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Research Article

What Makes the Headlines: A Five-Year Analysis of the Front Page of the 'Ghanaian Times'

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the various story types featured on the front pages of the 'Ghanaian Times' newspaper. Utilising the gatekeeping and framing theories, the study aimed to establish the dominant story types, news actors, and story settings. The variables were based on the fact that the 'Ghanaian Times', a state-owned print media with a constitutional obligation to offer equal facilities and opportunities to all to express divergent views and opinions, would do just that. That was not the case, as the data results showed a skewed coverage for political news, the elite, and urban settings. The newspaper, in the exercise of its gatekeeping function, ended up with unfavourable coverage towards rural folks, the masses, and even other non-political news. The study also adopted the qualitative approach and content analysis design, with thematic analysis used in handling the data, especially in coming up with the themes and corresponding frames about the story types, news actors, themes, and tone of the news stories. With the skewed representation at its premium front page, the editors must stop prioritizing profit over impact, thereby ensuring diversity of content to reflect the interests of the masses, rural areas, and non-political consumers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

What constitutes news in the Ghanaian media is as topical today as it was in those days when strict rules were rolled out by state authorities, especially the military regimes, to regulate media content that the public could have access to. This is especially so when the media landscape in Ghana is no longer dominated by the state but by elitist individuals and groups (Dzisah *et al.*, 2024; Nyarko, 2016), including politicians and business owners (Dwumfuor, 2024). This shift in the ownership structure of the media space arguably influences public discourse and content as the interest of owners overtly or covertly reflects in terms of what constitutes publications on a given day, with many journalists unable to exercise independent thought and professionalism in the discharge of their duties (Kesse, 2023). This arguably leads to the projection of certain interests and ideologies by the powerful in society, who are largely the elite, especially when they happen to own the media space. The shift, therefore, calls for extra care to be exercised in ensuring that the concerns of the masses and other marginalized groups in society are not ignored but given the needed coverage for onward redress by authorities, especially at the premium front pages of the newspapers. This is especially so when studies have shown that the front pages of newspapers are not only the foremost and most strategic pages in indicating which stories are of utmost importance to the news organization but also a lot of discussions within the broadcast media space centre on front-page stories with the added potential of drawing attention of officialdom to such stories (Nyarko, 2016; Amadu, 2003). According to Baah-Acheamfour (2019), a lot of radio and television stations centre discussions on economic, social, or political topics, and even news bulletins on stories published by the newspapers, aside from the daily ritual of newspaper reviews done each morning in Ghana on the airwaves, with many hinging on front-page stories. This stands to reason that if a story fails to make it to the premium front page, the probability that it may not get attention from state authorities and policy makers is higher. This is especially so with the state-owned media, which has a constitutional obligation to provide equal opportunities and facilities to all in society to have their views, opinions, and concerns heard.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Discussion on the work of the media, especially on issues of content, has occupied the front burner for a long time, as many continue to question the selection processes of the editors in choosing content for a given day. Indeed, the media in Ghana is largely accused of dedicating its content to the elites in society at the expense of the masses, whose issues need to be heard and addressed by authorities (Bonsu, 2017). The neglect of the issues confronting the masses has led to a persistent call by aggrieved media consumers and experts for a shift in terms of the pattern or nature of stories given prominence each day (Sevenans, 2015). What makes the publications problematic is the fact that the media in Ghana does not embrace diversity in terms of its coverage as there is a huge preference for political stories with little regard for social, economic and other stories that largely affect the masses, especially when it comes to front-page story selection (Sakyi, 2010).

Karikari (2017) indicates that there is indeed a gaping absence of coverage of issues concerning the conditions and interests of the poor, the working class, and thereby the majority of the laboring masses. Karikari (2017) adds that there are even social groups whose votes count but whose voices are not heard in the corridors of power due to unfair media reportage. Bonsu (2017) adds that the unfair representation in terms of reportage is dangerous for governance and development, especially when the media is a significant source of information for policymakers in Ghana.

Thus, the need for a departure from such a trend of publication is necessary not only in ensuring balanced and fair coverage but also in breaking the monotony in terms of what gets published. It will also help in ensuring that the marginalised and underprivileged are also represented on the premium front pages to attract the attention of policymakers, leading to the redress of their challenges.

2.1. Newspapers, front pages, and relevance

Newspapers serve a critical function in presenting a selection of the day's events to their communities, and each day's news presents a set of perspectives on the most important happenings to their publics (Kim & Chung, 2017). O'Donnell (2016) posits that many people in the world, especially in the United States of America and Africa, rely on newspapers as a major source of information on happenings around them, especially the front pages. According to O'Donnell (2016), with the creation of the printing press and the ability to distribute news and information on a mass scale, the media, through their gatekeeping function and adoption of frames, promote not only the reports of the day but also the way the public should view such reports.

McQuail (2010) states that even though every part of the newspaper is important, the most important location to find such representations of society's most critical events is arguably the newspaper's front page. The front page highlights the day's most critical and important stories, especially from the perspective of the editors and the organization that owns the newspaper (Singer, 2001).

Newspapers serve an important function in a democratic society as they provide shared collective experiences, common symbolic anchors, and representations of society to their publics (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). They present a display of codes—linguistic, typographic, and graphic—providing readers with information about the world (Carter, 2000). The front page of the newspaper is the most important page of the publication and highlights the day's most critical stories (Reisner, 1992). It is generally considered to function as a way to "attract readers, inform them and set the reader's agenda" (Pasternack & Utt, 1986). This is significant in that the front page visually suggests to the audience what a newspaper organization considers to be the most important stories of the day (Reisner, 1992). Thus, news audiences tend to focus more on front-page stories rather than on stories published elsewhere in the paper (Min-Mid Publications, 1984; Baidoo, 2011).

This is no exception in Ghana, in terms of the significance of newspapers, as even the front pages of newspapers constitute content in the electronic media. Nyarko (2016) posits that, indeed, the electronic media in Ghana largely depend on the



print media not only for news bulletins but also as the basis for their discussion segments. Nyarko (2016) goes on to say that the media landscape in Ghana is inundated with socio-political discussions, which are significantly centred on the contents of newspapers, especially the premium front pages. This arguably stands to reason that if your story is not found on the front page of the newspaper, there is a high probability that the story will not travel farther or receive the necessary attention, especially from authorities, for the needed attention to be paid to the issues raised. In Ghana today, political parties, movement activities, opinion leaders, and policy makers depend, to a considerable degree, on the mass media for information during newspaper reviews on issues that concern them and also learn about the reaction of others to their issues (Baidoo, 2011). Indeed, the print media in Ghana has not only played an important role in the country's development, especially in nurturing democracy, but it has also undoubtedly become a vital tool for information and communication in Ghanaian society, as it still aids in generating content for the electronic media (Hayford, 2014). There is, however, the skewing of stories either in terms of settings or news actors, which ultimately influence what the people must know, thereby hindering access to multiple and divergent information to aid decision making (Bennett, 2016).

While Gogovi (2017) talks about the skewing of stories to focus on the elite, largely the political class, ahead of the masses, Baidoo (2011) posits that the newspaper content largely centres on urban stories to the detriment of rural areas, leaving their issues less discussed and attended to. This is against the backdrop that the masses mainly dwell in such rural settings. Thus, the news media in Ghana are seen to be marginalizing not only the masses and rural dwellers but is framing the newspapers, especially the premium front pages, as political newspapers and elitist (Gogovi, 2017; Baidoo, 2011).

The concentration of the stories on the elite and the neglect of the masses and rural settings frowns upon Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which places a responsibility on State media to afford all persons a fair platform to express divergent views and opinions, including at the premium front pages.

Whether or not the 'Ghanaian Times', which is a state-owned media, is flouting this constitutional mandate is of concern to this work, as the newspaper, on the wings of profit, cannot be seen to be depriving the masses and rural dwellers of adequate facilities to have their issues heard and addressed.

2.2. Theoretical review

Two main theories grounded this research. They are the gatekeeping theory and the framing theory.

2.3. Gatekeeping theory

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin initially introduced the gatekeeping theory in 1947 before Shoemaker (1991) developed and expanded its concepts. This model describes the strict editorial procedures media must use to determine which stories they will release. The process includes various stages of content filtering that news materials must fulfill before being distributed to the public. The present research benefits from this theory because it demonstrates how media organizations

select particular news stories for public consumption based on editorial approval.

According to Katz and Lazarsfeld (1995), gatekeeping describes the management of critical strategic points in communication links that grant decision-making abilities to decide which pieces of information should be distributed or kept from public access. The gatekeeping framework describes multiple stages that news goes through before reaching the audience. Various individuals assess which stories will be released as publications or broadcasts during this process. Media gatekeepers' function as message filters through their roles as reporters and writers, as well as editors and producers, together with government officials. The complete process, starting from message selection to handling as well as control, constitutes the concept (Shoemaker, 1991).

The newspaper editors interviewed for this study, functioned as the main gatekeepers who decided which stories would gain front-page coverage in the premium sections of each edition. The frequently selective choice method possibly leads newspapers to establish one dominant messaging or framing approach for public identification.

2.4. Framing theory

Gregory Bateson (1972) introduced framing theory, which Erving Goffman (1974) expanded through his research about how news items, along with story content, receive interpretation within established contexts (Arowolo, 2017). Through framing processes, audiences are guided to focus on particular developments while the events receive context from meaningful frameworks. The key role of framing theory exists in its ability to explain the way issues and personalities are built (Boyer *et al.*, 2022; Heilman, 2022; Sikanku *et al.*, 2023) and the formation of meaning (Sclafani, 2015) as well as the evolution of discursive portrayals (Wineinger & Nugent, 2020) and symbolic representations (Fordjour & Sikanku, 2022). Framing theory explains that communication structures itself by choosing specific narratives as well as identities, themes, beliefs, values, and ideas over alternative possibilities (Kwansah-Aidoo & Mapedzahama, 2018; Sikanku, 2020). The achievement of this purpose relies on multiple framing instruments that encompass keywords, quotes, storylines, catchphrases, narratives, and life stories (Fordjour & Sikanku, 2022). This research finds framing theory essential because its relationship with language and identity development makes it applicable to this study.

News storytelling benefits substantially from framing, which determines how journalistic content builds the construction of presented issues. Research on frames as mass media information manipulation tools comes from Wallington *et al.* (2010), in addition to Chu (2015) and other communication scholars. According to Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), news coverage of issues directly affects audience understanding. Media content gets its central organizing idea from a frame within news media (Chu, 2015). Media framing consists of selection and emphasis, while exclusion and elaboration allow the definition of issues as well as their full context. Media audiences form their interpretations of topics based on how stories are framed, according to Jeffres (1997).

Entman (2004) establishes that framing functions as a daily



communication process because every message contains encoding according to specific frameworks. The theory proves effective in revealing differences between media coverage across different nations (Chu, 2015). Tankard (2001) explains that mass media structure and present issues through selection and emphasizing specific elements while leaving out others. The authors of Chong and Druckman (2007) explain how framing functions as a crucial tool in media content analysis because it regulates how people perceive information, which ultimately shapes their voting preferences.

Using framing theory, this research project will examine and analyze the present themes and frames that appear in the Ghanaian Times newspaper throughout its front page. The study aims to reveal what significant events the publication chooses to promote through its pages, which supports the formation or modification of public opinion in Ghanaian society.

Entman (2004) asserts that framing is an integral part of everyday communication, as messages are constantly coded within frames. The theory is particularly useful for explaining variations in media coverage across different countries (Chu, 2015). Additionally, framing refers to how mass media structure and present issues and events based on patterns of selection, emphasis, and exclusion (Tankard, 2001). Given its significance in media content analysis, Chong and Druckman (2007) argue that framing can influence public perceptions and even affect behaviors, such as voting decisions.

Therefore, this study will employ framing theory to analyze the themes and frames present in the front pages of Ghanaian Times, one of the nation's leading newspapers. This analysis will help determine which events the publication prioritizes as the most significant for its audience, thereby reinforcing or shaping public opinion within Ghanaian society.

2.5. Research questions

- i. What is the nature of the news published on the front page of the 'Ghanaian Times'?
- ii. What is the geographical representation of the front-page stories of 'Ghanaian Times'?
- iii. What is the social class of people covered in the front-page news stories of 'Ghanaian Times'?
- iv. What news values or policies determine what gets published on the front page of 'Ghanaian Times'?

3. METHODOLOGY

The research used the mixed methods approach for both data collection and analysis. The analytical process combined quantitative and qualitative research methods because findings from the content analysis of the newspaper were situated with an interview with the editor of the 'Ghanaian Times' to understand the subject better. Interviews as purposive conversations (Kvale, 1996) help give insight into a specific phenomenon, and in this case, the choice of stories published by the editors and the meaning to be put to it.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis lets researchers give subjective meanings to text data by using systematic techniques for coding and theme identification. Through content analysis, research analysts

analyze the "characteristics of language as communication while emphasizing the text's substantial meaning embedded within its context" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The analytical method known as Quantitative Content Analysis helps researchers measure variables through defined methods, which are objective and quantitative from Wimmer and Dominick (2006). The authors Walizer and Wiener (1978) describe content analysis as a systematic approach to analyzing recorded data content. The research topic examined the information that appeared on the front pages of the 'Ghanaian Times' newspaper. Content analysis has also been described as a good methodological process for studying themes and representation in content (Golding *et al.*, 1999). It is also good for analysing phenomena such as media content (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). According to Krippendorff (2004), qualitative content analysis is mostly used in media studies to analyse units of news articles, such as headlines, photos, and paragraphs, in the context of framing theory. The researcher, to analyse the stories which finally culminate into themes and frames with regards to the front-page news stories of the 'Ghanaian Times' newspaper, analysed the content of the entire news stories on the front pages. A coding protocol was designed to guide this work with an inter-coder reliability of 0.90, attained with three coders employed for the coding exercise.

Content analysis primarily focuses on the "characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Walizer and Wiener (1978) also define content analysis as a systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded data. In the case of this work, the focus was on content found on the front pages of the 'Ghanaian Times' newspaper. Also, the Week Construction Approach, as espoused by Stemple (1987), was used in collecting and sampling data for analysis. In all, 70 editions of the newspaper were sampled for analysis based on the approach, which calls for 14 editions of the newspaper to be selected to represent a year of publication. Using Simple Random Sampling, a day which was Monday was selected to begin the sampling process of the various editions, and since the newspaper does not appear in the stands on Sundays, another day, which was Tuesday, was also randomly selected to complete the 14 editions for the year. The process was repeated to arrive at the 70 editions sampled and made up of 210 stories. It also represented five (5) years of publication as the interview data helped interpret the front-page content. The 'Ghanaian Times' was also purposively selected because the focus was on state-owned media which have a constitutional mandate of ensuring fair representation in terms of their content and some works which had been done in this area tended to focus more on the other state-owned media 'Daily Graphic' leaving the 'Ghanaian Times' less explored.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The work was based on content analysis with an interview conducted to situate the findings, and both qualitative and quantitative tools were employed in analysing data. The study was undertaken primarily to establish the issues covered by the Ghanaian press, specifically the 'Ghanaian Times'. It was also conducted to find out the various news topics covered, the



news makers, and the setting of the stories. The study covered five (5) years from 2014- 2019, a period that marked Ghana's transition from ten (10) administrative regions to sixteen (16) regions hence providing a summary of editorial decisions and content before the transitioning in 2020, which will require another leg of editorial decisions to accommodate publications from the newly created regions.

4.1. News Stories Published on the Front-Pages of the 'Ghanaian Times' Newspaper

Figure 1 looks at the various story types that the 'Ghanaian Times' newspaper found newsworthy in publishing and indeed out of the 210 stories the editors through their gatekeeping duties allowed onto the front page, 73 of the stories representing 34.78 percent were on politics; 43 of the stories, representing 20.48 percent were on crime- related issues; and 41 stories representing 19.52 percent focused on social issues. Also, 28 stories, representing 13.33 percent, were on economic issues; 17 stories, representing 8.10 percent, were on culturally related matters. 8 stories, representing 3.81 percent, concentrated on miscellaneous activities. Thus, the editors framed the premium front page as a political page.

The dominant concentration on politics is in line with assertions by Baidoo (2011) and Gogovi (2017) that the media in Ghana including the state-owned print media prioritize political stories and class over any other stories in Ghana and by extension turn the newspapers' premium pages to serve the political class at the expense of social and economic issues which directly affect all especially the masses.

Thus, instead of highlighting the challenges of the masses for onward address by the political class who control the national purse and resources, the political class rather dictates what the masses must hear and feed on. The issues framed on the front page of the newspaper in terms of patterns and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion (Tankard, 2001) made political issues (aspects of the reality perceived) more prominent than others (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). The Editor of the newspaper, however, blames the overconcentration on the overconcentration on the dominant political activism in Ghana. "Aside from the vibrant political activism in the country, government functionaries also want certain government stories to be featured. The newspaper is for the state, and so we cannot depart from our government responsibility" (Interview data). According to Kim and Chung (2016), political interference for front page coverage of political issues is because a lot of people read the headlines on the front pages alone for information without necessarily reading the entire news story, especially.

4.2. Geographical Representation of the News Stories on the Front-Pages of the 'Ghanaian Times'

Table 1 illustrates the geographical representation of the stories covered on the front page to establish whether the newspaper offers equal representation to all to have their concerns heard and possibly addressed by the authorities, as articulated by Article 163 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. This is also against the backdrop that the state-owned newspapers are accused of sidelining the rural areas in terms of their premium front page stories (Baidoo, 2011; Gogovi,

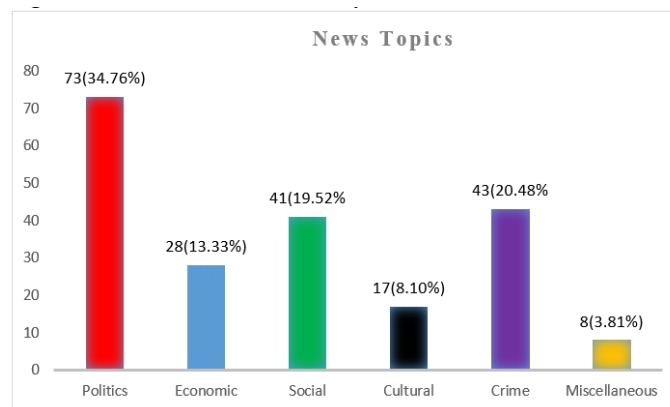


Figure 1. Nature of Stories Covered by the 'Ghanaian Times'

2017). The results indeed confirmed the assertions of the two scholars, among others, as the editors, in the exercise of their gatekeeping functions, portrayed the paper as the preserve of urban dwellers, with rural stories given little coverage. Out of the 210 stories, 194 stories, representing 92.3 percent, focused on urban centres, while 10 stories were from rural areas. Chaudhry and Dayal (2018) attribute the over-concentration in urban centres to economic reasons, and indeed the editor of the newspaper confirms this by indicating that "stories from rural centres don't sell and we will not make enough money to cover our operational costs" (interview data). Thus, rural areas are denied their fair share of coverage and representation on economic grounds, as such stories do not rake in the necessary sales. The results also confirm assertions by Strömbäck *et al.* (2012) and Skovsgaard (2014) that profit is indeed key in terms of what gets published in many newspapers, and arguably, Ghanaian Times is part of such newspapers motivated by profit or economic considerations, per the data analysed.

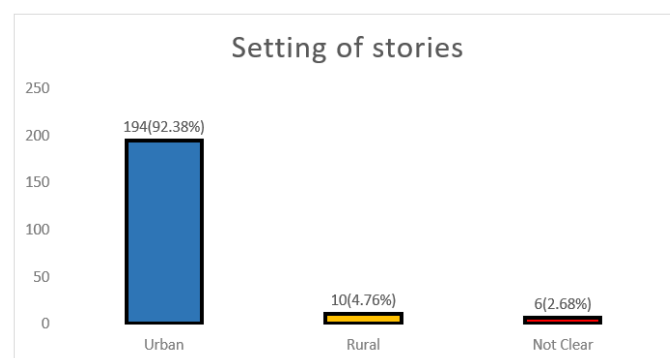


Figure 2. Geographical Representation of the Stories 'Ghanaian Times'.

4.3. Specific Settings of News Stories at the Front-Pages of 'Ghanaian Times'

The specific centres a story is sourced from arguably helps in painting a clearer picture as to the dominant setting that the editors prefer in sourcing stories (Stanbarck *et al.*, 2014). It also helps in determining whether the editors are skewing reportage in favour of certain settings, thereby flouting the constitutional obligation of providing fair access to all, irrespective of one's setting. The data signified that the 'Ghanaian Times' editors in their gatekeeping functions and on the note of economic or



profit reasons have framed the newspaper largely as an Accra newspaper as stories from Accra accounted for 160(76.19%) of the total 210 stories covered with Kumasi following with only 13 stories which is 6.19 percent of the stories published. The editor, in explaining these results, intimated that the newspaper sells more in Accra than any other place, hence focusing more on Accra stories, coupled with the fact that the majority of the institutions and persons as main actors of news are within the Greater Accra region. This was affirmed by the editor in an interview when he indicated that, “Yes, the paper has become an urban newspaper even though that isn’t the ideal thing that we should have. We enjoy no subsidies from the government and so must sell to cover costs, and places like Accra help with sales (Interview data).

The result is also in line with assertions by Strömbäck *et al.* (2012) and Skovsgaard (2014) that profit is indeed key in terms of what gets published in many newspapers, and arguably, ‘Ghanaian Times’ is part of such newspapers motivated by profit or economic considerations per the data analysed.

This stands to reason that the constitutional mandate of fair representation, as spelt out by Article 163 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, does not find expression as far as the premium front page of the state-owned newspaper is concerned, as profit determines representation and coverage.

The outcome of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Specific Settings of News Stories at the Front-Pages (Field Data).

Geography	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative
Accra	160	76.19	76.19
Kumasi	13	6.19	82.38
Ho	4	1.90	84.29
Asante Bekwai	1	0.48	84.76
Dadieso	1	0.48	85.24
Nakpali	1	0.48	85.71
Akim Oda	1	0.48	86.19
Nyinasin	1	0.48	86.67
Abompei	1	0.48	87.14
Cape Coast	3	1.45	88.57
Nkoranza	1	0.48	89.05
Obuasi	2	0.95	90.00
Dehia	1	0.48	90.48
Lawra	1	0.48	90.95
Tarkoradi	5	2.38	93.33
Kobina Ansah	1	0.48	93.81
Tema	5	2.38	96.19
Koforidua	1	0.48	96.67
Sunyani	1	0.48	97.14
Gyabenkrom	1	0.48	97.62

Bawku	1	0.48	98.10
Sangurli	1	0.48	98.57
Yendi	1	0.48	99.05
Korasua No1	1	0.48	99.52
Epoano	1	0.48	100.0
TOTAL	210	100	2,277.62

4.4. Regional Representation of Front-page Stories in the Newspaper

Data on specific settings of the front-page stories was further categorised into regional representations to paint a clearer picture. Though Ghana has 16 regions currently, the previously known 10 regions were used in this analysis because of the period of study. Thus, until December 2018, Ghana had 10 regions, and since the period of study is from 2015 to 2019, the researcher decided to stick to the 10 previously known regions in this analysis. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

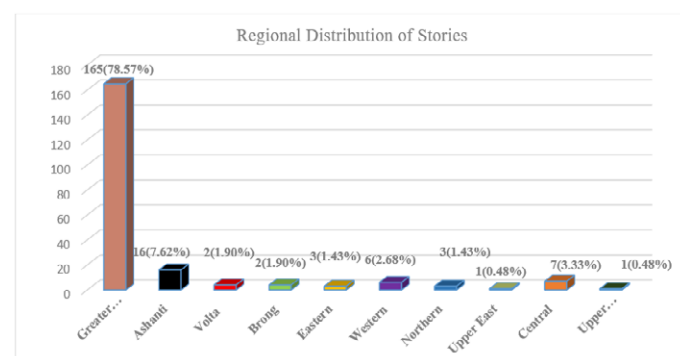


Figure 3. Regional Representation of Stories

From the results in Figure 4, 165 (78.57%) of the total 210 stories were dedicated to issues from the Greater Accra Region. This was followed by the Ashanti Region with 16 stories, which accounted for 7.62% of the total stories published within the sampled period. Central and Western Regions had 7 and 6 stories, and this accounted for 3.33% and 2.68 % of the total stories, respectively. Regions like the Upper East and Upper West Regions received the least coverage, with 1 story each, which is 0.48% of the total number of stories published.

The results do not give a good picture of the work of the editors in terms of regional representation on the premium front pages, especially in fulfillment of the constitutional obligation of affording all persons’ fair opportunities and access in expressing divergent views on issues affecting them. The Ghanaian Times newspaper’s preferred destination for stories is the Greater Accra Region. It could be concluded that the editors, in the exercise of their gatekeeping function, have framed the state-owned newspaper, ‘Ghanaian Times’, as a Greater Accra newspaper instead of a paper for all persons across the regions. The Editor affirms the results by saying that, ‘we get the majority of our front-page stories from Greater Accra and Ashanti Region, and that is where the newspaper sells most in helping to meet our operational costs’ (interview data).



4.5. Rural-Urban Dimensions to Settings of Front-Page Stories in 'Ghanaian Times'

Related to the setting of the story is the rural-urban dimension. When front-page news stories concentrate on issues in the urban centres or cities rather than rural centres, it is an indication of giving prominence to urban issues over rural issues. This study, therefore, sought to examine the relative levels of coverage of rural and urban news as presented in Figure 4 below.

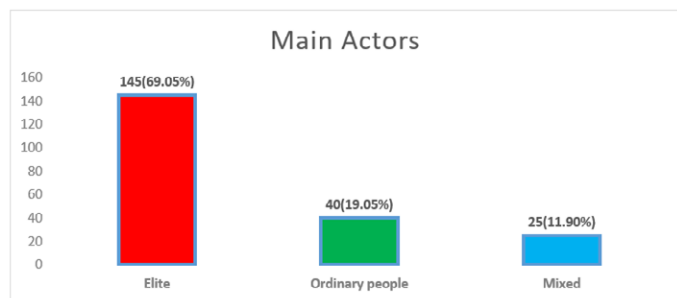


Figure 4. Main Actors in the Front-Page News Stories of the Newspaper

4.5. Main Actors in the Front-Page Stories of the 'Ghanaian Times' Newspaper

This aspect of the work evaluated the category of people the 'Ghanaian Times' found worthy as sources for stories. Despite various advice for editors to open their gates to the masses, literature has shown that the media in Ghana focus more on the elite than the masses (Baidoo, 2011; Gogovi, 2017). Whether or not the trajectory was the same is a question the researcher sought to find answers to. However, the results showed that the elite largely the political class and other businessmen and other authorities who drive sales still dominate the front page of the newspaper making it a page for the affluent and elite as out of the 210 stories covered 145(69.05%) while the masses accounted for 40(19.05%). It is also clearly in line with the assertion by Karikari (2017) that the elite, especially the political class, dominate news stories, necessitating that effort is made to balance coverage to reflect the views and opinions of the masses, whose concerns must be heard and addressed. The editor states that, "the elite are key to the survival of the newspaper. If we do not sell the newspaper, we do not get paid, and the elite who are influential are key to achieving the objective. News about them indeed sells" (Interview data). The result is shown in Figure 3 below.

5. CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it became clear that the Ghanaian Times, as a state-owned newspaper, per its constitutional mandate, is expected to afford all Ghanaians fair opportunities and facilities for the representation of divergent news and dissenting opinions (Article 163 of the 1992 Republican Constitution). However, that obligation is poorly executed as the premium front page showed skewedness not only towards the elite but also the urban centres. Thus, the rural areas are poorly represented on the front pages, as out of 210 stories captured between the years 2015-2019, only 10 of the stories

focused on rural centres.

Again, the capital city, Accra, was undoubtedly the preferred location for stories, as 160(76.19%) were sourced from the city. Kumasi, which was the second preferred area for stories, only managed 13(6.19%) of the 210 total stories sampled, with regional capitals like Tamale. Bolgatanga, Wa, is missing out, without a single story. So, the 'Ghanaian Times' newspaper is not only an urban-centred newspaper, but it is an Accra-centred and by extension Greater Accra newspaper, which is even an affront on regional representation in terms of coverage in line with their constitutional mandate of affording fair opportunities to all to express divergent opinions on issues.

Also, as a state newspaper obliged to give voice to divergent segments of society and issues, the newspaper focused the majority of its stories on politics. Thus, the paper could only give meaning to divergent representation by varying the shades of political opinion through the consideration of the preponderance of political entities and political views at the expense of other stories.

This is a grave case of concern, especially when the 1992 Republican Constitution per Article 162 (4) frees the editors and publishers from governmental control and interference in determining what gets published. Yet the editors still use the paper to serve the political class by heavily pushing political stories on the premium front pages to the detriment of country-wide stories, which were equally of national interest, relevant, and development-oriented.

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