.

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

18. Which of the two stations do you think is more concerned about the community's well-being or keeps the public interest in mind?

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 1. <i>Sky FM</i> | 2. <i>Radio BAR</i> | 3. Don't Know |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------|

19. Which station's news do you find more believable or credible?
1. *Sky FM* 2. *Radio BAR* 3. Don't Know
20. Which station presents news that's more important to you?
1. *Sky FM* 2. *Radio BAR* 3. Don't know

Section B: Perception of Sky FM news bulletins

21. Which type of news do you prefer listening to on *Sky FM*?
1. Local 2. Foreign 3. Don't know
22. Which language of *Sky FM* news presentation do you prefer?
1. Twi 2. English 3. Don't know
23. Which **one** news item on *Sky FM* news bulletins do you like most?
1. Politics/current affairs
2. Unusual happenings/strange happenings
3. Sports
4. Entertainment
5. Other, specify.....
24. Which **one** news item among the following on *Sky FM* news bulletins do you **not** like most?
1. Politics/current affairs
2. Unusual happenings/strange happenings
3. Sports
4. Entertainment
5. Other, specify.....
25. Why do you choose to listen to *Sky FM* news bulletins?
1. They are more believable.
2. They are more educative.
3. They contain news that I find more important.
4. They are more interesting.
5. Don't know
6. Other, specify.....
26. How believable do you find *Sky FM* news?
1. Very believable
2. Believable
3. Not believable
4. Not believable at all
5. Don't Know
27. How unbiased do you find *Sky FM* news?
1. Very unbiased
2. Unbiased

3. Biased
 4. Very biased
 5. Don't Know
28. How balanced do you find **Sky FM** news, ie how would you rate how **Sky FM** ensures that all parties involved are equally or fairly represented in its news?
1. Very balanced
 2. Balanced
 3. Not balanced
 4. Not balanced at all
 5. Don't Know
29. How reliable or trustworthy do you find **Sky FM** news?
1. Very reliable
 2. Reliable
 3. Not reliable
 4. Not reliable at all
 5. Don't know
30. How do you find **Sky FM** news in terms of its respect for privacy or not infringing on people's rights?
1. Very high
 2. High
 3. Not high
 4. Not high at all
 5. Don't know
31. How would you find **Sky FM** news in terms of its concern for the community?
6. Very concerned
 7. Concerned
 8. Not concerned
 9. Not concerned at all
 5. Don't know
32. How would you rate news on **Sky FM**, in terms of public interest?
6. Very much of public interest
 7. Of public interest.
 8. Not of public interest.
 9. Don't Know
33. How would you rate news on **Sky FM** in terms of style of presentation?
6. Very good
 7. Good
 8. Not good
 9. Not good at all
 10. Don't know

34. What **one** thing do you like about news bulletins on ***Sky FM***?
6. Language
 7. Voice of newscasters
 8. Length of stories
 9. Credibility/believability
 10. The way it is read
 11. Nothing
 12. Other, specify.....
35. What **one** thing do you not like about news bulletins on ***Sky FM***?
10. Language
 11. Voice of newscasters
 12. Length of stories
 13. Credibility
 5. The way it is read
 6. Nothing
 7. Other, specify.....

Section C: Perception of *Radio BAR* news bulletins

36. Which type of news do you prefer listening to on ***Radio BAR***?
1. Local
 2. Foreign
 3. Don't know
37. Which language of ***Radio BAR*** news presentation do you prefer?
1. Twi
 2. English
 3. Don't know
38. Which **one** news item on ***Radio BAR*** news bulletins do you like most?
1. Politics/current affairs
 2. Unusual happenings/strange happenings
 3. Sports
 4. Entertainment
 5. Other, specify.....
39. Which **one** news item among the following on ***Radio BAR*** news bulletins do you not like most?
1. Politics/current affairs
 2. Unusual happenings/strange happenings
 3. Sports
 4. Entertainment
 5. Other, specify.....
40. Why do you choose to listen to ***Radio BAR*** news bulletins?
1. They are more believable.
 2. They are more educative.
 3. They contain news that I find more important.
 4. They are more interesting.
 5. Don't know
 6. Other, specify.....

41. How would you rate the believability of news bulletins on **Radio BAR**?
1. Very believable
 2. Believable
 3. Not believable
 4. Not believable at all
 5. Don't Know
42. How unbiased do you find **Radio BAR** news?
1. Very unbiased
 2. Unbiased
 3. Biased
 4. Very biased
 5. Don't Know
43. How balanced do you find **Radio BAR** news, ie how would you rate how **Radio BAR** ensures that all parties involved are equally or fairly represented in its news?
1. Very balanced
 2. Balanced
 3. Not balanced
 4. Not balanced at all
 5. Don't Know
44. How reliable or trustworthy do you find **Sky FM** news?
1. Very reliable
 2. Reliable
 3. Not reliable
 4. Not reliable at all
 5. Don't know
45. How do you find **Radio BAR** news in terms of its respect for privacy or not infringing on people's rights?
1. Very high
 2. High
 3. Not high
 4. Not high at all
 5. Don't know
46. How would you find **Radio BAR** news in terms of its concern for the community?
1. Very concerned
 2. Concerned
 3. Not concerned
 4. Not concerned at all
 5. Don't know
47. How would you rate news on **Radio BAR**, which you think, are of public interest?
1. Very much of public interest
 2. Of public interest.
 3. Not of public interest.
 4. Don't Know

48. How would you rate news on **Radio BAR** in terms of style of presentation?

1. Very good
2. Good
3. Not good
4. Not good at all
5. Don't know

49. What **one** thing do you like about news bulletins on **Radio BAR**?

1. Language
2. Voice of newscasters
3. Length of stories
4. Credibility/believability
5. The way it is read
6. Nothing
7. Other, specify.....

50. What **one** thing do you not like about news bulletins on **Radio BAR**?

1. Language
2. Voice of newscasters
3. Length of stories
4. Credibility
5. The way it is read
6. Nothing
7. Other, specify.....

Thank you for answering the above questions.

Now, could you please tell me a little about yourself?

D1 Gender

1. Male
2. Female

D2 Age

1. 18-25 years
2. 26-35 years
3. 36-45 years
3. 46 – 55 years
4. 56 – 65 years
5. Above 65 years

D3. Level of Education

1. None
2. Primary/JSS
3. Secondary/SSS
4. College (Training colleges)
5. Polytechnic
6. University
7. Other (please specify)

D4 Occupation

1. Lecturer/Teacher
2. Trader/Businessman or woman

3. Seamstress/Tailor
4. Hairdresser
5. Labourer
6. Farmer/fisherman
7. Student
8. None
9. Other

D5 Income

1. Below ₵100,000
2. ₵100,000 - ₵250,000
3. ₵251,000 - ₵350,000
4. ₵351,000 - ₵450,000
5. ₵451,000 - ₵550,000
6. ₵551,000 - ₵1,000,000
7. Above ₵1,000,000

Thank you.

APPENDIX 4
RECRUITMENT GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

**Issues of credibility: Sunyani Residents' Perceptions of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*
News Bulletins**

RECRUITMENT GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. Do you live in Sunyani?
Yes (Recruit)
No (Discontinue)
2. Are you 18 years and above?
Yes (Recruit)
No (Discontinue)
3. Do you listen to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins?
Yes (Recruit)
No (Discontinue)
4. Have you taken part in a focus group discussion in the past six months?
Yes (Discontinue)
No (Continue)
5. Would you like to take part in a focus group discussion on listeners' perceptions of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* news bulletins?
Yes (Continue)
No (Discontinue)
6. Gender
Male Female

APPENDIX 5

RECRUITMENT GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

**Issues of credibility: Sunyani Residents' Perceptions of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*
News Bulletins**

RECRUITMENT GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

1. Do you live in Sunyani?
Yes (Recruit)
No (Discontinue)
2. Are you 18 years and above?
Yes (Recruit)
No (Discontinue)
3. Do you listen to either *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* news bulletins?
Yes (Recruit)
No (Discontinue)
4. Are you a (trained) journalist who plays a major role in the production of news
in your institution?
Yes (Continue)
No (Discontinue)
5. Would you like to take part in an interview on credibility of *Sky FM* and *Radio
BAR* news bulletins?
Yes (Continue)
No (Discontinue)
6. Gender
Male Female

APPENDIX 6
QUESTION GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Issues of credibility: Sunyani Residents' Perceptions of Sky FM and Radio BAR
News Bulletins

INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Welcome respondents and introduce them to discussion by explaining the significance of the study and why they are required to give honest views and opinions. Begin discussion by playing back a recorded major news bulletin (of a day selected at random) from each of the two radio stations. Then proceed to ask questions with the aid of the topics and questions provided below.

1.0 General Knowledge

1. What is news? (Probe for respondents' understanding of concept of news values such as timeliness, proximity, prominence, unusualness, newness, conflict, and human interest. Probe for explanations.)
2. Is news an important reason why you listen to a radio station? Why?
3. Which medium is your major source of news? Why?
4. Which of the two radio stations *Sky FM* or *Radio BAR* is your main source of news? Why?
5. What type of news must a news bulletin include? Why?
6. Do you think news is important to the existence of a radio station? Why?
7. With the improvement of Information Communication Technologies (ICT's) do you think radio news has a chance of survival? Why?

2.0 Credibility of Sky FM news bulletins?

1. How would you describe *Sky FM* news bulletins in terms of fairness or balance of coverage? (Do you think *Sky FM* is fair/balanced in the way it handles issues eg. Political issues in their news bulletins? Do you think *Sky FM* is fair in giving both sides of a story in a news bulletin?)
2. How would you describe *Sky FM* in terms of objectivity or unbiased? (Do you think in *Sky FM* news on finds the opinion of the reporter?) Why?
3. Do you think in *Sky FM* news bulletins everything that one needs to know is told?
4. How would you describe *Sky FM* news bulletins in terms of accuracy or the correctness of the facts? Why?
5. How would you describe the credibility of *Sky FM* news bulletins in terms of respect for privacy?
6. Do you think *Sky FM* news bulletins are trustworthy? (Do you think *Sky FM* news bulletins are reliable? Would you confidently repeat something you heard on *Sky FM* news somewhere with out any doubt of its truth in mind?) Why?
7. Do you think *Sky FM* is concerned about community well being in its presentation of news bulletins?
8. Generally would you say a *Sky FM* news bulletin is credible or believable? Why?

3.0 Credibility of *Radio BAR* news bulletins

9. How would you describe *Radio BAR* news bulletins in terms of fairness or balance of coverage? (Do you think *Radio BAR* is fair/balanced in the way it handles issues eg. Political issues in their news bulletins? Do you think *Sky FM* is fair in giving both sides of a story in a news bulletin?)
10. How would you describe *Radio BAR* in terms of objectivity or unbiased? (Do you think in *Radio BAR* news one finds the opinion of the reporter?) Why?
11. Do you think in *Radio BAR* news bulletins everything that one needs to know is told?
12. How would you describe *Radio BAR* news bulletins in terms of accuracy or the correctness of the facts? Why?
13. How would you describe the credibility of *Radio BAR* news bulletins in terms of respect for privacy?
14. Do you think *Radio BAR* news bulletins are trustworthy? (Do you think *Radio BAR* news bulletins are reliable? Would you confidently repeat something you heard on *Sky FM* news somewhere without any doubt of its truth in mind?) Why?
15. Do you think *Radio BAR* is concerned about community well-being in its presentation of news bulletins?
16. Generally would you say a *Radio BAR* news bulletin is credible or believable? Why? (In posing the above questions ask respondents to rate the news bulletins in terms of the measures used and probe for their reasons for rating them as they will.)

4.0 Recommendations

What recommendations would you give for the improvement of news bulletins of each of the stations? Why?



APPENDIX 7
QUESTION GUIDE FOR INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

**Issues of credibility: Sunyani Residents' Perceptions of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR*
News Bulletins**

INTERVIEWER'S GUIDE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Welcome interviewee and introduce him/her to the interview by explaining the significance of the study and why he/she is to give honest views and opinions. Then proceed to ask questions with the aid of the topics and questions provided below.

1.0 General Knowledge

1. In your opinion what is news? Why?
2. As a journalist how do you select your news stories?
3. What are some of the characteristics of a good news story?
(Ask questions about objectivity, fairness and accuracy)
4. How do you write your news stories?
5. Do you think news is important to the existence of a radio station? Why?
6. Do you think news is important to the selection of a radio station? Why?
7. Which medium is your major source of news and why?
8. With improvement in information communication technology, do you think radio news has a chance of survival? Why?

2.0 News Credibility

1. What do you understand by credibility of news?
2. Is credibility important in news? Why?
3. What factors make a news story credible?
4. What advantage in your view has radio news over other sources of news?

3.0 Perception of *Sky FM* and *Radio BAR* news bulletins

1. How would you describe *Sky Fm/Radio BAR* news bulletins?
2. Are the news bulletins newsworthy and why?
3. Are the news bulletins credible? Why?
4. Suggest ways in which the news bulletins could be improved.
5. Suppose you learnt from both stations that a nationally prominent person was a kleptomaniac is seeking treatment at some undisclosed facility, and there was no one connected to the individual available for comment. If no more information is provided on the issue, which of the two stations are you more likely to believe and why?

