

Influence of Media Owners' Political Affiliations on Journalistic Professionalism in Ghana

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to examine whether media owners' political affiliations influence news content and journalistic professionalism in Ghana. Media ownership theory as developed by Altschull in 1984 basically contends that the content of any newspaper is directly influenced by the interests of its owners. The findings of this study support this theory.*

The research was based on content analysis as well as in-depth interview. Media content was measured through content analysis of the two major newspapers of the country, Daily Guide and Enquirer. The two were selected because of their owners' political affiliations, circulation and reach.

The results of the in-depth interviews were then compared with the findings of the content analysis. The articles reviewed coupled with data from the interviews appear to confirm the widely-held view that the Ghanaian media, particularly the press, have taken entrenched political positions.

Therefore, the study found that in majority of the instances newspaper ownership did have relationship with the nature of coverage of NDC and NPP issues in Ghana from 2010 to 2014. The findings indicated that Daily Guide and Enquirer covered political issues in a similar fashion during the period under review. Hence, the main hypothesis that there was likely to be relationship between newspaper owners' political affiliations and the coverage of NDC and NPP issues in Ghana was supported by the results of the study.

Keywords: *Newspaper Ownership, NDC, NPP, Political Affiliations, Journalistic Professionalism*

I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, the prerequisite for relating to and understanding the wider world have been narrowed to the effective use of information communicated through the media. Moreover, the enormous opportunities available from being part of the global village have become conceivable only because of innovations in information and communication technology which in turn have democratised media information (Okafor, 2014).

In his view Edie (2001) noted that the mass media all over the world have established themselves as a new channel - a third channel for political, (social and economic) influence - and in many aspects also as an independent power broker.

According to Machin and Niblock (2006), a rich, interdisciplinary body of scholarship into news journalism has raised critical concern about the industry. Since the earliest days of mass communication questions have been raised as to the implications of popular journalism, of concentrated ownership, of unacceptable practices, of sexism and racism, of sensationalism and bias, to list but a few.

The media has often been perceived as a political campaign tool to mop up support for and against influential political elites. The journalist and press critic A. J. Liebling opines that freedom of the press belongs to those who own it (as cited in Baker, 2007). This rather cynical remark makes ownership an issue of central focus in media studies today. It could also explain why politicians have often demonstrated a penchant for the acquisition of media outlets, namely to propagate their political ideologies to the electorate (Simiyu, 2014).

Simiyu citing Dean Alger (1998) opines that the news media are absolutely central to the functioning of democracy today, and entertainment and other features and programmes in the mass media, in the aggregate, have powerful effects on society more generally. Further, he contends that how news organizations in particular are operated and, ultimately, who owns and controls the main media we all rely on for information, exchange of ideas and basic images are fundamental in determining whether the democratic process works as intended, or whether it falters or is subverted.

He went further to highlight that globally, media ownership has become increasingly concentrated, dominated by a few key players. Perhaps most powerful amongst them is Rupert Murdoch, the founder and CEO of News Corporation. Recently, Murdoch became the subject of a backlash from those who believe his

presence is becoming too powerful given his inclination to dabble in European politics and beyond (Reuters, 2012).

Research Objectives

The study sought to achieve the following objectives namely:

- i) To find out the influence of ownership on news content
- ii) To ascertain the nature of coverage given to the political parties of their owners by the Enquirer Newspaper and Daily Guide Newspaper during the years under review
- iii) To determine whether or not newspapers are used in promoting the propaganda of their owners' political affiliation.
- iv) To measure the extent of media owners influence on journalists and their practice in Ghana.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study taking into cognizance the various underlining variables are:

- i) What is the relationship between current pattern of media ownership and media performance in Ghana?
- ii) How much of news content is primed to project the political party of the media owners in positive light?
- iii) How frequent does a media report negative stories about the political party of their owners?
- iv) To what extent does ownership pattern influence journalist recruitment and professionalism?

Scope of the study

The newspaper industry in Ghana was purposively divided into the major political parties in operations based on their ownerships. Ghana has a multi-party system though there are two dominant political parties (the National Democratic Congress and the New Patriotic Party), with extreme difficulty for anybody to achieve electoral success under the banner of any other party.

This study was limited to two newspapers: one NDC member owned and the other NPP member owned, namely: the Enquirer and the Daily Guide.

The two papers were purposively selected because it has been established that they owners have political affiliations. Secondly, within the context of political affiliation of owners, the study is interested in comparing media which have the highest circulation both in terms of numbers and geographical coverage.

Theoretical Framework

Media Ownership Theory

The media ownership theory was developed by Altschull in 1984. He posits that the content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who finance the press (Dugle, 2013).

This theory basically contends that the content of any newspaper is directly influenced by the interests of its owners; that is, the content of a medium reflects the interests and ideologies of those who own it. In the light of this, where a media outlet is commercially owned, the content will reflect the commercial interest of the news organisation's owners.

Shoemaker and Reese (1991 cited by Nartey et al. 2011) refined the theory to propose that media owners have the ultimate power over news content.

Framing Theory

Media Framing is another theory upon which this study is anchored. Framing is a concept that means different things to different scholars.

McCombs (2004, p. 87) defines framing as "the selection of, and emphasis upon, particular attributes for the news media agenda when talking about an object (the fact of cutting and trimming news stories in order to filter it and shape it as the sender wishes)."

This means that the media could frame objects, placing various degrees of emphasis on the attributes of persons, public issues or other objects when they think or talk about these issues. In other words, it is not just what is said in news reports, but how subjects are characterized and presented. It is through this unique characterization or presentation of issues that the media communicate certain meanings to audiences apart from just stating facts.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Effects of Ownership on Media Content

Okafor (2014) also supported the view that media ownership does influence how journalists cover stories; this happens in various ways including direct censorship and coercion of editorial staff. News reporting patterns were found to be connected to the type of ownership.

The theoretical framework and model adopted for this work refer to the public interest to address an issue of content in mass media messages. Mass media content is a product of the interaction between different interests within mass media, different roles of mass media, different sources of information, and different interests of groups outside mass media organization (McCullagh, 2002; Shoemaker, 1991; Press Freedom, 1997; Koltsova, 2001).

Shmykova (2007) stated that there were also studies that reported no effects of ownership on content of newspapers.

For example, he cited Akhavan-Majid and Boudreau (1995) who compared the editorial role perception of chain-owned and independent newspapers. With control for the size of newspapers there was no difference in editorial role perceptions. Perception changed due to size of newspapers, not due to ownership.

Some studies addressed questions about effects of ownership and the size of newspapers on space and allocation of different kinds of content. Lacy (1991) found that ownership did not have an effect on how news were allocated. Yet group-owned newspapers, when compared to independently owned ones, had shorter stories and devoted more space and stories to editorial and op-ed material.

Although results of studies on effects of ownership on contents are contradictory, this area of study still attracts scientists and is among the most highly debated. Some studies did in fact show that mass media ownership has impact on the diversity of its messages on two levels:

1) Presenting different points of view or different perspectives on some issue (for example, while endorsing, newspaper either endorse one favorable candidate, or presents several); 2) Presenting a variety of issues in general.

Regarding the journalistic character of the press, the long-established party parallelism remained strong in Ghana. The editorial content of the papers was often marked by the association to the actors on the political arena. McChesney (2000), states that newspaper ownership mostly serves political ends.

This assertion justifies Professor Kwame Karikari, Executive Director of Media Foundation for West Africa, who was sharing his thought during a symposium on "Reflecting on the first 100 days of Prof. Atta Mills's Presidency" organized by the Danquah Institute in Accra. He called for urgent steps to pass the Broadcasting Bill to law to save the nation from drifting to a civil war similar to what happened in Rwanda (Daily Graphic, 22 April 2009).

He equally noted that politicians were also using their ownership of the media to persecute their political opponents.

The Member of Parliament for Assin North, Kennedy Agyapong, one of the few politicians who own media organisations, has dismissed the idea put forward by Professor Kwame, saying the media organisations owned by politicians in Ghana are insignificant. (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, online – July 6, 2011)

Media Ownership: The Ghanaian Scenario

According to Owusu, (2011), Ghana probably experienced its best time in its constitutional history for freedom of the media when the Criminal Libel Law that had restricted press freedom and criminalised free speech for more than a century was repealed in August 2001.

With the introduction of the 1992 Constitution which had ended 11 years of military dictatorship in Ghana (with a population of more than 24 million), the stage was set for the struggle for greater media freedom.

Currently, there is a proliferation of the media. The media landscape is liberalised. Journalism has played significant roles in safeguarding Ghana's constitution and other democratic efforts. The repeal of the criminal libel law has brought more freedom to journalists than before.

In spite of these tremendous strides, the heightened level of unethical and irresponsible journalism is giving cause for concern. Many believe the repeal of the law has opened the floodgates to irresponsibility on the part of journalists (Owusu, 2011).

As a result, some Ghanaians are beginning to doubt the ability of the media to continue to protect the country's democracy. Others are even calling for laws that would curtail some of the powers given the media by the constitution. Some journalists are accused of openly mounting political platforms to campaign when they have a code of ethics to protect.

The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) Code of Ethics (the guiding document for the practice of journalism in Ghana) stipulates the parameters within which journalists can operate but this has been persistently flouted. Truth appears to be a tool of convenience and not a fundamental component of journalism in Ghana. President Mahama in 2012 admitted that the situation has been "accentuated by the high stakes in our electoral politics" and adds that "the politics of insult and personality vilification has overcome us."

There is a widespread perception that some journalists fight human rights abuses and crusade against corruption best when the party they are perceived to be supporting finds itself in opposition but once in government, the same crop of journalists see the same human rights issues and corruption in particular as no longer worthy enough a cause to champion.

Some journalists have been criticized for defending clear cases of wrong-doing on the part of government and public officials as well as powerful individuals even when competent courts of jurisdiction or institutions of state have indicted such officials.

Nevertheless, President Kufuor, who supervised the repeal of the law as President of Ghana, does not believe that re-introducing the law would solve the issue. He admits that some journalists have become

irresponsible but insists he has no regrets in supervising the repeal. His only advice is that journalists should strive to uphold high journalistic standards, a view shared by the NMC Chairman (Karikari, 2000).

According to Ankamah (2006), chairman of the constitutional body mandated to uphold high journalistic standards made it clear that he did not share the view of those calling for restrictions on media freedoms by insisting free press is a fundamental human right open to all.

Ghana currently has a quite diverse, pluralistic media. There are about 200 authorized FM stations, 12 private television stations, hundreds of newspapers. The state no longer enjoys a monopoly of media ownership. Journalists are no longer arrested and detained for their editorial functions. However, excesses in the profession are being used as a justification to clampdown on journalists and it is up to them to mend their ways to prevent it. (Owusu, 2011)

Mutere, Guedegbe, Ahiabenu, and Klutsey (2010) acknowledge the contribution of radio stations in enhancing debate during elections has helped promote lively and constructive political campaign and transparency during vote counting and declaration of results. However, there have been reported cases of excesses on the part of the electronic media, a situation which has been attributed to inadequacy of broadcasting laws in Ghana. There are attempts currently ongoing aimed at developing a broadcasting law but the process is somewhat slow and the law is expected to take some time to be promulgated. but quickly add that though it is growing fast and has achieved a number of successes, the media, like any other institution, is faced with many challenges, including but not limited to substandard output on the part of some journalists, inability of some journalist to undergo continuing professional education, low level of remuneration and poor resources in the newsroom, perceived partiality of some media outlets, growing ownership of media houses by politicians and high brain-drain of journalists from the sector. Overcoming these challenges will not happen overnight, but it is comforting to note that stakeholders have recognized the challenges and are working to resolve them over time.

The media is said to be the fourth estate of the realm in any democracy. It provides the participatory platform for discourses in the country. Today in Ghana, the role of the media in bringing the public up-to-speed on events in the country is more critical than ever. Media coverage in the post-election era however is politically skewed at the expense of development. Besides, the media has lately received a lot of criticisms for renegeing on its watchdog role turning itself into an appendage for the two leading political parties in Ghana, the NDC and the NPP (Mutere et al, 2010).

The preamble of the USA code of conduct for journalists is instructive. "Public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and provide a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of journalists' credibility."

The Ghana Journalist Association (GJA) Code of Ethics espouses the same ideals and aims to "ensure that members adhere to the highest ethical standards, professional competence and good behaviour in carrying out their duties". It calls on its membership to play their watchdog role with a high sense of responsibility without infringing on the rights of individuals and the society in general and to write and report the truth, bearing in mind their duty to serve the public which has the right to unbiased, accurate, balanced and comprehensive information.

The media is becoming increasingly susceptible to political manipulation. The hot exchanges that greet the public on the airwaves every morning: the invectives and name callings; the verbal violence and intemperate language cannot be in harmony with professional or moral code of ethics in any profession and/or society that is determined to develop.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. This research makes use of intensive interviews, or in-depth interviews which are essentially a hybrid of the one-on-one interview. Eight journalists and two experts in the media industry were contacted and interviewed on the research phenomenon via the instrument of structured question guide. The sample size was chosen with the concept of saturation in mind, that is number of interviews increasing up to the point when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation.
2. In line with Diedong (2013), a qualitative research method, namely content analysis was used to provide relevant data on newspaper coverage of political parties. Through a purposive sampling technique, two Ghanaian daily newspapers were selected for the study. Two privately owned newspapers - *Daily Guide* and *Enquirer* were selected because of their national reach and readership. The other key criterion for their selection was that both have carved out a niche for themselves as being prominent in reportage on political issues and discourse. Besides, it is assumed that their respective owners have political affiliations.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher used descriptive statistical tools such as tables, charts, and cross-tabulations of thematic areas, in presenting and analysing the findings. Again, applying statistical tools to the data collected in the content analysis, the researcher tested the main hypothesis of a likelihood relationship between newspaper ownership and the news content issues in Ghana using sub-hypothesis.

1. Analysis of In-Depth Interview Data

This section gives a detailed analysis of the data collected from the in-depth interview.

Demographic Data of Interviewees

An analysis of the contents of the demographic details of the in-depth interview respondents produced the data presented in Tables 1-6 below:

Table 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

Sex	Males	%	Females	%	Total
	8	80	2	20	10 (100%)

For the in-depth interview, a total of twelve interviewees were initially contacted but due to the busy nature of the media industry coupled with the personal engagements of the interviewees only ten were finally available for the interview as is seen on table 1. Eight (80%) of the interviewees were male while 2 (20%) were female.

This finding shows that the respondents were both gender inclusive to reflect cross-gender ideas and perspective on the various themes of the in-depth interviews.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Below 30	%	30 - 50	%	Above 50	%
	1	10	8	80	1	10

Table 2 shows that majority of them were 30 years of age and above as represented by 80%. One interviewee was above 50 while only one was below 30 years.

These findings show that all interviewees were matured enough to participate in the interview. It equally shows that they have lived enough in the society to understand happenings within the socio-political arena especially as it relates to the media.

Views on current pattern of media ownership in Ghana

Out of the ten (10) interviewed, nine (9) interviewees affirmed that most media owners are affiliated to political parties making it difficult for workers to be neutral and that they (the owners) determine the forms of programming of their stations. They went on to state that many media owners' ideology is to use the media whether newspaper, radio or television as a potent tool to help push the agenda of their parties and do not keep the basic aim of journalism in mind in their operations.

The pattern of media ownership and control described by Respondents is in line with the existing reality in the Ghanaian media industry. Basically the government has considerable power in the Ghanaian media industry. For privately owned media organizations to operate in Ghana, they have to secure an operating license through the relevant government agency.

A respondent even said, "The one who pays the piper calls the tune" to support his view that the media houses do the bidding of their owners. He went on to say that those who have a stake in the management and financial muscle of the media house have commercial or political or socio-economic or religious motives and would do all they can to satisfy such motives.

Findings revealed that Respondents believe that the pattern of media ownership in Ghana is defined as a split between government or public media ownership and private media ownership where individuals and private institutions own media. This pattern of ownership gives the government the opportunity to control the Ghanaian media industry through the issuance of operating licenses, allocation of operating frequencies and enactment of laws.

Effect of Ownership on Performance

Quotes from responses presented below exemplify the views expressed by respondents on the issue of patterns of media ownership and nature of media performance in Ghana.

Respondent 6 argues that: "Ownership is very important. If the media is private sector driven it will serve Ghanaians better. Therefore, there should be a change in the character of media ownership in this country".

Respondent 5 reveals that: "you risk losing your job if you give out unfavorable information about government activities, while the reporter in public media that makes use of such unfavorable information also runs the risk of losing their job. However, private media organizations that come across such information normally use them but at times the reporter could be compromised".

In addition, respondent 10 explains that: "There are institutional problems with media operations and ownership in Ghana. The guys who are stealing the money are the ones rich enough to set up newspapers in

Ghana. And he who pays the piper would dictate the tune. Look at all the newspapers in Ghana. Tell me which one is not being bank-rolled by those bad guys?"

The findings indicate that the current media ownership pattern in Ghana has a number of limitations with regards to the media playing a critical role in setting agenda for societal discourse. This can be observed in the support which media organizations give to the government of the day regardless of the performance of such a government. Respondents agree that proprietary and ownership influence is another hindrance in the attempt of the mass media in Ghana to serve as the watchdog of the people. Most often those rich enough to set up media outfits also have a lot of political, social, business and/or economic interests to protect. They at times bring these interests to bear on the day-to-day running of their media organizations. Proprietors have been known to demand self-censorship from their editors. They expect those working in their media organizations to understand the need to protect the proprietors' many and differing interests. The respondents suggest that public and private discourse in Ghana tends to support the argument that the control of the mass media by the ruling class is one of the means through which it influences people's ideas and thoughts thereby propagating personal agendas as media agenda. The owners of the media in Ghana are not only major capitalists in their own right but are also closely linked to the ruling circles around the globe.

This finding is in line with research objective one and research question one which seek to find out the influence of ownership on news content as has been shown by the responses that media owners have high influence on news content across all media platforms whether newspaper, radio or television.

How interviewees see the nature of current media ownership and its impact on journalistic professionalism in Ghana?

To this interview question, interviewees noted that both public and private media are influenced by their owners. One interviewee mentioned the fact that the state runs the public media and it is hardly expected to have these media doing critical stories on the government of the day.

In the same vein, respondents acknowledged that the private media are influenced to project the views and news about their owners and slant stories in their favour.

One interviewee stated that, "if the media outlets in the country continue to be highly favourable instead of bringing out issues that will help a majority of the people or promote what we call the common good, I am afraid the future of the profession is nothing but bleak and gloomy".

Another respondent said "the nature of the current media ownership has lowered journalistic standards in the sense that most media owners go in for cheap labour and by cheap labour I mean anybody who can speak on air and not professional journalists who are trained, by so doing they settle for mediocre contents, programme, presenters and in the end these mislead the public, hence the issue of defamation on the increase".

From findings of the present study, research objective four (To measure the extent of media owners influence on journalists and their practice in Ghana) and research question four (To what extent does ownership pattern influence journalist recruitment and professionalism?) have been achieved as they were aimed at measuring the extent of media owners influence on journalists and their practice in Ghana. Data from the respondents shows that it is clear that media ownership is crucial in determining the nature, extent and direction of performance of the media in Ghana. This is because media ownership is often associated with media control as evidenced by the study data. The study data indicates that respondents perceive journalism in Ghana to be shifting from mirroring the society to protecting the people in power as a result of the existing media ownership pattern.

Interviewees perception on the extent political coverage of each media outlet is influenced by the party or parties to whom it is close to.

Some interviewees were quick to mention that Oman FM is affiliated to the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and give them positive slant in its coverage while Radio Gold is affiliated to National Democratic Congress (NDC) and will do same.

A respondent rated the media in Ghana by saying on a scale of 10, he would say 8 out of 10 media houses are biased towards a particular party largely based on the party affiliation of the owner.

Some respondents pointed out that for instance Net 2 is an NPP station; UTV enjoys NPP political reportage because of the owner's political affiliation.

One interviewee was quick to note that one will not be far from right to say media outlets in Ghana are polarized just like political parties. On the outlook, media houses tend to be very proactive when their party is in power and dormant when their party is out of power.

All respondents spoke in the affirmative as they were of the view that media owners influence the activities and programmes of the media houses to the advantage of their political affiliations.

Interviewees view on which political party the Daily Guide newspaper aligns with most often

Majority of interviewees said the New Patriotic Party (NPP) while about 2 respondents refused to comment on this. Some respondents affirmed that the owner of the newspaper house is a leading member in the NPP.

The data shows that *Daily Guide* uses the newspaper to give positive coverage of NPP and to promote NPP propaganda.

Interviewees view on which political party the Enquirer newspaper aligns with most often

As in the immediate question above, most of the interviewees said the *Enquirer* are more pro National Democratic Congress (NDC).

A respondent even quoted the lead of a story written by Stanley Assor, Jr. on the headline titled “Cocaine! Cocaine! Cocaine! Kofi Wayo: The Barons are in NPP” (*Enquirer*, 30th July, 2011), the lead reads:

“It is the hypothetical reasoning of popular social commentator, Chuck Kofi Wayo, that the NPP fidgety tantrums, over NACOB boss, Yaw Akrasi-Sarpong’s broach on drugs amounts to the NPP role modeling as the proverbial old lady, who grows uncomfortable whenever dry bones are mentioned in a proverb”

Still on this theme, another respondents gave a rundown of some headlines of *Enquirer* newspaper to support his believe on the biasness and news framing attitude of the media. The headlines he mentioned include Al-Qaeda, Others Funded from Ghana Under Kufour (September 30, 2011 – Front page), Living The ‘All Be Die’ Dream, DFP Boy Punches NPP (September 1, 2011 – Front Page), Quashigah Flays Nana Addo Over \$10bn Faux Pas (September 2, 2011 – Front page), and JJ Calls Kufour A Thief – Says He’s Stolen Millions To Bankroll NPP To Regain Power (June 6, 2011 – Front page).

Some interviewees stated that Raymond Archer declared his sympathy with NDC and stated how he had said that he was a system analyst and had made lots of suggestions as to how things should be run at the Presidency.

A respondent even said: “it is instructive to note that Raymond had claimed once on Radio Gold that he was advising the late Professor John Atta Mills on certain issues when he was the President”.

The findings from the above theme addresses research objectives two and three as the data was aided at ascertaining the nature of coverage given to the political parties of their owners by the *Enquirer Newspaper* during the years under review and to determine whether or not newspapers are used in promoting the propaganda of their owners’ political affiliation. The data shows that *Enquirer* uses the newspaper to give positive coverage of NDC and to promote NDC propaganda.

Views on the public calling for reform in structure of media ownership

All the interviewees were conversant with the Ghanaian constitutional provision on media ownership and speaking in line with this affirmed that there is no way people or groups could be prevented from owning media houses. In view of this, that call may not go far enough as the law do not bar politicians from owning media. However, some of them stated that the important thing needed is for the proper regulation and monitoring and guidelines to ensure journalism is not made a propaganda profession.

A respondent said, “The only thing the public can do is to advocate for reforms but their advocacy will not go far if the system is not improved”.

Another said, “That call is in the right direction”

Yet another stated that he believes “people with political affiliations should own media outlets as far as they can separate their personal views from their roles as owners of the media outlets”.

This finding shows that media owners have great influence on journalists and their practice in Ghana and therefore address research objective four which aims to measure the extent of media owners influence on journalists and their practice in Ghana.

Respondents’ take on whether in terms of recruitment, beat assignment and promotion media owners are favourably predisposed towards journalists that support their political party and worldview

Some respondents said they totally agree that in terms of recruitment, beat assignment and promotion media owners are favourably predisposed towards journalists that support their political party and worldview. One interviewee from Ghana Broadcasting Corporation stated that if he hired someone to promote his ideology and the employee did not, why he should promote him.

One asked, “If you are going to project my opponents or competitors and not me, why should I put you on the assignment?”

Another asked, “If you are not ready to sing to my tune, why should I hire you in the first place? There are instances one’s party affiliation is demanded by the media owners before one is put on air as a presenter or panelist. In the end, the ability to be objective is lost”.

Probing further, some interviewees added that there are occasions where media men have been refused coverage on a particular story because they are touted as belonging to a certain political party. Also some other media houses tend to receive favour in terms of sponsorship from political parties because they promote their agenda.

The available data shows that there is a high tendency for ownership to influence recruitment and journalistic professionalism as evidenced by the responses from the interviewees.

A look at the extent of ownership influence on news content, objectivity and journalistic professionalism

All respondents agreed that the news is mostly slanted to meet the tastes and aspirations of the media moguls. A respondent argued that it is not difficult to determine the political leaning of most media houses in Ghana. To that extent, he agreed that media ownership is affecting news content and professionalism in Ghana.

One of the interviewee observed that most media houses with political affiliation are skewed towards reporting mainly about their party. These use their platforms for bickering and insults at the other parties.

On objectivity, most respondents stated that most panelists and journalists are never objective as they have to promote the ideologies of the media owners.

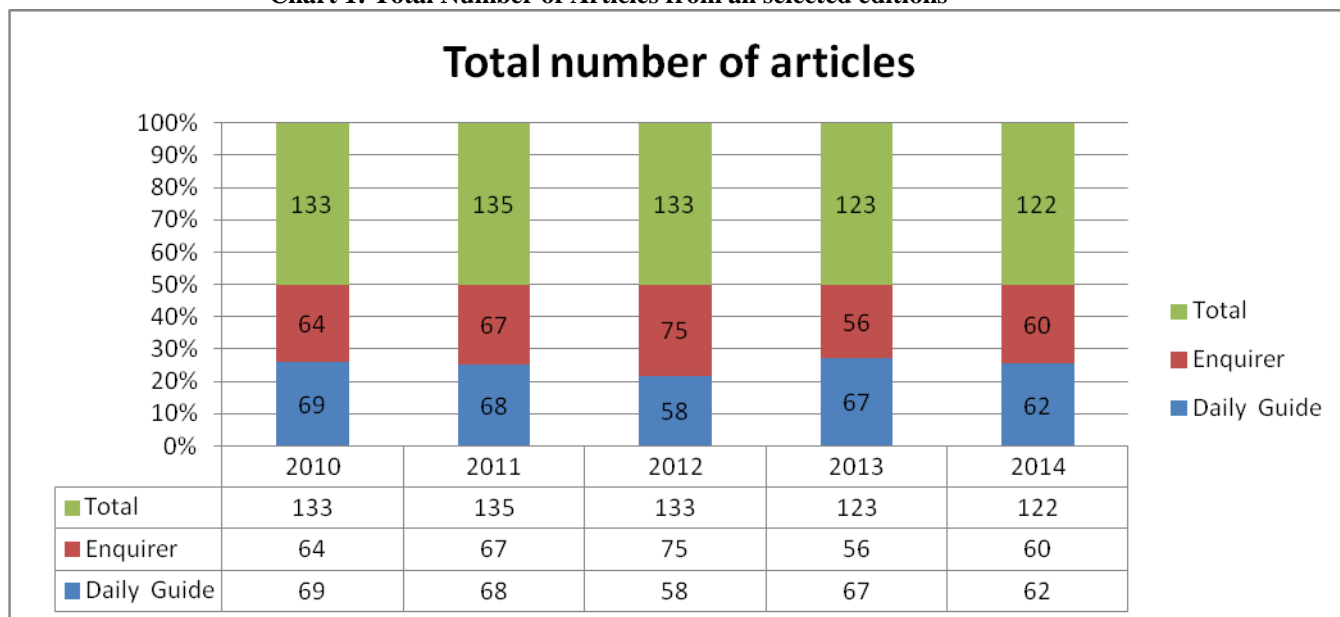
A respondent said, “it affects to a large extent mainly for owners who interfere in the objective delivery of news content, research and hosting of programmes”.

While on the issue of professionalism, they all equally said much is left to be desired.

A respondent stated that “the standard, objectivity and quality of news have now been thrown to the dogs”

Findings from Content Analysis of Selected Newspapers

Chart 1: Total Number of Articles from all selected editions



From the data on this chart, *Daily Guide* published 69, 68, 58, 67, 62 articles respectively from the nine days selected in 2010 to 2014, while *Enquirer*, produced 64,67,75,56,60 articles respectively under the same time period. The *Daily Guide* published a total of 324 articles and *Enquirer*'s total was 322. The combined total number of articles published by the two newspapers for the nine days selected between 2010 and 2014 was 646.

This finding shows that *Daily Guide* published more articles during the period under review. Of the 646 published articles, 324 (50.2%) were published by *Daily Guide* while 322 representing 49.8% of the total were published by *Enquirer*.

Chart 2: Number of Stories on Each Political Party

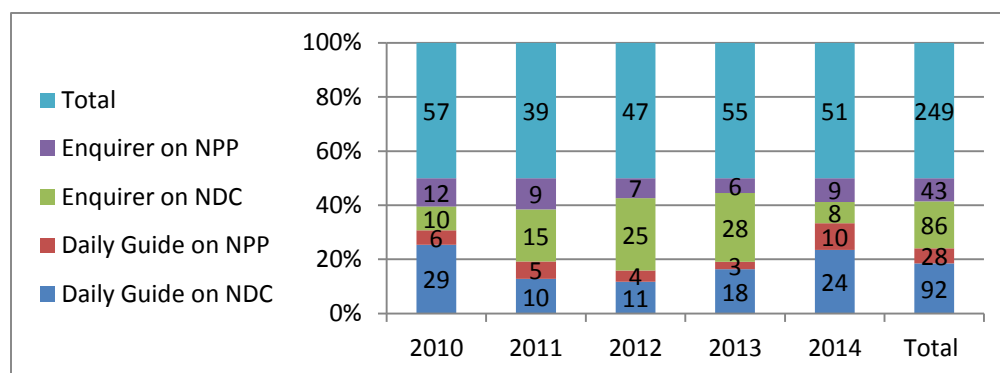


Chart 2 shows that out of the total of 646 published articles collected from the front pages, editorials and back pages of the newspapers from the period 2010 to 2014, only 249 were articles on either NDC or NPP. These 249 articles on the two political parties form 38.7% of the whole. *Daily Guide* published 120 articles on the two political parties - 92 (76.7%) articles on NDC while the remaining 28 (23.3%) articles of its 120 published articles were on NPP.

On the part of *Enquirer*, the same chart shows that it published a total of 129 articles on both political parties with 86 (66.7%) on NDC while 43 (33.3%) on NPP. This data shows that both newspapers have equal percentage of article on NDC and NPP.

By comparison, while both newspapers dedicated more articles to NDC, *Daily Guide* published a higher number than *Enquirer* on NDC related matters. *Enquirer* had more articles on NPP than *Daily Guide*.

The two newspapers had a total of 178 articles on NDC with *Daily Guide* publishing 92 (51.7%) and *Enquirer* 86 (48.3%). Articles on NPP were 71 of which *Daily Guide* published 28 (39.4%) and *Enquirer* published 43 (60.6%).

These findings show that more articles were on NDC and that both newspapers devoted more to either downplay the activities of NDC or promote its activities. This statistics supports the propaganda theory that states that media platforms are used to promote their owners' political affiliations.

Chart 3: Placement of Story

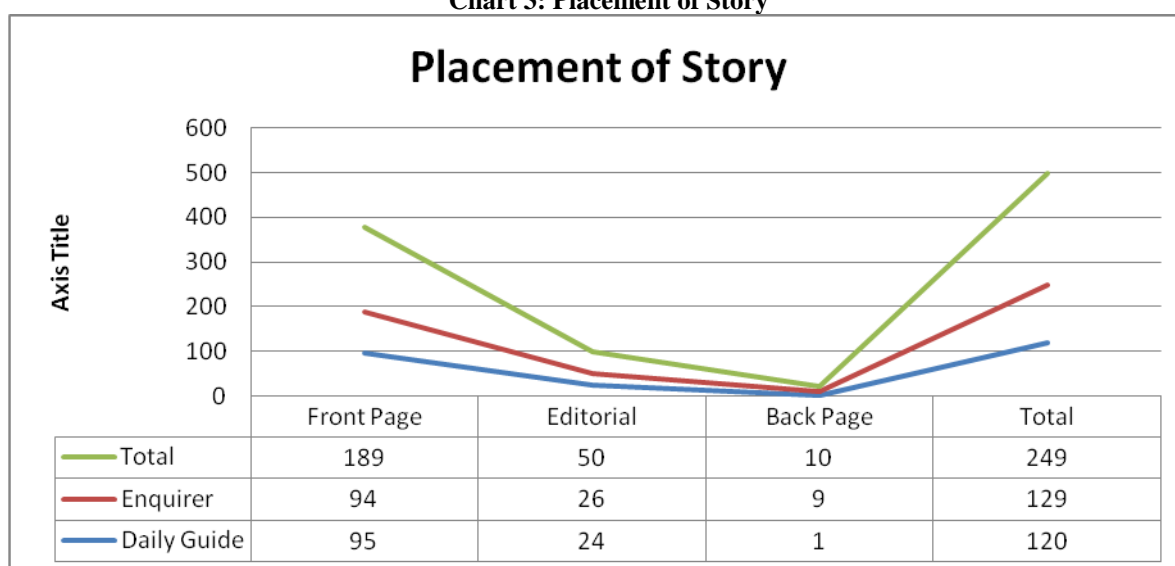


Chart 3 above shows data on the placement of stories in the two newspapers. Out of the 249 stories on the two political parties, 189 (75.9%) were on the front page, 50 (20.1%) on editorial and 10 (4%) on the back page.

From the 120 articles published by *Daily Guide*, 95 (79.2%) were on the front page, 24 (20%) on editorial and 1 (0.8%) was on the back page. *Enquirer* has 129 of which 94 (73.9%) were on the front page, 26 (20.1%) and 9 (7%) on back page.

These findings show that the front page is the major source of news on the political parties followed by the editorial. The back page was the least source of news on either NDC or NPP. By number and percentage, *Daily Guide* has more NDC/NPP news on the front page than *Enquirer*.

The data also shows that *Enquirer* has more number of stories on the editorial and back pages. Its editorial percentage is same with *Daily Guide* while the margin of its back page in both number and percentage was wide in difference. It has 9 (7%) stories while *Daily Guide* has only 1(0.8%).

Chart 4: Type of Article

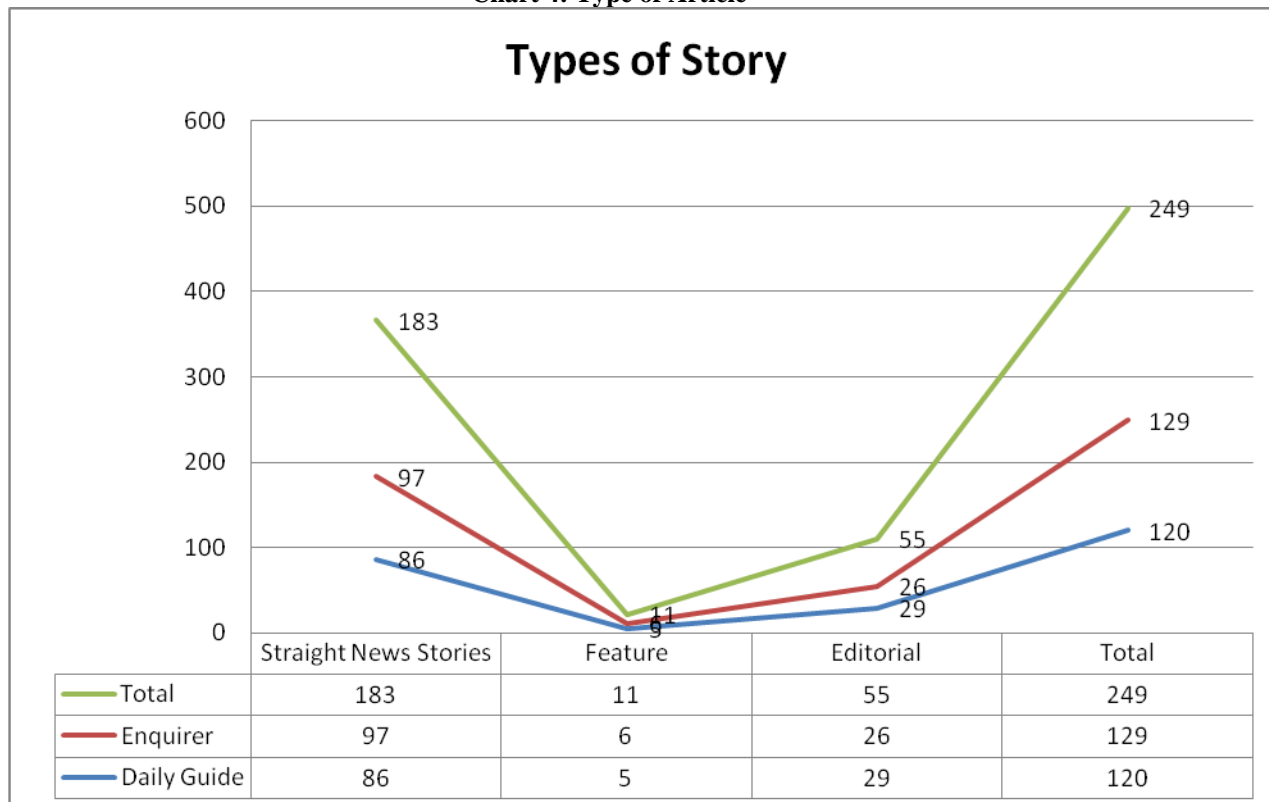


Chart 4 shows data on the types of article published on both NDC and NPP. The data shows that out of 249 articles most were straight news stories which was 183 (73.4%), followed by editorials 55 (22.1%) and the least was features which has 11 (4.4%),

Out of *Daily Guide's* 120 articles, 86 (71.6%) are straight news, 5 (4.2%) are features and editorials are 29 (24.2%). For *Enquirer*, of its 129 articles, 97 (75.2%) are straight news stories, 6 (4.7%) on features and 26 (20.1%).

Findings from these data explicitly show that most stories on NDC and NPP were straight news followed by editorials. Feature stories were least on the scale.

Chart 5: Author/Writer of Story

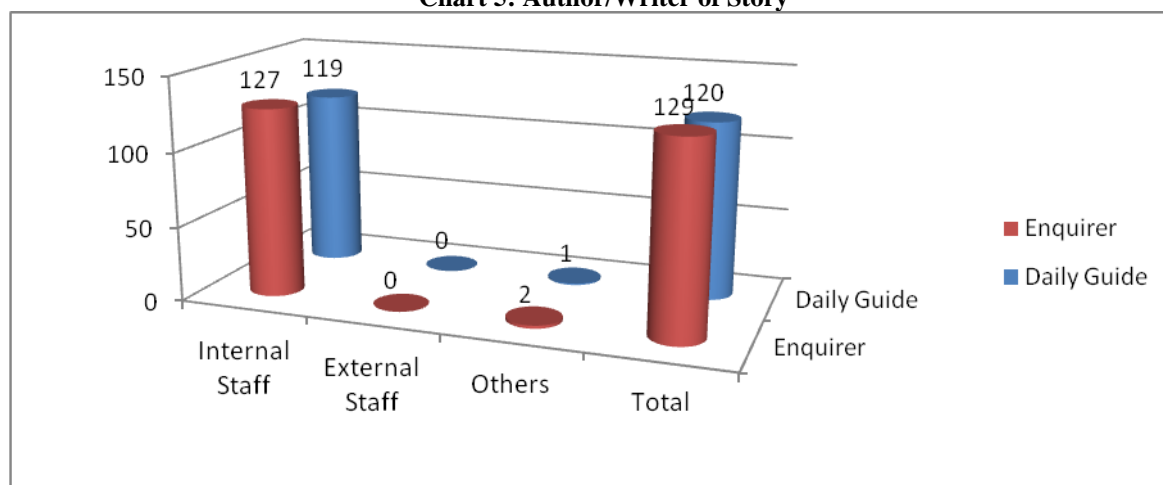


Chart 5 presents data on the source of articles on *Daily Guide* and *Enquirer*. All of the 120 articles published by *Daily Guide* were written by internal staff except one. Meaning 119 (99.2%) of the entire articles were generated by internal staff while only 1 (0.8%) came in from non-staff.

Enquirer follows the same trend as the data shows that out of its 129 articles, 127 (98.4%) came from internal staff while on 2 (0.6%) came from non-staff.

This finding shows that external and non-staff are not encouraged to publish article or that articles emanating from non-staff are hardly considered especially on issues bordering on NDC and NPP. The two

media houses prefer staff that share their internal ideologies and sets of thought. This finding supports both the framing theory and the propaganda model

Chart 6: Content of Story Published by Newspaper

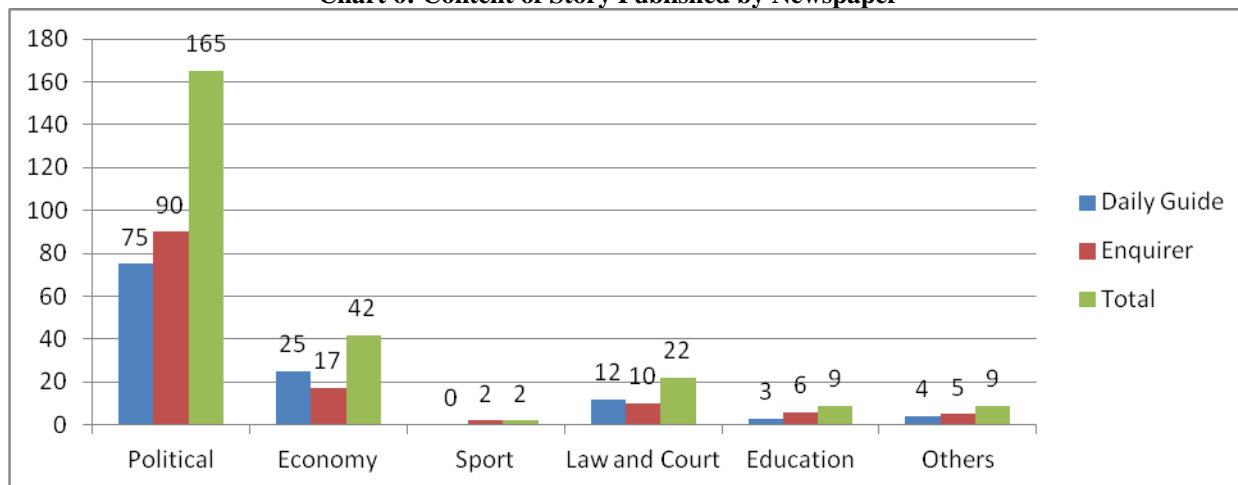


Chart 6 presents data from the content of story published by each newspaper. A total of 165 (66.3%) are political stories, 42 (16.9%) economic news, 2 (0.8%) sport news, 22 (8.8%) law and court news, 9 (3.6%) each for education.

These data show that political news are the most significant concentration of the two newspapers as 66.3% of articles was dedicated to politics. This shows the interest of the media owners. This finding supports the media ownership theory and the propaganda model as more than half of the stories are on politics only. The combination of all other types of stories is still less than that given to politics.

The second most reported articles are economic news which is 16.9%. The gap between politics and economic news is very wide as is shown by the 49.4% different.

This finding shows that both media house are most interested in political matters. Education and other vital social issues are least on the list of their interest. This validates the hypothesis that media houses are principally established to further the political ideologies of their owners.

Besides, this content structure portrays that the media as the fourth estate is not holistically involved in the wholesome development of Ghana as they have pitched their tent largely on the political front thereby neglecting a whole lot of other important areas of reportage needed for the development of the nation and enlightenment of the citizenries.

Chart 7: Story Framing by Daily Guide

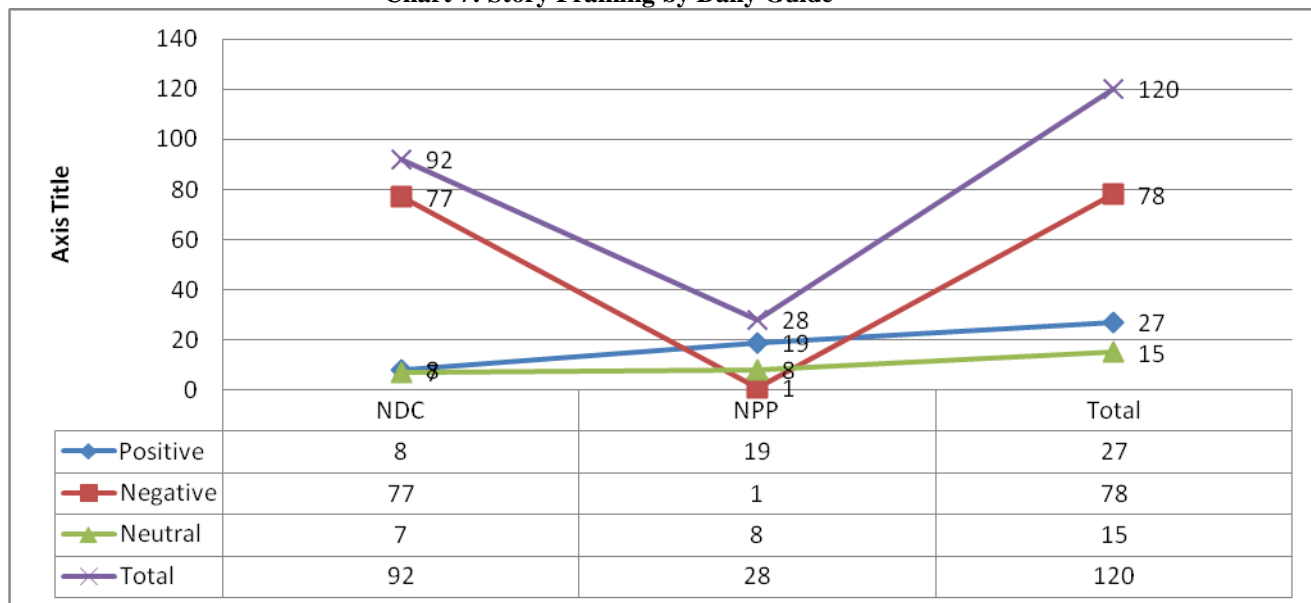


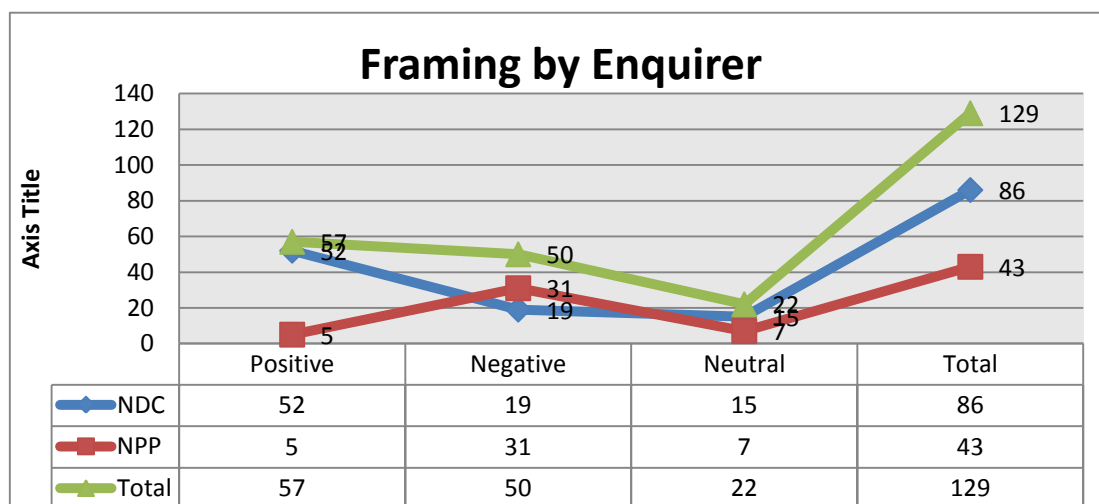
Chart 7 shows that contrary to the assertion of Cho, Y. S. et al (2004) that there is no difference between ownership and political dimension of news conclusion, this analysis shows the opposite. Out of 92 articles on NDC reported by Daily Guide 77 (83.7%) were projecting NDC in negative light. Only 1 (3.6%) of the total 28 articles on NPP were negative. A total of 77 (76.7%) of 120 articles on the two political parties were

on NDC and 77 (64.2%) of 120 articles were framed to portray NDC negative. Only 8 (8.9%) of the news on NDC was positive while 7 (7.6%) were neutrally framed.

Meanwhile, during the same time period, *Daily Guide* published 28 articles on NPP. The analysis shows 19 (67.9%) were positively framed in favour of NPP while 8 (28.6%) were neutral, leaving only 1 (3.5%) on the negative frame. Cumulatively, that makes 96.5% of their reportage on NDC to be to the advantage of the party.

This finding in line with the research objective confirms that media content are used for the ideological and political propaganda of the media owners. *Daily Guide* continually portrayed NDC as a failed or ineffective party while projecting NPP as an ideal alternative to the present government which is NDC led.

Chart 8: Story Framing by Enquirer Newspaper



The chart 8 above shows the story framing by Enquirer newspaper. The purpose is to test the validity of the framing theory and propaganda model on the news content of the newspaper. The newspaper published 129 articles on NDC and NPP combined during the period under review within the sections of the daily selected for coding. Of this total, 86 (66.7%) were on NDC while 43 (33.3%) were on NPP. This shows that Enquirer reported twice more on NDC than on NPP.

Meanwhile, of the 86 articles on NDC, 52(60.5%) were positive, 19 (22.1%) were negative while 15 (17.4%) were neutral. From this data, it is shown that 77.9% of the reportage on NDC was favourable while 22.1% were not favourable.

Within the same review period, 43 articles were published on NPP. From this amount, only 5 articles (11.6%) were positive, 72.1% were negative while 7 articles (16.3%) were neutral. This figures show that NPP is mostly portrayed in bad light by Enquirer newspaper.

With the above finding, it is fair to state that Enquirer newspaper mostly frame news content in favour of NDC while at the same time majoring on unfavorable reportage on NPP and uses its media as a propaganda vehicle for the NDC. This finding confirms the claim of the framing theory and propaganda model and stands in support of the research question which seeks to find out if Enquirer newspaper frames its news in favour of NDC and equally acts as a propaganda platform for the party.

This finding again invalidate the the assertion of Cho, Y. S. et al (2004) that there is no difference between ownership and political dimension of news conclusion

Comparing table 7 and 8, the researcher noted that both media houses devoted more articles to NDC than NPP. Guide has 92 articles on NDC while Enquirer has 86.

Recommendations

Based on the limitations and findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for future research in the subject:

1. Newspapers should be independent. They should strive to produce higher quality news. They should orient towards quality and professional journalism with the public's interest at its heart, rather than doing what politicians and businesses want the public to know.
2. Newspapers should give attention to other areas of Ghana developmental needs apart from politics. Health, education, agricultural and culture should be given more coverage in their reportage.
3. The NMC should be empowered with enough resources by the government to do media monitoring and enforce ethical standards of journalism.
4. The GJA and other professional associations should also be strengthened and given public support to back the NMC in insisting on highest ethical standards for the practice of journalism.

5. The NMC, GJA and others should strengthen their internal disciplinary mechanisms to clamp down on irresponsible journalism and not leave this function in the hands of the government and politicians. Their decisions should always consider media freedom and the interest of the public.

V. CONCLUSIONS

From this study, the Ghanaian media as it presently operate functions to regurgitate the imposed agendas of its owners, their friends and associates. This therefore shows that current media ownership pattern and the level of media control in Ghana actually hinder the media from independently setting society's agenda.

In agreement with Adesoji and Hahna (2011) this researcher urges for a redefinition of ownership as important in the process of strengthening the Ghanaian press, such that it could play the role expected of it in a globalised world.

The findings from the study show that the both Daily Guide and Enquirer published more positive stories on the political parties of their owners while reported more negative stories on the opposition party. Therefore, the statistical result did support the proposition of media ownership theorists such as Altschull (1984) that media content often tend to reflect the interests and ideology of its owners or financiers while contradicting Cho et al. (2004) as their research findings imply that the effect of ownership on content is less than expected.

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