

Newspaper Review Show in the Broadcast Media Space in Ghana: An Exploratory Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Ghana's public sphere has witnessed a growing media presence which has enhanced the relay of information to the citizenry. By this, society is given a full spectrum of alternatives to access media. Amid this atmosphere is a platform labeled the "Newspaper Review Show" which appears to have generated some sort of contention since its inception among newspaper publishers on one hand and broadcast stations on the other. Using an exploratory qualitative approach, this study has shown that review of newspaper content is pervasive in the landscape and the selective style of review of major agenda has affected readership, revenue of newspaper outlets, and reading culture, among others. However, the article also contended that falling readership is attributed to some factors other than only review of newspaper content.

Keywords

newspaper, broadcast, review, media, radio, television (TV)

Introduction

The airwaves liberalization that swept across the continent of Africa in the 1990s made substantial impact on the broadcast media in Ghana for both radio and television, and propelled their vibrancy in a number of ways which tackle social issues. Subsequently, this encouraged societal participation through phone-in programs to ensure pluralism. "Pluralism is generally associated with diversity in the media; the presence of a number of different and independent voices, and of different political opinions and representation of culture within the media" (Doyle, 2005, p. 12). Although the public sphere transformed dramatically after the advent of radio broadcasting, this adaptation was more complex than just a decline (Stamm, 2011, p. 6) of the newspaper industry. Researchers have shown how the advent of a medium consigned existing ones to the background (Aalberg & Curran, 2012; Abrahamson, 1998; Hallock, 2007; Jan, Raza, Siddiq, & Saleem, 2013; Rayport & Jaworski, 2001; Stamm, 2011). For instance, Hallock (2007, p. 4) specifically clarified that the growth of the broadcasting sector (radio and television), the Internet, and cable television has contributed to the fall in the readership and sale of newspapers. Though concerns in this regard have surfaced in sections of the Ghanaian print media, beyond the growth levels of electronic and broadcast media, there seem to be underlining factor(s) such as "content usage" which might have impacted the print industry in many respects. Showing how strategic *timing* is in newspaper production, Busa (2013) wrote,

They operate essentially on a 24-hour news cycle. They are printed once a day, typically at night, and once the paper has gone to the press, a story must wait for the next issue to come out, and must compete with all the other new stories. This makes readers anxious to know about the latest events rely on radio, television and the Internet, which are designed to break news faster than newspapers. (p. 26)

In a related argument, television's power to "break news" instantaneously is to some extent blamed for an indirect but significant change in the orientation of the print media (Cho et al., 2003, p. 311). It is for this and other reasons that, with the advent of broadcasting, newspapers envisaged that radio especially would offer the following benefits: A new state-of-the-art medium that could broaden the public sphere and geographic scope could serve as a promotional tool to attract more readers to their papers and the channel to accruing more profits for their ventures. This led most print outlets to own broadcast stations in the United States in the 1940s (Stamm, 2011, p. 5). Studies on inter-media agenda-setting relations of newspaper and the online medium/wire services have established that agenda set on a medium influences topical issues published in the other (Breed, 1955; Cassidy, 2007; Danielian

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& Reese, 1989; Lee, Lancendorfer, & Lee, 2005; Roberts & McCombs, 1994; Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002; Sikanku, 2011). However, researchers have not qualitatively given attention to purported *direct use* of content by various offline media such as the print media (newspaper) on one hand and broadcasting (radio and television) on the other hand especially within Africa and specifically the Ghanaian context.

Newspaper Review and Agenda Setting

The public sphere of Ghana is dominated with a plethora of news outlets and could be described as one that champions consensus building. Historically, both state and privately owned newspapers have been at the forefront of agenda setting in the Ghanaian landscape (Amoakohene, 2004; Gadzekpo, 1997; Karikari, 1994; Kwansah-Aidoo, 2001; Sikanku, 2011). Newspapers in Ghana are published in English and are primarily sold by vendors normally on streets to catch the attention of readers in traffic during the early morning rush hour and at a few newsstands. This mode of circulation appears similar in most African countries.

Recently, the majority of the television and independent radio firms in Ghana run “review of newspaper programmes” during which they announce studio phone-in line(s) for the listening public to participate in debates on society (Amadu, 2003). Some of these programs include *Kokrokoo*¹ [Peace FM], *News file* [Joy FM], *Badwam*² [Adom FM/TV], *Breakfast Show* [Ghana Television (GTV)], *Good Morning Ghana* [Metro TV], *Adekye Nsroma*³ [United Television (UTV)], and *New Day* [TV3]. *Newspaper review* may be conceptualized as a broadcast program during which major headlines published in specific dailies and weeklies are fully discussed as topical issues of the day with or without studio panelists. News stories are articles composed by journalists that include new information about events, people, or ideas (Sissons, 2012, p. 276) in a defined environment. Due to their traditional role as pacesetters in agenda setting, the state and privately owned print media outlets in Ghana have raised concerns about massive direct use of their patented content by broadcast stations (radio and television) in their morning programs dubbed “newspaper review.” This state of affairs appears to have created an atmosphere of *first come, first serve* phenomenon in the Ghanaian media market in a situation where content conveyed via frequencies are faster to reach the audience compared with the snail-paced traditional paper-based medium. However, the contestation is the question of whether review of newspaper content has disadvantaged the copyright owners of these papers or tends to benefit and add value to their operations. The current study intends to explore the degree to which newspaper review by broadcast stations in Ghana impacts the operations of the print media industry.

Agenda setting is theorized on the notion that strong relationship exists between the prominence that media assigns to some subjects dictated by the degree of placement and

coverage and the significance ascribed to these subjects by the consuming public (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Ghanem, 1997; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). In this context, “salience” refers to the act of “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to an audience” (Wanta, 1997, p. 53) in relation to other issues. With the advent of the Internet platform, Lin and Jeffres (2001) conducted content analysis of 422 websites run by newspapers, radio, and television firms that span 25 U.S.-based large metro markets to determine the degree to which they reflect their traditional strengths and qualities. They showed that while each of these offline mediums has fairly unique content, they try to utilize its website to achieve institutional objectives. Also, while the size of market was noted to be fairly insignificant in determining content of their websites, the type of media proved strong to determine differences between those websites. Gherstet (2014) departed from the theories of market-driven journalism and media logic to conduct a content analysis study that sampled 1,347 articles published in five major newspapers over a seven-day period to analyze how the Swedish general election in 2010 was reported in the print and online editions. The study examined the degree to which online news supplements displaced newspaper content and showed that there was no significant differences between major issues reported online compared with those in print. It concluded that there is a “displacement effect” on print journalism rather than “supplementary.” Tan and Weaver (2013) delved into the concepts of “agenda diversity” and “agenda-setting” and ran tests to investigate the causal relationships among the longitudinal changes in public agenda diversity of the *New York Times*’s content diversity and the *New York Times*’s agenda-setting effect on public opinion. Their study unveiled that despite the fact that increased public agenda diversity decreased the paper’s public agenda-setting effect and the *issue agenda diversity* had fallen over time, overall, agenda-setting effect between the newspaper and the public had not waned over time.

Wu, Atkin, Mou, Lin, and Lau (2013) investigated the effect of micro-blogs on the major agenda-setting media in China after the 2011 fatal railway accident using sampled micro-blog messages and traditional media stories published 9 days prior to the incident. The study concluded that the online media set mainstream media agendas and became a platform for participation of citizens in ways that traditional media fell short. They established that the agenda-setting function of conventional media seizes to be universal and deemed it as one of the many competing players. In their report that tracked the “impact of social media on agenda setting in election campaigns” through “cross-media” and “cross-national” comparisons, Sauter and Bruns (2013) observed that media practitioners who write about politicians tap content from social media postings and that the platform is more integrated into the daily lives of people. They established that social and traditional media have intertwined to transforming the ways that politicians interact within a contemporary political public sphere. In a similar

study that emphasized “tweeting” the 2012 elections in Belgium, Verdegem, D’heer, and Mechant (2013) agreed with Sauter and Bruns on the extent to which social media has dramatically changed the relations between society actors (politicians and citizens) in the media landscape and that Twitter is an extension of traditional media instead of an alternative; this position contrasts with Ghersetti (2014) who saw social media to displace conventional media instead of complementing it. Coulson and Lacy (1996) investigated how competition among newspaper outlets affects their content among 423 and 1,667 practicing journalists in the same study and found that, in the former, most participants noted that newspapers in competition exhibit the following features: They publish higher quality diversified news locally, have a greater diversity of editorial opinions compared with non-competitive ones, and are less probable to be complacent but more probable to engage in news sensationalism, whereas in the latter, participants noted news from broadcast media offers satisfactory local news alternative to newspapers.

By the application of the agenda-setting principle, the current study argues that broadcasters adopt a selective style of reviewing catchy newspaper headlines and ignore or give lesser space/attention to other headlines.

Method

This study was conducted in the cosmopolitan region of Greater-Accra, Ghana. It has a population of 4,010,054 covering a land area of 3,245 km² (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). With the highest number of media establishments, most media entities have their offices headquartered in the region from where most “newspaper review” programs are broadcast and syndicated by broadcast stations in other towns to cover the whole country. This made Accra, Ghana’s capital city, the ideal location to seek the views of journalists pertaining to the subject of newspaper review programs.

Using a qualitative approach, the researcher first established contacts with prospective participants, interacted with them and conducted interviews, engaged in data transcription, and worked with the material obtained. Interviewing is the means of inquiry, and it helps to understand the lived experiences of other persons and the meaning they make from that experience (Seidman, 2013, pp. 8-11). Qualitative domain of research is hooked on the interpretive paradigm which is exploratory in nature, and thus enabled the researcher to capture information in a field where little is known (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005), such as the current study under consideration within Africa and the Ghanaian contexts. Participants were composed of experienced media practitioners drawn from an equal number of government and privately owned print media outlets, media associations, the media regulatory body, and media activists from academia, to share their views on daily discussions on broadcast stations (radio and television stations) branded as “newspaper review” and how it impacts on the print media industry.

These participants ($N = 15$) were purposively selected due to their in-depth knowledge and understanding of how the entire Ghanaian media environment, and most importantly the print media, functions with respect to content generation and distribution/sales of their final production. Purposive sampling is where a subset of population deemed to possess special skills is selected as a sample (Singh & Mangat, 1996, p. 7) to interview. Open-ended questions were used because they enabled the researcher to build upon and explore answers from the respondents with the objective to create an avenue for them to reconstruct their experiences within the subject under investigation (Seidman, 2013, p. 14). Due to the fact that the use of a recording device provides a precise version of all responses collected during a face-to-face communication encounter compared with manual scribbling (Yin, 2014, p. 110), the researcher used a voice recorder to capture all interview responses into electronic formats.

Ethics

This study gave priority to issues of ethics. Ethics is described as the “rules of conduct that express and reinforce important social and cultural values of a society. The rules may be formal and written, spoken or simply understood by groups who subscribe to them” (Castellano, 2014, p. 274). Ethical clearance to conduct this research was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa, and Ghana’s National Media Commission (NMC). Informed consent is fundamental to any ethics policy in research (Halse & Honey, 2005, p. 2148); therefore, prior to this interview, participants were furnished with consent letters and ample time was given to read and ascent to them, as having fully understood the contents. In the consent letter were specific questions that each respondent was to tick a *Yes* or *No* answer to determine *willingness* or *unwillingness*. Some of these include Do you accept that your voice be audio-taped? I will remain frank in my responses? I [the participant] am at liberty to determine the venue of this interview? My response is purely for academic research purposes? Your name will not be attached to your responses? and I reserve the right to opt out without any fear of intimidation?

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study. It involves the process of identification and formulation of themes such that all parts of assembled data that are appropriate to meeting the main question(s) of a research were isolated, contextualized, and labeled consequentially (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The study followed specifically the eight-step process of qualitative content data analysis expounded by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009). Data gathered was transcribed. Transcription is pivotal to the process of data analysis so it represents what the researcher and transcriptionist preserve from the audio-taped speech. Thus, transcription aims to convert verbal dialogue

into a printed format by capturing the accurate words of participants (Sandelowski, 1994). Transcribing with accuracy is foremost to successful data analysis. To do this, the researcher listened to the recorded interview responses several times to become conversant with the data (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liangputtong, 2007, p. 337). However, due to the position that transcribing is a complicated process and can hardly be free from inaccuracies (Sandelowski, 1994) and the fact that issues of ethics may be flouted (Dickson-Swift et al., 2007, p. 337) especially when assigned to transcriptionist(s), the researcher personally transcribed the audio data to forestall any possible errors. To ensure reliability, hardcopies of the data were given to respondents to confirm their comments. In line with Zhang and Wildemuth's processes, units of analysis were defined and codes/categories developed in an interpretive and descriptive manner, to ensure and recheck coding for consistency purposes, based on the aim of the study to subsume the diverse views captured from interviewees into these streams. Finally, inferences drawn from the data were reported as *sales/readership*, *style of review*, and *other challenges*.

Results and Discussion

The study showed that review of newspaper content by broadcast media stations (television and radio) affects circulation/sale of newspapers, affects advertising exposure, and demotivates reading culture, among others. Beyond this, some critics also pointed out that issues of professionalism, standards and low quality of papers, and waning interests to read are fundamental factors to falling newspaper sales. In between these two extremes, the study argued that the effect of newspaper review on the print industry is dependent on location and proximity factors. The following comments shed light in this regard:

Sales/Readership

In Ghana, print media houses are battling with newspaper review by the broadcast media. With the electronic media stations being free on air totaling over 300 every morning, they broadcast everything in the newspapers, and therefore after listening [to them], there is no motivation to buy the newspaper. This affects sales with many people crowded at the stands to read headlines having already heard the news on air read from cover to cover. Some stations start review as early as 5am through to 11 a.m. to mid-day [12 p.m.], so the purchase of single copies is not helpful to newspaper houses. As a result of this, tried to see if subscription could do the trick, but even government departments such as Municipal, Metropolitan and District Assemblies who were also purchasing have either reduced or stopped their subscriptions entirely so there is a challenge but we are managing. So, it is not that we are more interested in adverts but it's an opportunity cost.

Through the response from the above participant, it is evident newspapers in Ghana do not support the review of

newspaper show by broadcast stations. The media landscape has many broadcast media outlets and due to the fact that they broadcast at no fee in the early hours and throughout the day, virtually all agenda set in the daily papers are aired. Coupled with the fact that in Ghana, FM radio is more pervasive and the highest consumed media amid television stations on national and private channels that reaches most homes (Kafewo, 2006, p. 14), and with the content of newspapers reviewed over prolonged hours, it has created a situation where the desire of the populace to purchase newspapers has waned and appears to affect an already financially fragile industry whose revenue from circulation sales is meager. As a result, most newspapers have not been able to "break even" particularly considering their fairly high costs of production and distribution (Wahl-Jorgensen & Cole, 2008, p. 10). This informant further noted that people flank newsstands with no intention to buy papers but only to catch a glimpse of captions to confirm news agenda they had already heard from broadcast stations. Thus, beyond radio and television broadcasting, the media environment seems to connote that there is no news because newspaper agenda has been thoroughly reviewed through the "review shows" running into the afternoon. The financial plight of the print industry has further been worsened by complete cease or reduction in the number of copies subscribed to by government offices. These concerns, according to this respondent, have driven most newspaper outlets to lean on advertising as the alternative income source which is fundamental to their financial sustenance because of limited revenue that sales generate (Paila, 2005, p. 20). However, to Tomaselli (2003), even the most relied upon revenue from advertising is not enough to sustain most private press in most places around the globe including South Africa, and that serves as an affront to their freedom and development. For instance, due to competing changes in the landscape through television, many papers have adjusted to the drive of being more entertainment-focused and having less fact-oriented reporting (Aalberg & Curran, 2012, p. 4). In Pakistan, newspapers inspired by the outlook and style of presentation of cable news adopted aggressive and state-of-the-art news production to boost falling readership (Jan et al., 2013, p. 118). Furthermore, another commented,

This practice affects newspaper revenue a lot. Imagine somebody takes your newspaper, the content that you have created, and reads everything in it from the morning to about mid-day. It is likely that the person who may have liked to buy the newspaper might have listened to everything on radio and won't have the urge to buy it anymore. So, it affects readership and at the same time adverts, because all that the stations are doing is to put your content on radio, discuss it and collect advertising on it and leave you on the fence. This is a very difficult situation.

The above informant re-emphasized that newspaper review show affects their income generation base, and seemed worried that the broadcast media makes use of their

intellectual property without compensation. Thus, two major issues were highlighted, which according to the participant was very problematic. First, it shrinks distribution coverage and their share of the media market which subsequently affects advertising. This respondent seems to paint a picture that the review program captures huge listenership which is a prerequisite for advertising slots on air for the broadcast stations. Second, newspaper outlets work to produce content only to set agenda for the broadcast stations to reap benefits at their expense. Beyond these two extremes, it is unclear whether adverts placed in newspapers reach the intended audience in a situation where papers are not bought after readers get exposed to the content.

Style of Review

This theme sought to highlight concerns about the method that broadcasters have adopted in the review of newspapers within the Ghanaian media landscape. A participant remarked,

We are not against newspaper review in total, but looking at the *style* the various radio and television stations have adopted, I think it goes against the copyright law, because as far as some of us are concerned, most of these newspaper programs are sponsored so nothing prevents the Ghana Independent Broadcasting Association, which is the umbrella body, from paying the Private Newspapers Publishers Association of Ghana a certain percentage of their revenue that they earn from sponsorship and from newspaper review, and that is something we [the print media] have taken up with the National Media Commission. This is because it is our product that they are using.

Beyond the fact that broadcast stations engage in massive daily review of newspaper content, the above participant said that they (the print media) are not advocating for the review program to be scrapped utterly but the method with which the broadcast media consumes their content drives them to agitate, and this, the informant noted, contradicts the copyright law. This is a law that “allows authors limited right to monopolistic control over their output” (McChesney, 2004, p. 4). Whereas the notion of inter-media agenda setting tracks one medium’s agenda to another (Sikanku, 2011) to determine differences or similarities, the current “review show” by the broadcast media as it pertains in Ghana makes a pre-calculated extensive use of agenda set in newspapers to the extent that it defeats the copyright principle. Moreover, this respondent further explained that some of them (in the print media) are fully aware that the review shows have full sponsorship, but they are not given a share of this income. The print media sees this state of affairs as so serious that they had sought the intervention of the NMC which is the official media regulator in Ghana, and is fully backed by the country’s fourth republican Constitution. The NMC has a Complaint Settlement Committee that plays the role of mediation for persons or entities who feel aggrieved by the actions of a media outlet (Diedong, 2006, p. 2) or its journalists. Furthermore, this informant appears to paint a picture

that suggests that the controversy surrounding newspaper review show hovers around denial of compensation to the print media outlets by broadcast stations for direct use of their content. In another framing that appears to buttress the claim that the *style of review* is questionable, a participant commented,

There are those [broadcast] media outlets themselves who are into agency [business] and run a whole lots of adverts, that if there are stories in newspapers which go against the sponsors of their program(s), they will never review them.

To this informant, the broadcast stations are selective and review only those stories that do not hurt entities that pay for the review show. On this basis, the newspaper review show appears to be tilted toward commercial interests than to the general interests of the public because it shelves some equally significant headlines. Media practitioners are increasingly pressured not to be too aggressive on corporate entities that via advertising and sponsorship give revenue to the media firm (Fürstenau, 2011; Rao & Wasserman, 2015, p. 652). Thus, the inclusion criteria for the selection of major newspaper headlines in the review program is done at the sole discretion of the host based on their level of sensationalism (Amadu, 2003) and also the extent of newsworthiness and interest to audience (Hallock, 2007, p. 6; Sissons, 2012, p. 276). By the style of their review, broadcasters capitalize on *salience* [salient], parts of newspaper content which are key to the theory of agenda setting and hinges on ensuring that audiences notice and remember bits of information transmitted (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Wanta, 1997, p. 53) and participate in the discourse as well. This appears to shift news production capability of newspapers which is critical to determining their agenda-setting performance in the marketplace to broadcast stations because they reach the public sphere earlier to discuss the headlines before the copyright owners arrive. Overall, newspaper publishers resent the style that broadcasters have adopted in the selection of stories and reading of almost all their content on air. With this, an informant appears to describe newspaper outlets as “content breeding and production grounds” for broadcast media because their stations “live” and “feed” on print material daily. Though the style of review continues to be a challenge to the print media houses, they seem to have no escape route.

The program affects us [newspaper outlets] a lot because some of them virtually *live* and *feed* on the newspapers from morning to mid-morning, I mean, lunch time. They read from cover to cover so if you are a reader and you heard it on radio, do you have to go and buy the newspaper? It’s a reality. It affects the sales but it’s something we are living with.

However, another dimension of the impact of newspaper review program, according to the respondent below, has two phases:

I will describe it as having *good* and *bad* aspects. The good aspect is that when the radio and TV stations highlight the headlines, it will entice some buyers to go and buy the details of the story and some buy because they want to keep the record. The bad aspect is that the reviewers are not just highlighting the headlines and the lead of the story, but they go deep into the story. That is where newspaper reviews by radio/TV stations are actually hampering the work of the print media. Recently, *Daily Graphic* protested formally against it and some newspapers also came to their support. So, if they can just read the headlines and then only the next two paragraphs without going into details, it will be helpful. However, the irony of it is that, to gain visibility, a lot of the newspapers send complimentary copies despite this difficulty with them. We are always happy to hear that our newspapers have been reviewed. That is a tricky situation.

On the newspaper review continuum, whereas at one end it affects newspaper outlets adversely due to the style of reading entire articles, on the other hand it serves as a promotional tool that creates awareness and draws public attention to the numerous dailies and weeklies published in the media market. This exposure enables people to buy papers for two main reasons. First, those who want to get to the bottom of the stories heard on air and second, for the storage of newspapers for future reference. *Daily Graphic* is state-owned and it is the leading newspaper with the biggest market share in Ghana, and according to this respondent, the paper officially expressed dislike of the newspaper review show run by broadcast stations and received backing from other print outlets.

The issues surrounding airing of newspaper stories have been demonstrated to be complex because in some instances, well-known newspaper review programs on radio basically replicated some unsubstantiated submissions and allegations published in the dailies the very morning (Sarpong & Safo, 2002). With this, irrespective of the abusive nature of such stories, they are also given ample airspace in the public sphere (Amadu, 2003) within the broader Ghanaian media environment where unethical journalistic practice is already evident (Owusu, 2011, p. 71). This seems to have created some sort of recycle of inter-media perpetuation of foul content emanating first from the print, then to the broadcast, and finally online.

However, convergence in the media sphere itself produces the advantage of utilizing print, broadcast, and online platforms as alternatives to enable the audience to choose *when* and *where* to access news because most people no longer stick to one source. For instance, people relied on television for *instant news*, Internet for *diversity*, and print for *context* on the Iraq war (Kolodzy, 2003; cited in Hallock, 2007, pp. 5-6). Similarly, from the cultural perspective, “these newspapers, radio and television websites can also embrace the opportunity to create alternative platforms for audience to access news, information, and entertainment content” (Lin & Jeffres, 2001, p. 569). With the distinct features of the various forms, media is able to furnish its audience with information

appropriately. This is consistent with the views of some of the informants in the present study that a section of them (newspaper publishers), presumably due to the uniqueness of broadcast media, do not intend to stop the review of newspaper show entirely because it serves as a means to expand public discourse and advertises their papers, but rather disagree with the degree to which they read content directly. It is in this vein that some print outlets within the same landscape rather willingly send free copies to broadcast stations to be reviewed to gain exposure, which to the above participant is a “complicated scenario.” This reaffirms the position that newspaper publishers saw the birth of radio transmission as the means to advertise the papers’ operations (Stamm, 2011, p. 5) and to enhance growth. The findings from the current study reflect an observation made in the print media landscape that issues surrounding newspaper review degenerated into some sort of scuffle between various editors after vendors appealed to the print outlets to stop the “reading of newspaper content” on air because it is plunging sales and business (Sarpong & Safo, 2002). This is because, from the perspective of the above informant, whereas some editors saw the review show as a channel for promotion for their papers and were ready to tap into its benefits, to others it is a problem that has led to falling readership and the need for attention from the NMC. Moreover, newspaper vendors also defined the review program as completely reading everything in the paper to the listening public and thus beyond falling revenue, their means of livelihood appears to be affected. Furthermore, some other participants who also see the “review show” as having *positive* and *negative* sides, commented,

Though putting a stop to this [the review show] would boost sales [of newspapers], I would opt for a two-way practice because it is also a promotional call for our newspapers, except for the fact that reading of the entire newspaper is problematic, and I think that if they just mention the headlines it will be more ideal.

It is true that the newspaper review affects our sales, it has its positive aspect of bringing us to the public domain that . . . there is [name of newspaper] which has broken a story, and increases the existence of the paper in terms of awareness, but in another breath, it has its negative impact of affecting our sales.

Other Challenges

Other informants held different views beyond attributing falling newspaper readership and sales claim to the review program. One respondent said,

But, whatever you do, you can’t stop them. I think it hurts them but I don’t think however much it hurts the papers, it can account for a significant percentage of why newspapers are not bought. I think there are more fundamental, deeper, complex issues involved. People’s reading habit is a factor. People don’t read in

this country. There is poor culture of reading, even university lecturers and students don't read outside their textbooks. Ordinarily, when you walk across Ghana from Accra to Navrongo, from Keta to Axim, you don't find people sitting down and reading. If people are reading, they are reading religious texts and so on. That is the main source of the weakness of the newspaper economy in the country. I don't know where that problem of reading came from but it is there. Another aspect of the problem is that over the decades, newspapers under state control were so stale so there was no incentive for people to buy them. Now that there is democracy and freedom of the press, the press has also not shown high standards of quality of professional content. They have been taken over by partisan political perspective of anything and everything. I suppose they don't do very much to attract the public to read.

Having acknowledged that newspaper review show affects the print outlets, its impact on circulation sales is negligible and moreover the broadcast stations cannot be stopped from running the program. The above informant further identified two major issues for low patronage of newspapers in Ghana. First, throughout the country [Accra, Navrongo, Keta and Axim—all being towns in different regions of Ghana], people no longer read to the extent that teachers and learners are caught in the same bracket. When it becomes necessary to read, people prefer to read religious and other materials to newspapers. Meanwhile, the growth of broadcasting, first, radio and subsequently television, initially occurred concurrently within the context of a vibrant culture of reading (Stamm, 2011, p. 4). Beyond the position that people *do not have time* to read papers (Hallock, 2007), this informant rather seems to argue that the interest to read is no longer there. In a study conducted in the Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana, 75% of 1,000 students read for exam purpose, to acquire knowledge (5%), to improve usage of English (15%), and for fun (5%) (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014, p. 15). Also, with about half of Ghana's population living in rural communities (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012), the chances of accessing newspapers can be a challenge. This informed the position of the host of Peace FM's *Kokrokoo* Newspaper Review Morning Show, Kwame Sefa Kayi, who admitted that though the program could affect reading desires among the populace, he argued that some people cannot read English and they tend to lean on the broadcast media for information (Akwa, 2014) because such programs are normally run in local languages depending on the location of the FM radio or television station. Moreover, the language of instruction in which readers have received education determines the desire to relate to it (Busa, 2013, p. 26). An estimated 80% of Sierra Leoneans speak the most understood Krio language, but newspapers remained published in English, which makes it a medium for the elites (Wahl-Jorgensen & Cole, 2008, pp. 6-7). Second, the period prior to the 1990s saw a suppressed press that published old-fashioned materials at the time, but the post-fourth republic liberalization era has not transformed many of them to embrace

higher content standards and professionalism, with politics taking centre-stage in all discourses. For instance, "newspapers in Sierra Leone cater for a narrow audience, but one that is considered politically vital" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Cole, 2008, p. 7). To the informant, this also explains why people are not motivated to buy newspapers. This appears to suggest that newspapers in Ghana need to have a more diversified lens to issues of society to be able to stimulate interests and expand readership.

Reflecting further that low standards and quality of papers have caused readership to fall, another respondent noted that beyond the fact that *Daily Graphic* spearheaded agitation against newspaper review show, the paper is still successful in the market. The informant attributed this to quality through print clarity and well-composed stories. Thus, he seems to argue that amid newspaper review show, strong priority to quality newspaper publication is the key to expanding readership in Ghana's intense media market. The respondent said,

Recently, some papers came out led by *Daily Graphic* that radio and television stations read all their stories so people don't feel obliged to buy newspapers; but *Graphic* conceded that in spite of all that, they are doing well. This is due to their quality because the print comes out well and has journalists who write well as a marketing strategy.

Furthermore, *location* and *proximity* emerged as major factors that determine the extent to which newspaper review impacts the print media industry. With Ghana's print media landscape centralized in Accra and some major regional capitals, to this participant, the effect of newspaper review with respect to disincentive to buy, appears to be a problem in remote locations because papers transported get there late. By this, news broadcast via television and radio reaches those localities faster than the snail-paced traditional newspapers. The situation is worsened by the plight of people whose take-home pay is not enough. The daily minimum wage for 2013 was GH5.24 (USD2.38) and the price of newspapers is between GH1.50 and GH3.00 (African Media Barometer, 2013). The revised daily wage for 2015 was GH7.00 (USD2.08) (Osam, 2015). The response below attests to this:

Newspaper review may have some impact particularly in the areas (vicinities) where the newspapers do not get there early enough. By the time the newspaper reaches those localities, the people might have been told the full content so a reader is not motivated enough to buy especially in most cases where one's disposable income is not that big.

Given the right to choice in a capitalist market system like Ghana's where consumers determine which product to pay for consumption or not, this situation becomes even more complex when placed within the context of broadcasting where commercial ones have witnessed exponential growth and

whose services traditionally have been free because advertisers pay for listeners and viewers' consumption (Picard, 2006, p. 185). Thus, this seems to cause the print media to feel the pinch of newspaper review because on the principle of rationality, people with meager income prefer to consume news freely, reaching their homes conveniently from the broadcast media at the expense of advertisers who benefit through exposure to audience instead of paying directly for the same news in the dailies. This is consistent with the position of the African Media Barometer (2013) which reiterated, "Because radio stations often 'cannibalise' or scavenge news from the newspapers, accessibility to this news is enhanced, and most people gain their news on radio" (p. 8).

Conclusion

This work explored the extent to which "newspaper review show" by broadcast stations has impacted the print media industry in Ghana and showed that the practice is pervasive within the landscape. The present state of the review can be described as a *bane* on one side of the review continuum where it affects readership and sales, means of livelihood for vendors, demotivates habit of reading and is utilized as a revenue stream to benefit broadcast stations through sponsorship and advertising at the expense of the print media who are copyright owners. On the other side, it is a *blessing* to some sections of the same print landscape because to some editors, the broadcast show serves as a promotional mechanism that creates awareness for the public to buy their papers. Editors who fall within this category willingly send complementary copies to broadcast stations to gain exposure. These distinct schools of thought regarding "newspaper review show" gives an indication that the frontline of the print media industry is divided on the subject, especially in a situation where the NMC has been contacted to mediate. Beyond these two extremes, the study revealed that politically focused content, coupled with presentations that appear unprofessional and low quality of printing, has engulfed some of the newspapers and contributed to falling readership. Moreover, people no longer read countrywide and where they do, they prefer religious material to newspapers. Geographically, the impact of newspaper review is dependent on the proximity of community to the national or regional capitals where newspapers circulate quickly. By this, review shows tend to affect remote locations more where it takes a longer time to transport papers compared with urban communities. According to this study, newspaper review in itself is not a bad program because it comes with some benefits such as broadening the public sphere and also serves members of society who lack understanding and reading of English because the program is normally held in the local language. However, the *degree* and *style* with which broadcast stations attach salience to selecting some newspaper agenda and ignore or pay less attention to some other content calls for agitation within some circles of the print media who deem it as a breach of copyright policy.

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Notes

1. *Kokrokoo*: This is an Akan (Ghanaian language) word meaning "wakening sound from a rooster" (cock crow).
2. *Badwam*: This is an Akan (Ghanaian language) word meaning "public discourse platform."
3. *Adekye Nsroma*: This is an Akan (Ghanaian language) word meaning "sunrise."

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