



**Media Independence in Ghana: The Case of the Fourth Republic.**

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## **Abstract**

The media is often referred to as the *fourth estate* with the objective of making it autonomous of some society players whose activities seem to sway it from its traditional role of advancing the course of public interest. These dominant forces have intertwined internally or remotely into the very environment within which media institutions operate and seem to stifle their functions and independence. The general objective of this study was to *explore* the relationship between media independence and the legal, economic and political environments within present-day Ghana. *Economically*, this study investigated the impact of *media funding* on the independence of both government and private print media outlets in Ghana tagging advertising as its revenue generation source to determine agenda-setting and framing patterns. Furthermore, it explored whether the media has *diversified* its operations for revenue generation purpose and to what extent *ownership tendencies* impacts on editorial independence. *Legally*, it investigated the impact of media laws and the fourth republican Constitutional provisions on media independence and lastly, assessed the independence of the Ghanaian print media from the perspective of standards and professionalism.

The study used an *exploratory mixed-research method* that combined semi-structured interviews and content analysis. Fifteen participants were drawn from the Ghanaian print media landscape composed of experienced newspaper editors, senior journalists, regulatory bodies, media associations, African sub-regional media organisation and media activists from academia. Twenty newspapers were selected equally from two government and private print houses respectively to conduct a *manifest* and *latent content analysis* of adverts placed in Ghanaian newspapers. This work was embedded in the *theory of political economy*. Transcribed data was organised thematically for analysis and presented in a narrative, tabular and graphical formats.

Overall, the study indicated that Ghana's corporate community together funds media more than that of government. Funding through advertising impinges on editorial independence and influences agenda-setting and framing of news patterns. Furthermore, small sections of the Ghanaian media have diversified into other businesses to raise revenue to mitigate some of the pressures of that comes with reliance on a lone income. Moreover, ownership influences are evident in the landscape. The study also showed that though the Ghanaian constitution has made some positive impacts, some shortfalls were identified such

as: The media lack a Right to Information Law; archaic laws still exist in the statute books; and huge court fines which cripples media outlets. Finally, unethical practices were evident in the media landscape and argued that *legalities* form a minimal part of the independence of the Ghanaian print media but concerns about their freedom is self-inflicted by the very media practitioners through their actions and sometimes questionable reportage.

## **Preface**

The empirical research described in this thesis: “Media Independence in Ghana: The Case of the Fourth Republic” for PhD was carried out in the Centre for Communication and Media Studies, School of Applied Human Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban, from July 2013 to December 2015, under the supervision of *Prof. Ruth Elizabeth Teer-Tomaselli*.

This study represents original work by the author and has not otherwise been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma at any tertiary institution. Where use has been made of the work of others it is duly acknowledged in the text.

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Signature

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## **Definition of terms**

AMB: African Media Barometer

AMDI: African Media Development Initiative

CHRI: Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

FOIL: Freedom of Information Law

FOIB: Freedom of Information Bill

GJA: Ghana Journalists Association

GYEEDA: Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency

HSBC: HongKong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (Multinational Bank)

IFJ: International Federation of Journalists

IREX: International Research and Exchanges Board

MISA: Media Institute of Southern Africa

MFWA: Media Foundation for West Africa

NRC: The National Redemption Council

NDC: National Democratic Congress

NPP: National Patriotic Party

NLC: National Liberation Council

NMC: National Media Commission

NCA: National Communication Authority

PRINPAG: Private Newspaper Publishing Association of Ghana

PNDC: People's National Defence Council

RTIL: Right to Information Law

RDIRBC: Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada

SADA: Southern Accelerated Development Authority

SMC: Supreme Military Council

UNESCO: United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

## TABLE OF CONTENT

CONTENT	PAGE NO.
TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii-iii
PREFACE	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEFINITION OF TERMS	vi
TABLE OF CONTENT	vii-xii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Background	1-2
1.1 The Major Republics (1957-1993): Striving towards Media Independence	2-9
1.2 <b>Some Successes of the Fourth Republican Constitution</b>	10-11
1.3 Some Drawbacks	11-13
1.4 National Economy of Ghana	14-15
1.5 Media funding: Relations with Media Independence	17-19
1.6 Objectives of the Thesis	19
1.7 Research Questions	19-20
1.8 Delimitation	20
1.9 Significance	20-21
1.10 Thesis Structure/Organisation	22-23
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>24</b>
2.0 Introduction	24-25
2.1 Concept of Freedom	25-29
2.2 Media Independence: Defining the Concept	29-33
2.3 <b>Previous Studies</b>	33-39
2.4 Media and Society: Issues of Ethics, Standards, Accountability and Responsibility	39-40
2.4.1 Media Accountability and Responsibility: An Obligation of Freedom	40-45
2.4.2 Media Ethics, Standards and Professionalism	45-48
2.5 Media Freedom and Governance Systems: Democracy, Authoritative and	49-50

	Socialist forms	
2.5.1	What is Democracy then?	50-51
2.5.2	Authoritative Governance and the Press	53
2.5.3	Socialist Governance and the Press	53-55
2.6	Media Ownership and Control	55-58
2.6.1	Media Ownership in Africa	58-59
2.7	Advertising Defined	59
2.7.1	Advertising as a Funding Source	60-63
2.7.2	Media Commodification, Profitability and Consumption	63-65
2.8	Media Diversification	65-66
	<b>CHAPTER 3: THE PRINT MEDIA LANDSCAPE OF GHANA</b>	<b>67</b>
3.0	Foundation of Print Media in Ghana	67-68
3.1	Geographical Distribution of Ghana's Print Media Resources	68-73
3.2	Media Regulatory Institution(s) and Advocacy / Professional Groups	73
3.2.1	Formation of Press Councils	74
3.2.2	NMC Composition and Formation	74-75
3.2.3	Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG)	75-76
3.3	International Media Bodies/Protocols	76
3.3.1	Windhoek Declaration (1991)	76-77
3.4	Regulatory Environment of Media: Survey of Media Law	77-79
3.5	Post-Independent Ghana and Press Laws	79-82
3.6	Theoretical Framework	82-84
3.6.1	Globalisation	84-85
	<b>CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>87</b>
4.0	Research Design	87
4.1	Data Collection Sources	87-88
4.2	Qualitative / Quantitative Research	88-89
4.2.1	Qualitative and Quantitative: Merger or Dichotomous Debate	89-90
4.3	Content Analysis: What Is It?	90-91
4.3.1	Media Content Analysis: The Roots	91
4.3.2	Applicability of Qualitative and Quantitative: Revisited in Line with Content Analysis	91-92
4.3.3	Content Analysis: Procedural Measures	92-93

4.4	Sampling/Sample Procedures	95
4.5	Sample Size for Newspapers	95
4.6	Sections of Content Selection for Newspapers	98
4.6.1	Framing and Agenda-setting: Determinant of Media Independence	101
4.6.2	Framing	101-02
4.7	Agenda-Setting	102-04
4.7.1	Reliability and Validity Differentiated	104
4.7.2	Reliability	104-05
4.8	Inter-coder Reliability	105-06
4.8.1	Validity	106-07
4.8.2	Thematic Analysis: What is it?	107-08
4.8.3	Interviews	108-09
4.9	Sample Size for Interviews	109-10
4.10	Thematic Analysis: Procedural Measures	110-11
	Interpreting Data and Presentation	111-12
	Ethical Considerations	112
4.11	Limitations	112-13
<b>CHAPTER 5: MEDIA FUNDING VERSUS AGENDA-SETTING/FRAMING: THE CONDUIT FOR MEDIA INDEPENDENCE</b>		<b>114</b>
5.0	Introduction	114-15
5.1	Results	115
5.1.0	Newspaper Funding through Advertising	115-20
5.1.1	Justification: Advertising Allocation Gap	120-22
5.2	Media Funding Versus Agenda-setting/Framing	122
5.2.1	Newspaper Categorisation and Agenda-setting	122-23
5.2.1.0	Headline Tone	123-25
5.2.1.1	Criticality	125-28
5.2.1.2	Informants	128-30
5.3	Discussion	130-33
5.4	Conclusion	133
<b>CHAPTER 6: POSITIONING MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL: THE GHANAIAN CONTEXT OF MEDIA INDEPENDENCE</b>		<b>134</b>
6.0	Introduction	134
6.1	Results	134

6.1.0	State Ownership and Control	134-38
6.1.1	Private Ownership and Control	138-41
6.1.2	Diversity	141-43
6.2	Discussion	143-46
6.3	Conclusion	146
<b>CHAPTER 7: MEDIA DIVERSIFICATION: REDEFINING RELIANCE ON ADVERTISING FUNDING AND IMPACT ON MEDIA INDEPENDENCE</b>		<b>145</b>
7.0	Introduction	147-48
7.1	Results	148
7.1.0	Advertising over-dependence	148-50
7.1.1	Sales from circulation	151-53
7.1.2	Diversification	153-57
7.2	Discussion	157-59
7.3	Conclusion	159
<b>CHAPTER 8: ACHIEVING MEDIA INDEPENDENCE THROUGH LEGAL &amp; REGULATORY MEASURES: A REALITY OR FORMALITY?</b>		<b>158</b>
8.0	Introduction	160
8.1	Results	161
8.1.0	Constitutional Enforcement	161-63
8.1.1	Autonomy and Application of NMC Regulation(s)	163-66
8.1.2	Information Law	166
8.1.2.1	Political Will	167-68
8.1.2.2	Stalemate over Content of Bill	168-71
8.1.3	Deterring Media Laws	171-73
8.1.4	Court Adjudication	173-77
8.2	Discussion	177-79
8.3	Conclusion	179-81
<b>CHAPTER 9: PRINT MEDIA STANDARDISATION &amp; PROFESSIONALISM: A DETERMINANT OF MEDIA INDEPENDENCE IN GHANA</b>		<b>182</b>
9.0	Introduction	182-83
9.1	Results	183
9.1.0	Educational Level of Practitioners	184-86

9.1.1	Professional Membership Association	186-89
9.1.2	Regulatory	189-92
9.1.3	Money Matters	192-94
9.2	Discussion	194-98
9.3	Conclusion	198
<b>CHAPTER 10: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION(S) &amp; RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		<b>199-208</b>
10.1	Implications for Policy Interventions	208-10
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>211-42</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		<b>243-55</b>
APPENDIX 1: Interview Schedule		243-44
APPENDIX 2: Coding Instruction		245-49
APPENDIX 3: Coding Instrument		250-52
APPENDIX 4: Informed Consent Document		253-54
APPENDIX 5: Ethical Approval		255
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>		
Table 1.0	Governing administrations in Ghana (1957-2007)	4
Table 1.1	Some Provisions on Media Independence (1992 Constitution)	9
Table 1.2	Ghana's media ecology	14
Table 1.3	Country Data	16
Table 2.0	Primary Journalistic Sins	44
Table 2.1	Definition and Media Approach for each Political Society	52
Table 3.0	Schedule of Newspapers Publication in Ghana	70
Table 3.1	Ghanaian Media and Operational Status	72
Table 4.0	Content Analysis Usage as a Method	92
Table 4.1	Media Selection Grid	96
Table 4.2	Further Synthesisation of Media Grid (Sampling)	97
Table 4.3	Selected Newspapers, Ownership and Schedules	100
Table 4.4	Phases of Thematic Analysis	108
Table 5.0	Government-Corporate Newspaper Media Funding-Mix through Advertising	116
Table 5.1	Funding, Agenda-Setting and Framing: Headline Tone	123
Table 5.2	Funding, Agenda-Setting and Framing: Criticality	126

Table 5.3	Newspaper Media Agenda-setting and Informants (sources) Pattern	129
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**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 3.0	Global Freedom of the Press Index: Rankings	86
Figure 4.0	Media Content Analysis Flowchart	94
Figure 4.1	Map of Ghana Showing Ten Regions	98
Figure 5.0	Government and Corporate Advertising in Newspapers	117
Figure 10	Extracted framework	206

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background

The concept of media independence is a complex discipline whose propagation has generated debates over centuries. This complexity stems from the fact that while political systems and administrations have not changed in some countries, media freedom levels fluctuates (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014:1) showing that beyond political systems, other variables implicitly appear to impact it. To Leeson (2008:156), “media freedom is not an exogenous factor randomly distributed across countries. Instead, media freedom reflects underlying social, legal, political, economic, and even cultural factors, and in turn also helps to shape those factors”. Thus, attempts to design a universal measuring rod to determine independence of the media is a challenge if not impossible due to the rapid changing phases of socio-political, regulatory frameworks, economic, cultural systems and more recently Information and Communication Technology (Internet) within individual countries. McQuail (1992:103) have questioned the complexities surrounding whose freedom is being sought for in media; the owner, journalist or editor? In other context, the question of: “who watches the watchman?” has also been posed. Despite the complications that come with establishing independence of the media in any defined society, media institutions and their personnel just like any other corporate entity and its employees reserve the *right* to work in a safe environment without fear. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any *media* regardless of frontiers” (Freedom House, 2005). It is in line with this that the Commonwealth Press notes: “Whether in Nigeria or Uganda, the UK or Canada, India or Malaysia, an independent, responsible press is the *sine qua non* of a properly functioning modern state” (Commonwealth Press Union, 1999:3). However, various sovereign states have adopted and practiced different governance systems that arguably have dictated the extent to which the media functions either as free, partially free or not free irrespective of the above declaration and Ghana is not an exception.

The current research delves into media independence in Ghana with a focus on the Fourth Republic. In order to provide an historical context, this chapter briefly explores the major republics [First, Second and Third]. Exploration will emphasise the constitutional provisions (regulation), media funding, and their relationship to the independence of the media in the execution of journalistic functions in Ghana.

### **1.1 The major republics (1957-1993): Striving towards media independence**

Ghana, the West African country formerly called the Gold Coast and a colony of **Britain** attained its independence on **6 March 1957**, the first in Sub-Saharan Africa. Thereafter, Ghana witnessed a period of unstable and different intermittent political cultures. Between the periods 1957-1966, 1969-1972 and 1979-1981, Ghana was ruled by three different civilian governments amidst military regimes (Rockson, 1990:39; Afrimap, 2007:18). Ghana has experimented with four democratic rules since 1957 (Morrison, 2004:421) thus the country is currently in its Fourth Republic, beginning with the introduction of the 1992 Constitution. **Since Kwame Nkrumah was deposed through a coup in 1966, Ghana had been ruled by nine governments; five military and four democratic. Each time a new faction assumes power the editorial staff of the state newspapers is shuffled or replaced, and the editorial positions of the papers are transformed, sometimes overnight, to reflect the personal and ideological commitments of the new government (Hasty, 2005:34; Anokwa, 1997:3).** To put this into perspective, Karikari (1987:32) recounted:

In the history of relations between government and the state-owned press, one important development can be observed: the high turnover of ministers (commissioners or secretaries) of information. In the thirty years of independence, there have been 28 ministers (commissioners and secretaries) of information. The National Redemption Council (NRC) / Supreme Military Council (SMC) appointed eight in seven years of rule, while the People's National Defense Council (PNDC), in its first five years, appointed four. The shortest records of tenure in that office were twenty days each under the National Liberation Council (NLC) and PNDC.

**The above incidents define the state of affairs between the period 1972 to 1979 where military uprising and takeovers was common in Ghana (see Table 1.0). This era could be**

described as the dark days for the media. The private press also tasted its fair share of repression during this era. These dramatic transformations over the years show the close relationship the media has with society and the political systems within the country. Considering the fact that the press functions “to inform, to educate, to entertain and amuse, to examine fairly and critically and to make constructive contributions to the thought and forum for airing of ideas and opinions, whatever their origin and however controversial” (Wilcox, 1975:23-24), its activities became so indispensable that during the initial five year administration of the People’s National Defense Council (PNDC) government, for instance, numerous public forums spoke on the media’s role in nation building and political processes which drew participants from philanthropic and advocacy groups and had *press freedom* surfacing on all agendas, among other issues (Karikari, 1987:29).

A discussion of the period between independence in 1957 and the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1993 is complex, considering how military regimes and democratic republics were intermingled. For the purpose of this work, only brief highlights will be given on the first three republics and most importantly how the media (both state and privately owned) were positioned under those administrations. See Table 1.0 below showing the various republics of Ghana since its independence in 1957.

**Table 1.0: Governing administrations in Ghana (1957-2007)**

<b>Dates / Period</b>	<b>Governing authorities / Political systems</b>
1957 - 1960	„Westminster“ Constitution (Nkrumah government)
1960 - 1964	<i>First Republic</i> : presidential system introduced
1964 - 1966	First Republic: one-party rule
February 1966 - October 1969	National Liberation Council (NLC)
October 1969 - January 1972	<i>Second Republic</i> (Dr. Busia government)
January 1972 - October 1975	National Redemption Council (NRC)
October 1975 - July 1978	Supreme Military Council I (SMC I)
July 1978 - June 1979	Supreme Military Council II (SMC II)
June - Sept. 1979	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)
Sept. 1979 - December 1981	<i>Third Republic</i> (Dr. Limann government)
January 1982 - December 1992	Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC)
January 1993 - Present	<i>Fourth Republic</i> : J.J. Rawlings, John Kuffour, <b>Prof. Mills and John Dramani Mahama</b>

Source: (Afrimap, 2007:18; Anokwa, 1997:6)

The first republic was led by Kwame Nkrumah and operated a Westminster-style of governance which was subsequently changed to a presidential system in 1960 (Afrimap, 2007:17). The republic eventually metamorphosed into a socialist system modeled on soviet governance (Rockson, 1990:39) and became a single-party state whereby the president declared his tenure as indefinite. This was toppled by a combined force of the army and police in 1966 (Gyimah-Boadi and Brobbey, 2012). With regard to the way in which the media fared under the First Republic, Nkrumah assumed a position where he constantly criticised privately-owned newspapers, “believing that capitalist competition interfered with the sanctity of the truth and the

project of national development” (Asante, 1996 cited in Hasty, 2005:34). As a consequence of this reasoning, the *Ashanti Pioneer*, a private newspaper, was banned. In 1962, the Newspaper Licensing Law, which required newspapers and magazines to obtain a license before publishing, was applied to limit newspaper publication, thus leaving only the *Daily Graphic* which Nkrumah subsequently bought, and *Ghanaian Times*, both of which are state dailies (Hasty, 2005:34; Twumasi, 1981:17). Writing on the double stance of the First Republic regarding media, Sackey (2013) made reference to the following quotes by Kwame Nkrumah before and after the struggle for political emancipation:

The imposition of any form of press censorship was an idea most repugnant to me, since it ran counter to everything I had always believed in, everything for which I had struggled in my life. Freedom of expression had been one of the essential rights for which I had fought. I had gone to prison for daring to say things the colonial administration had not liked. (Kwame Nkrumah [Speech-1963], cited in Sackey, 2013)

It is part of our revolutionary credo that within the competitive system of capitalism, the press cannot function in accordance with a strict regard for the sacredness of facts and that it therefore should not remain in private hands. (Kwame Nkrumah [Speech-1963], cited in Sackey, 2013)

This illustrates the extent to which the very instrument (media) that indirectly benefitted Nkrumah, and contributed toward the freedom sought for Ghana was dramatically clamped down on when Nkrumah finally took office for the presidency. As Gadzekpo (1997:35) puts it, “having used the press extensively in the struggle for independence, Nkrumah was all too aware of the power that the press could have in mobilising people”.

The First Republican Constitution imposed severe limits on basic freedoms of speech and association (Afrimap, 2007:17). The eventual outcome was a total suffocation of the press, leading to the state emerging as the lone player in the media industry. Because freedom of expression became inconsistent with Nkrumah’s concept of ‘*consciencism* ideology’, it was completely denied (Gadzekpo, 1997:31). Thus, Twumasi noted:

At the time of his overthrow in 1966, Nkrumah had expanded media facilities enormously, and placed them firmly in the hands of the government. The private news media had been eliminated. Television, radio, the Ghana News Agency (GNA) and the

news media were government owned and operated. Authoritarian structures of mass media control had been effectively established. It is these structures of social and political control that have been bequeathed to successive governments (Twumasi, 1981:18).

There was with a sigh of relief at the liberation of the media fraternity after his overthrow and, Sackey (2013) observed that; in just 24 hours after Nkrumah was toppled, the following report by a state-owned media (*Ghanaian Times*) was released:

Today tyranny is dead. The people of Ghana have been freed from the great burden which has been imposed on them by the corrupt Government of Kwame Nkrumah . . . Today democracy is reborn, and Ghanaians are grateful to the timely intervention of the Army and Police who have saved us from the destruction of the tyrant Kwame Nkrumah who ran the country as a mad man would run his house. (Sackey, 2013).

Dr. Abrefa Busia became the prime minister of Ghana's Second Republic from 1969 to 1972 (Afrimap, 2007; Yeboah, 2009). The administration created an open environment that ushered in the launch of independent privately-owned papers like *The Spokesman*, a paper that was vociferous of the government and its Progress Party (PP), as well as *Palaver Tribune* and *Voice of the People* (Anokwa, 1997). This government was described as being a libertarian one in matters of communication, as exhibited by the abolition of the Newspaper Licensing Law in 1963 (Gadzekpo, 1997:37). Dr. Busia however dismissed Cameron Doodoo, the editor of *Daily Graphic*, a state-owned paper, regarding his editorial which criticised the government saying that it was taking a pro-apartheid stance after Busia called on all African nations to open negotiations with the then-apartheid South Africa (Asante, 1996; Anokwa, 1997).

The Third Republic lasted from 1979 to 1981 and was led by Dr. Hilla Limann (Afrimap, 2007:18). Generally, the attitude of this administration towards the mass media was friendly, a quality which was evident in the delivery of the president's sessional address to parliament:

The constitution provides for the establishment of the Press Commission to manage the state-owned media and to give the press the necessary independence and protection to enable it to perform its [sic] essential functions of educating and keeping the public properly informed and serving as a watchdog of the people's rights and liberties (Limann, 30 November 1979).

Thus in the history of Ghana's media policies, this was the first time that a constitution, whether civilian or military, explicitly made provision to guarantee press freedom at a time agitation for it had intensified (Karikari, 1987:38). It represents a landmark in constitutional matters as it raised the status of mass media as a significant institution. In comparison to the First and Second Republics indirect links were assigned to the mass media through references to provisions of basic human rights such as freedom of expression and of conscience (Twumasi, 1981:13). The Third Republic is deemed as *progressive* with regard to media recognition, exemplified by the creation of the Press Commission, however, the libertarian media policies of both the Second and Third republics led by Prime Minister Busia and President Limann respectively left the repressive laws on criminal libel and sedition untouched. They also made no effort to liberalise broadcasting or expand the telecommunications sectors for private ownership and operators (Gadzekpo, 1997:38-40). However, after the overthrow of Dr. Limann's popular elected People's National Party (PNP) government, the Third Republican Constitution was suspended abruptly leading to the abolishment of the Press Commission (Rockson, 1990:38).

The Fourth Republic was led by the Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings. When the wind of democracy swept across the African continent, and with advancement in technology that enhanced communication, it became practically unacceptable to stifle freedom of expression in the 1990s (Gadzekpo, 1997:42). Furthermore, by 1990, immense pressure from both domestic entities and the international community propelled several measures leading to the beginning of the Fourth Republic from January 1993. Prior to its adoption, a series of Constitutional exercises were carried out between 1990 and 1992. "These included the National Commission for Democracy (NCD) regional fora, production of a draft Constitution by a Committee of Experts and the convening of a Consultative Assembly" (Afrimap, 2007:18). The constitution declared the country to be a unitary republic with sovereignty in the hands of the Ghanaian populace. It was drafted with the notion of forestalling the recurrence of coup d'état, single party states and tyrannical governance; and to foster tolerance and power-sharing thought (ModernGhana.com). Finally, in April 1992, the manuscript of the new Constitution was voted upon in a referendum and subsequently adopted (Afrimap, 2007:19). Under this republic, Rawlings abrogated most of the repressive decrees for the media that he had instituted under the PNDC and emphasised the imperatives of having an objective and responsible press as part of politically liberalising Ghana. This era ushered in a profound sense independence for both state and private newspapers (Hasty,

2005:35). In a similar vein, it is observed that as far as the press is concerned, the Fourth Republican Constitution presented some of the most liberalised media policies throughout the history of Ghana (Gadzekpo, 1997:43). It established the National Media Commission (NMC) to foster media freedom and to ensure the state media are not vulnerable to government manipulation (RDIRBC, 1994; Gadzekpo, 1997:43). The repeal of the Newspaper Licensing Law by Jerry John Rawlings just six months prior to the general elections in 1992 led to the springing up of three dozen autonomous privately-owned newspapers (Temin and Smith, 2002:588; Hasty n.d). This is reminiscent of the abolishment of the Licensing Act of 1695 in Britain that led to a proliferation of newspapers numbering twenty in London, with more in the other regions (Hallin and Mancini, 2004:200). This scenario best describes the prolonged suffocation of the media and how prolific they could have been if regulations were relaxed. Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution (1992) succinctly defines the freedom and independence of the media as follows in *Table 1.1*:

**Table 1.1: Some Provisions on Media Independence (1992 Constitution)**

**FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE MEDIA**

**162**

(1) Freedom and independence of the media are hereby guaranteed.

(2) Subject to this Constitution and any other law not inconsistent with this Constitution, there shall be no censorship in Ghana.

(3) There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a license as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information.

(4) Editors and publishers of newspapers and other institutions of the mass media shall not be subject to control or interference by Government, nor shall they be penalized or harassed for their editorial opinions and views, or the content of their publications.

(5) All agencies of the mass media shall, at all times, be free to uphold the principles, provisions and objectives of this Constitution, and shall uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people of Ghana..

(6) Any medium for the dissemination of information to the public which publishes a statement about or against any person shall be obliged to publish a rejoinder, if any, from the person in respect of whom the publication was made.

**163**

All state-owned media shall afford fair opportunities and facilities for the presentation of divergent views and dissenting opinions.

**Source: The Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana – Chapter 12 (1992)**

## 1.2 Some Successes of the Fourth Republican Constitution

There are immense benefits that media freedom offers social institutions daily, most importantly the smooth flow of accurate and diverse points of view (McQuail, 1994:141-2). Considering some of these benefits offered Ghana as a result of the Fourth Republican Constitution's provisions on media independence, the following is evident:

Press freedom was guaranteed by the constitution in order to loosen government grip on the mass media (Gadzekpo, 1997:42). Despite Ghana's checkered past with respect to press freedom (Temin and Smith, 2002:588; Media Monitor, 2004:5), the 1992 constitution lifting press controls (Hasty, 2005: 275) and the devotion of a whole chapter to freedom and independence of the media (Alhassan, 2005:224) as depicted above in Table 1, meant that the media landscape became liberalised (African Media Barometer [AMB], 2011:5). In the face of well-established state-owned media, the private media sector gradually grew and made their presence felt. Local radio stations and newspapers with national coverage rapidly sprung up and were accessible to almost every district of Ghana while television stations access was not difficult to receive (Twumasi, 2012:9). With these, front-page news on exposing corruption in Ghana became common (Hasty, 2005:275). Furthermore, having defined media independence in this democratic order, journalists ensured the public was fed with information about *government*, *businesses* and other state interests so that these could be scrutinized (Twumasi, 2012:11). Thus, as in other evolving democracies, the phasing out of government monopolies ushered in a new era of free expression (Sikanku, 2011:1321). Ghana's informal environment began to expand due to the press liberalisation in ways that previously were unimaginable considering its media history (Amoakohene, 2004:26). This confirms the assertion that a symbiotic relationship between media freedom and democratisation does exist (Gunther and Mughan 2000; Pasek, 2006 cited in Camaj, 2012:21). The constitution's provisions on media independence for instance gave the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) a fresh impetus towards the achievement of its objectives and the creation of its permanent secretariat [Ghana International Press Centre] in 2003 (GJA, 2011:48).

The media monitored Ghana's electoral processes and kept government and its officials in check to ensure that they were transparent and accountable (Arthur 2010:210). Media searches and releases in Ghana led to the cancelling of plans by the National Patriotic Party (NPP)

government to borrow US\$1 billion from the International Finance Consortium due to doubts about the company's credentials (Gadzekpo, 2008 cited in Arthur, 2010:210).

In 2002, a front-page story in the *Ghanaian Chronicle*, "Grab and Chop at Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL)," described a kind of smorgasbord of ubiquitous practices of corruption involving embezzlement and conflict of interest at Ghana Water Company Limited (Ohene 2002:1 cited in Hasty, 2005:275).

In the same vein, on the pretext that it is a *listening government*, the government withdrew from the decision to sell Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) when media constantly criticised the move in 2003 (Afrimap et al. 2007 cited in Arthur, 2010: 210). From the above revelations, one may probe: are these some of the watchdog duties of the media that inform why some governments and other interests may want to stifle them so they could have the room to operate according to their own dictates?

### **1.3 Some Drawbacks**

Despite the above benefits, certain drawbacks are identified in the same Fourth Republican Constitution. Though the editorial independence of the media is guaranteed under the constitution to protect "editors and publishers of newspapers and other institutions of the mass media" from "control or interference by Government" (Articles 162 & 163), vicarious control is often witnessed in biased views and fabrication of stories in public media that tend to project the government in the best light. Emmanuel Dogbevi, Editor of *Online Business Journal*, cited a story published by state-owned *Daily Graphic* newspaper on the approval of funds for Ghana to complete road projects by the World Bank. After the World Bank denied it, it surfaced later that an official from the presidency had planted it in the paper (IREX, 2012:178). Autonomy was given to the state-owned media in the 1992 constitution to serve all political parties equally (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2003:47; Afrimap, 2007:5) but the intention of unbiased state-owned media is difficult considering the state control over the media and its history of supporting the ruling government. Interference by government is enabling state officials to occasionally determine who should be allowed access especially to airwaves (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2003:47). Also, the Fourth Republican Constitution was promulgated along with the *Criminal Libel Law* that stifles press freedom and expression. This law was in force until its abolition by parliament on 27<sup>th</sup>

July, 2001 under the presidency of John Kuffour (Fobih, 2008 cited in Arthur, 2010:210). In 2007, Afrimap describes the freedom of press in Ghana saying:

Five years after the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law, some vocal journalists complain of anonymous threats and phone calls, secret trailing, character assassination and stifling of business. Monitoring of state broadcasters indicates that the Constitutional requirement of equal access for all political parties is not respected in practice. There is a need for continued vigilance and corrective action on all these issues (Afrimap, 2007:5).

Even when the Criminal Libel Law has been finally repealed, the *Emergency Powers Act of 1994 (Act 472)* was retained. This law permits government to censor news from crisis areas of the country. Thus, in practice, a law that bars publishing false statements deliberately and likely to cause anxiety and panic to the public or a breach of peace though has good intentions; it has been misapplied to several media practitioners. This, some commentators have suggested that it should be abrogated because it inhibits freedom of expression (Afrimap, 2007:39). This practice has extensively undermined Ghana's progress to entrench press freedom. For instance, a state-owned newspaper journalist was arrested for his editorial in which he claimed that a state housing project meant for security workers had been abandoned for squatters, some of whom were alleged to be criminals, to occupy. Failure to declare the source has also been a reason for other journalists to be arrested (Gyimah-Boadi and Brobbey, 2012). The examples above suggest that the definition assigned to Ghana's media independence in the 1992 Constitution was not complete at the time. Control over media heightens in the case where Ghana's Registrar-Generals' Department is mandated to register all business, including *media bodies*, to pay tax without recognition of the public watchdog role of the media. This and other state of affairs have created in the media scene a situation that is increasingly dominated by richer commercial interests and politically motivated dealings (IREX, 2012:176). Furthermore, Ghana's independent media remain precarious despite the legal protections and resource utility. Media charges against the government on controversial matters have warranted retaliation. The right to criticise the government is difficult to maintain in Ghana especially at the beginning of the Fourth Republic because journalists have been sued in court, and suffered jail sentences and tarnished credibility (Morrison, 2004:437). Thus, the establishment of media freedom cannot be

achieved by constitutional and legal decree alone, but need to be a daily practice that requires constant developing and re-affirmation (McQuail, 1992:111).

Irrespective of the fact that access to information has been enhanced since the beginning of the Fourth Republic, Ghana still lags behind best practice in matters of accessing information (Afrimap, 2007:38). For instance, the First National Democratic Congress (NDC) government denied the request from the media to be furnished with copies of the opposition New Patriotic Party's (NPP) budget proposals, until a court order instructed otherwise after the NPP sued and won the case (Morrison, 2004:437). At the time of this research it is still unclear as to why Ghana's Freedom of Information Act Bill has not been passed, being held up in parliament since 2003 (Schiffrin, 2010; Afrimap 2007:38). Furthermore, the Ghanaian government in 2012 banned Multimedia Rite, a private media house, from covering any government events or activities – a decision that was received by a huge public outcry and media criticism which led to a rescinding of its decision. These are issues that merit scrutiny in relation to media's independence. Ghana's media ecology has the following statistics as shown in *Table 1.2* below:

**Table 1.2: Ghana's media ecology**

<b>MEDIA SPECIFIC</b>	
<b>Media outlets / stations</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Print	466 total publications, including 11 National Daily newspapers.
Radio Stations	257 on air (African Media Barometer [AMB], 2013).
Television Stations	28 television stations; (AMB, 2013).
Newspaper Circulation	Top Daily Newspapers: <i>Daily Graphic</i> (State-owned), <i>Ghanaian Times</i> (State-owned), <i>Daily Guide</i> (Private), <i>The Chronicle</i> (Private). (AMB, 2013).
Internet Usage	5,171.993 million (2014 est., <i>World Internet Statistics</i> ).

Source: [IREX (2012); African Media Barometer, 2013; World Internet Statistics (2015)].

#### **1.4 National Economy of Ghana**

Africa is still an economically emerging continent and therefore its regulatory frameworks, economic structures and political systems seem fragile to support and nurture strategic civic institutions such as the media compared to advanced industrial economies; Ghana is not an exception. Ghana is a *unitary* state but to ensure participation of its masses, a decentralised administration was introduced between 1988 and 1989 (Afrimap, 2007:10). Synonymous with its democratic status, Ghana is a *capitalist economy* (free market system) and as such its market functions on the *demand* and *supply* principle. This allows individuals with the required capital and other means of production to establish commercial ventures in fields such as

the telecoms, banking, airlines, recreation and more recently oil and gas exploration. The current Ghanaian policy on Private-Public Partnership (PPP) re-enforces the liberalised economic climate in the country now, and this environment of capitalism no doubt explains the establishment of several media outlets for both profit and non-profit motives that have flooded the media market. However, the „sale of content strategy“ is hampered by the ability of the average Ghanaian – who earns about \$1.00 US Dollar daily to purchase newspapers or even afford phoning-into to a radio or television station to contribute to socio-political concerns of the country. In effect, it appears media houses, especially those in the private press, generally are *unable to generate income* for their operations independently (Smith and Temin, 2001:166; Arthur, 2010:215).

Ghana is an agrarian country and as at 2010, 13,366,340 households representing 54.2% of the total population in agriculture (GSS, 2012:287). The country exports gold, bauxite, manganese, aluminum, cocoa, timber and more recently oil among other farm products. The following statistics (See Table 1.3) give an overview of the economy of Ghana.

**Table 1.3: Country Data**

Country	Republic of Ghana
Population	26,327,649 (World Fact Book est. July 2015)
Language(s)	English (Official), African Languages
Literacy Rate	74.1%
Land Area	238,533 km <sup>2</sup>
Land Divisions	10 Main Regions
Seat of government/ Capital city	Accra (Greater-Accra Region )
Ethnic groups (% of population)	Akan 47.5%, Mole-Dagbani 16.6%, Ewe 13.9%, Ga-Dangme 7.4%, Guan 3.7%, Gurma 5.7%, Grusi 2.5%, Mande-Busanga 1.1%, other 1.4%
Religious (% of population)	Christian faith 71.2%, Islam (17.6%), traditional religion (5.2%) and No Religious affiliation (5.3%)
Governance system	Democratic: Unitary Republic / Presidential
President / Top Authority	President John Dramani Mahama (As at 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2012)
Gross Domestic product (GDP)	\$38.65 billion (2014)

Ghana Statistical Service: May 2012; IREX, (2012); [World Fact Book, \(2016\)](#).

## 1.5 Media funding: Relations with media independence

The „survival of the fittest“ concept, as **postulated** by Charles Darwin seems to be at work in the media circles in Ghana. This survival situation is hooked firmly to the funding and revenue generation of newspapers, both privately-owned and state-owned. Having considered how the media fared under various republics, this section presents a brief overview of the financial situation of the Ghanaian media that is glued to the economic domain. Though different sources of revenue fund the media jointly, this work will exclusively tag the placement of advertising in newspapers in order to draw conclusion(s) on the flow of funds available to a media house and its subsequent repercussion(s) on editorial autonomy.

Exploring the financial viability of print publishing media in Ghana, especially the circumstances of private press houses, it transpired that most are poorly capitalised; the sole proprietorship often lies with political affiliation appearing as a journalist; the company has undefined staff duties; and the owner is the editor-in-chief and the „jack of all trade“ (IREX, 2012:180). The print media has proliferated in a small market that lacks a central distribution, and is characterised by low subscription, limited circulation and audience reach and little advertising backing. The high publishing cost results in low margins of investment (Quaison-Sackey, 2004:8). In 1998, for instance, due mainly to lack of funds, the *Media Monitor* temporarily stopped publication (*Media Monitor*, 2004:4). Thus, for such entities to survive, several private media are run as purely as business enterprises with the sole aim of exchanging huge audiences for advertisers“ money, thus making sensationalism the order of the day (AMB, 2011:5). In as much as they tend to lack sustained business models and are frequently highly unprofitable, they do not want to merge or consolidate because different papers were established on different philosophies and ideologies (Schiffrin, 2010:411). The financial situation is compounded by the fact that most private-owned weeklies, monthlies among others do not circulate papers beyond the Ghanaian capital city, Accra, and a few other main cities (Boafo, 1987:26), whereas the state funded *Graphic* and *Times Corporations* have branches in each regional capital thus facilitating quick nationwide circulation by bus, train and courier (though the remotest parts of Ghana may receive theirs later). As a trend, it is no wonder that even in the 1970s, these papers were conveyed by the Air force and Ghana Airways (Hasty, 2005). The financial benefits that flow from the state to insulate its papers appear to suggest that these

newspapers do not wish to bite the hand that feeds them. Beyond Ghana, it is generally observed that in Africa, privately-owned press of the late twentieth century was not expanding when compared to their state-owned counterparts (Ansah, 1988:9) due to the varying funding patterns. In an attempt to offer solutions, Kwame Boafo (1987:32) recorded that:

a mechanism for democratising and decentralising newspaper publication and distribution systems is to give serious and sustained encouragement and financial support to the introduction of newspapers and other mimeographed publications at the rural community level. Individuals and organisations wishing to establish newspapers and other publications could be actively encouraged and assisted – for example, in the form of tax reliefs, preferential allocation of newsprint and other printing materials to look outward of the national capital and, particularly, to the district administrative level.

The above scenario does not erase the fact that the state-owned media are free from funding difficulties in the history of their establishment in Ghana. It is against this background that the government of Ghana launched a seed capital amount of GH¢1million (\$261,209) for a *media fund* to aid research, staff training and development, information and communication technology among others for all media houses in Ghana (*Daily Graphic*, March 8, 2012:32). This declaration is purported to fulfil a government promise of including in the 2012 state budget a grant of an annual GH¢ 2,000,000 (\$522,202) media development fund that is expected to improve the operations of press houses as well as skills of journalists. This would assume that the fund is equitably distributed. It is the first in the history of Ghana's media (IREX, 2012:183). However, sections of society have raised concerns that the establishment of a media fund by the government was a ploy to induce journalists to do its bidding, particularly with the approach of the December 2012 polls (*Daily Graphic*, March 8, 2012:32). Currently, (as at the time of writing this thesis in 2015) the financial plight of newspapers in Ghana has been worsened by the daily review of paper editorials by the broadcast media, notably radio and television. This is a practice in the Ghanaian media landscape presumed to affect newspaper sales and subsequently their financial standing. These concerns (among others) raise questions about the independence of the media in such an environment, and the concomitant need to look into it.

Overall, it can be said that the state of Ghana's media and their audiences have changed with the variations in the political landscape. Despite these, the audience has deemed the media

as a very important organ (Kwansah-Aidoo, 2003:47) that needs to be enhanced. To serve these audience better, it has become imperative to delve into the subject of media independence in Ghana under the Fourth Republic.

### 1.6 Objectives of the thesis

The **main objective** of this research is to explore the relationship between media independence and the legal, economic and political environments within present-day Ghana. The **specific objectives** for the study are to:

- (i) map the *funding* of the Ghanaian media by government and **private corporate/business** enterprises through advertising placement; and to investigate the extent to which it impacts on the independence of the media;
- (ii) evaluate the extent to which *media ownership* by both *government* and *private* outlets / businesses affects editorial independence;
- (iii) investigate whether the media has diversified its operations beyond the media industry for revenue generation purposes and to determine its implication(s) for media independence;
- (iv) critically investigate how *media laws* and or *regulations* affect media independence; and
- (v) explore how media standards and professionalism affect independence of the media.

### 1.7 Research Questions

This study investigates the independence of the media and interrogates: in present-day Ghana, what relationship between the media on one side and the legal, economic and political environments on the other? The work further poses the following specific questions:

- (i) What is the ratio of the *advertising--funding mix* in Ghana between government and **private corporate/business** enterprises? How does this impact on independence of the media?
- (ii) What is the state of *media ownership* by government and private outlets / businesses in Ghana and how does this affect editorial independence?
- (iii) Has the media diversified its operations beyond the media industry for revenue generation purposes? What is/are its implication(s) for media independence?

- (iv) How do *media laws* and *regulations* affect media freedom?
- (v) How do media standards and professionalism affect independence of the media?

### **1.8 Delimitation**

This study delved into media independence in Ghana with an emphasis on the Fourth Republic. The media scape was confined to the print industry, specifically the *newspaper*. The reason for this was that the financial position of most newspapers in Ghana appears to be weak, so the subject merits investigation in order to examine the autonomy of the press from the perspective of legal, economic and political with *funding* as its locus. Geographically, the study was carried out in the Greater-Accra Region of Ghana. The major reason for this was that Accra is the capital city of Ghana and media activities and their operations are concentrated there. Moreover, the seat of government and almost all media firms across Ghana have their head offices located there, thus making it convenient to collect data on all the major entities to reflect the position of the media in the entire country. The targeted population of the current research included newspaper media houses, media practitioners (journalists), media professional associations / organisations, media regulatory bodies and regional media organisations. Moreover, four newspapers, composing of two state-owned and two privately-owned were selected for content analysis. The time period is contemporaneous with the research undertaken.

### **1.9 Significance**

A free press is one of the most efficacious instruments to promote good governance and external controls on administrative corruption (Camaj, 2002:22). This research is expected to go beyond the debate on legal and political dimensions of „government-media“ relations and dwell extensively on the *economic* domain using content analysis to determine who *funds* the operations of the media through the placement of adverts into the print media, specifically newspapers. It has long been perceived that governments tend to be the biggest advertiser (McQuail, 1992:135). However, with the springing up of businesses in the banking and telecommunication sectors amidst recent exploration of Ghana’s oil resources, all of which allow corporate entities to become important funders of newspapers through advertisements, it has

become necessary to examine the funding patterns so as to be able to deal with the subject of editorial autonomy in this twenty-first century. As James Curran (2002:150) put it, “advertisers can also exert a direct influence by supporting media which offer a conducive environment for their products or politics, and withholding support from those who do not conform”. By mapping out the proportions of funding from government on one hand and business enterprises on the other, this work is expected to show the relationship between media financing and media independence using content *framing* and *agenda-setting* to determine editorial independence. It sets the platform to determine who funds the media most in Ghana, government or enterprises, as a pre-requisite to better propose a panacea to issues of media operations and its concomitant external influence. Space is given to the role of *media owners* as strategic partners in issues of funding.

Moreover, the study considers whether the media has *diversified* its operations. *Diversification* in this study is distanced from the traditional debate of assessing the pluralistic (diversity) views of media consumption but will be dealt with in the context of *revenue generation* beyond the media industry. This move is expected to suggest strategies to lessen if not to eradicate the over-reliance on a specific source of accruing income within the media industry with its tendency of subjecting the media to huge editorial influences. Most countries spell out press freedom provisions in their Constitutions but in practice it is not as functional as expected (Kanyongolo, 1996). The research investigates beyond provisions in the Constitution and the question of whether those laws are enforced with respect to media independence and how fairly. The research also hopes to conceptualise „self-inflicted influences“ which is to what extent media’s own behaviour, through the observance of its ethics, standards and professionalism, impacts on their freedom is explored using qualitative approach. It is for the above reasons and many more that twenty years after the adoption of the 1991 Windhoek Declaration on “*Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press*”, Gwen Lister (2011:49) argued that though there has been some headway, more needs to be done and thus the necessity to regularly sensitise the political class and other related bodies to create a conducive environment for media to thrive freely. Finally, this work intends to develop a „media workflow model“ that encapsulates economic, legal, political and ethical impacts on the subject of media independence.

### **1.10 Thesis structure / organisation**

This thesis is composed of ten chapters. Chapter one delves into the introduction of the study that discusses background issues related to the major Ghanaian republics [First, Second, Third] with emphasis on the Fourth Republic, and also gives a brief explanation of how the media fared under each administration. It presents some successes achieved under the Fourth Republic due to constitutional provisions that gave room to some liberalisation as well as describes some of the shortcomings in terms of stifling media freedom. Finally, an overview of media funding is given with respect to the Ghanaian situation. The chapter spells out the objectives and research questions, delimitation and significance of the study.

The second chapter reviews the related literature on media independence so as to present a formidable argument on the problem. Issues discussed include; freedom of expression as propounded by authors like Milton and others to lay a base for the work; and media freedom concepts and definitions within the frames of legal, political and the economic environments. Systems of governance are discussed with an emphasis on democracy as an institution since this is indistinguishable from determining the subject of media independence. The relationship of media within society is also given space as a means to expanding on the role of the media in a given society while bringing up issues of media ethics and professionalism, accountability and responsibility. The issues of advertising, media funding and the structure of the media market are explored in this chapter. Space was also given to ownership, regulation, content and consumption, ideology among others.

The third chapter explores literature further, with a focus on the print media landscape of Ghana. It paints a picture of the national economy of the country, history of the print media, geographical distribution of print media, media regulatory bodies/associations (National Media Commission (NMC) / Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) / Private Newspapers Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG), regional media organisation and international protocols, and a survey of media laws. As part of chapters two and three, discussion on the chosen theoretical framework have been carried out on **political economy** in order to further unearth issues of media funding, regulation, economic and market tendencies, ownership

and controls, globalisation and liberalisation to establish the extent of influences on the media within the Ghanaian context.

Chapter four presents a detailed description of research methodology and methods. The study employed an *exploratory mixed-research approach* through the use of content analysis and interviews thus making both qualitative and quantitative tools ideal for data analysis. Space in this chapter has been given to sampling procedures, issues of reliability, validity and ethical considerations, production of coding instruments, instructions and training of coders. Data collection sources have been visited and discussed appropriately. To be able to discuss data collected from interviews conducted and deal with „framing“ and „agenda-setting“ from the content analysis exercises, thematic analysis was used to thematically give meaning and direction to the work. Microsoft Excel Version 2010 and Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) Version 21 were the software applications the researcher used to organise data captured from headlines, news and advert placements in selected Ghanaian newspapers. Finally, limiting factors of the entire research were spelt out.

Chapters five, six, seven, eight and nine of the study presents the research results / findings and discussion. The results analysed of the extent legal, political, economic and professionalism issues impact on media independence within the Ghanaian print media context and were reported in *tabular, graphical* and *thematic / narrative* formats.

The final part of this work (chapter ten) includes the summary, conclusion and suggestion(s) to enhance further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the issues of media independence with emphasis on Ghana's Fourth Republic. Though global perspectives of media independence issues have been incorporated in this work, in Africa, discussion has been confined to the Anglophone Sub-Saharan region chiefly due to language barriers. The study sets out to assess independence editorially from the perspectives of media funding, tagging advertising as the revenue source, and other variables including ownership, regulations, exploring standards/professionalism and issues of diversification in media operations. It discusses the roots of contemporary media, the concept of freedom, definitions of media independence. The chapter identifies previous studies covering advertising as a revenue source and media market structures. It also explores the media and society nexus, considering issues of accountability and social responsibility, media freedom and governance systems (democracy, authoritative, socialist), media ownership and controls. The next section, a sub-chapter of this literature review presents the foundation of print media in Ghana, geographical distribution of Ghana's media resources, some local and international regulatory bodies and advocacy groups / protocols that impact on the media in Ghana, and concludes with a brief survey of media laws within the Fourth Republic. Lastly, a survey of the *political economy theory* ends this chapter explaining its appropriateness and how it serves as a formidable base to build this work on due to its many facets of media funding, ownership, regulatory/legalities, political, governing systems and arms of government (legislature, executive and judiciary).

The media landscape has witnessed changes which has broadened the reference scope from only *printed press* to the word „press“ where, in the realm of the media profession, it is still used conventionally to include other media forms (McQuail, 1990:111). Zelizer (2004:26) buttressed McQuail's stance when she recorded that „medium“ has been used to refer to newspapers in the eighteenth century and it is with the advent of broadcasting in the twentieth century did the term „media“ assume its plural form. Based on these positions, the following

terms will be used interchangeably in this study: *Press, Media; Media Independence, Editorial Independence; and Media Freedom and Press Freedom / Expression.*

## 2.1 Concept of Freedom

Freedom remains one of the most central fundamentals of modern day thought and has been the subject of popular consciousness and scholarly conceptualisation of the human race, society and the entire world; it has occupied a formidable space within the broad *modernity* paradigm. For the past two-three centuries, freedom took the centre-stage especially in Western reasoning (Nordenstreng, 2007:15-16). Its relations, and subsequent application to the press, further extend its history till today. The authoritarian monarchy in Britain was toppled in 1688 – among the reasons for this was that it wielded too much power, and that it owned and controlled the content and the use of the press. Under this regime, the press existed only to serve the state and project its programmes, making it a forbidden act to criticise the political elite (Siebert et al., 1956). Thus, the ruling class deemed mass media owners as incompetent of having a full understanding of state ideology, thus rendering them unaware of the policies of the state (Twumasi, 1981:22). The above state of affairs shows that *freedom* was virtually non-existent, and this led to the advent of *libertarianism* which took centre-stage in British governance and press structure and eventually gave birth to the *freedom of the press* notion. The libertarians hold that man is a rational and independent being with the ability to make choices between good and bad or good and the better (Oloyede, 2005). In a more expanded view, Siebert et al. (1956) presents the libertarian thinking as:

Man is no longer conceived of as a dependent being [as in the authoritarian system] to be led and directed, but rather as a rational being able to discern between truth and falsehood, between a better and worse alternative, when faced with conflicting evidence and alternative choices. Truth is no longer conceived of as the property of power. Rather the right to search for truth is one of the inalienable natural rights of man [...] the press is conceived of as a partner in the search for truth.

In his work *On Liberty* (1859), John Stuart Mills argued extensively on freedom of expression on the premise that people need to freely express their opinion in society, pointing out that traditionally, if governments are not accountable to the citizens, they will rule in their own interests instead of the interests of the citizens (Brink, 2008:40). Thus citizens need to be informed appropriately because without this, the governed will not be in a position to hold to account the governors (Opuamie-Ngoa, 2010:2). Mills' position on the above argument gives an indication that he did not preach free speech *absolutism* (Gauthier, 1999:203; Riley, 2008:166), but rather a general policy of *laissez-faire* which postulates that unless expressions directly inflicts grievous harms on others without consent, they should be left alone (Riley, 2008:166). The original notion of freedom in the liberal thinking carried a positive connotation instead of negative. It sought "freedom *for* something, not freedom *from* something" (Nordenstreng, 2007:19).

In the same vein, Cohen-Almagor (2006:241) explained that "the freedoms the media enjoy in covering events are respected as long as they do not oppose the basic values that underlie the society in which they operate: not harming others, and respecting others." The press undoubtedly plays a fundamental role in ensuring that citizens' right of freedom of expression is enjoyed because the press functions as a canal for information conveyance with a spill-over effect of contributing to the development of entire societies. In the absence of the press, "society would remain in the darkness of ignorance" (Mohd Sani, 2004:343). This is further expounded by the words of Alexis de Tocqueville.

The more I observe the main effects of a free press, the more convinced I am that, in the modern world, freedom of the press is the principal and, so to say, the constitutive element in freedom (Alexis de Tocqueville, 1805-1859; cited in Ahrend, 2002).

The freedom to publish has remained a central feature in the *liberal theory* of a free press. Through this freedom, the press is deemed a representative because anyone is at liberty to begin to publish a newspaper once the publisher could find audience to buy to sustain it economically. Pluralism and interests in society are the objectives for warranting this freedom of the press because papers were not censored prior to publication. This sets the platform for every citizen with an opinion to find a place to express it (Royal Commission on the Press [RCP], 1977:9; cited in Curran, 1979:68). For instance, under the *French Press Law of 1881*, freedom of the

media was defined vividly as the “right of every individual to publish their *own* newspapers or books within the legal restrictions of their protecting the interests of other citizens and the institutions of the republic” (Barbrook, 1995:4). It is argued that the liberty granted the press was premised on two major lines: firstly, the freedom of a publisher to publish what he wishes and secondly, the freedom of the reader to read what he wants (RCP, 1962:98; cited in Curran, 1979:77). This purports that freedom of the media is essentially a demand of the right to free speech of opinions and without press, freedom of expression is non-existent. Consequently, any form of control of the press connotes direct control of citizens’ freedom of speech (Mohd Sani, 2004:358-361). Buttressing this stance, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) pointed out that journalism is so essential that entities that intend to repress freedom must first repress the media because they represent the voice of the people.

Through the blend of the philosophical works of Locke, J. J. Rousseau, Marie Voltaire Milton, Jefferson, Adam Smith, Stuart Mill, and Oliver Holmes, the „marketplace model“ of communication in society evolved. The media are defined as the „market“ in this model, and serve at the information and opinion level of society as the major basis of this market. The paradigm holds that as much as possible the marketplace should be essentially free because a free market by the dictates of this model paves way to finding the *truth* which is believed to be the surest avenue to get ideas, information and opinions (Merrill, 1989:12). According to Merrill, the assumptions of the marketplace model are three-fold, and take as their starting point that:

- the audience of the media can control these media and keep them accountable for their actions;
- the audience is knowledgeable and concerned, and to some degree, a potent and largely monolithic as well; and
- when people know the good, they will see to it that others [e.g. managers] know and do the good (Merrill, 1989:13).

Thus, through the liberal view, the freedom that the market offers enables *anyone* to put across an opinion in the media. This enlarges the participation net for public debate and ensures that all important viewpoints can be published (Curran, 2002:225).

However, the liberal-democratic custom which recognises that press freedom as a precondition to finding the *truth* in a „market place of ideas“ has been contested and critiqued for

its potential of worsening tensions and rivalry, thus benefitting the opinions of groups who have access to mediated communication (Voltmer, 2006:3; cited in Wasserman, 2010:568). The liberal belief that *anyone* is at liberty to publish a paper in the commercial market has been deemed an illusion (Curran, 1979:68). This is because the enjoyment of the right of freedom of speech relies exclusively on information access through the communication outlets which, currently, are deemed to be commodities and highly commercialised. The majority of the poor historically have been denied access to such freedoms. Freedom of the media from this perspective is viewed as hindered by commercial interests with a spill over effect to a narrow concept of the public and its interests (Wasserman, 2010:574).

Writing on boundaries of the free expression debate, Cohen-Almagor (2006:244) suggested that “we should take into account four factors – the content of the expression, the manner of expression, the intention of the speaker and the circumstances”. Moreover, this concern is made clear in manner in which Glasser and Ettema (1989) have shaped the definition of news as “news is what will sell papers”, “news is what the public wants to read”, and “news is what raises eyebrow” (cited in Zelizer, 2004:26). Supporting this stance, Lapham (1989:78) argued that “journalists are storytellers subject to the superstitions of their audiences. Like any other storyteller, the journalist is obliged to drum up a crowd. To keep the crowd’s attention, he’s got to tell the crowd more or less what the crowd expects to hear”. These assertions are reminiscent of why the concepts of framing and agenda-setting have taken a broader spectrum in mass media generally. They are among the reasons that Cohen-Almagor (2006:241-2) observed that media is one of the major institutions that would be undermined, and democracy could not function as expected if freedom of speech is not ensured. For instance, although documentation from the International Community, for instance, the 1945 UNESCO Constitution, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the Millennium Declaration of 2000 made mention of the notion of media freedom, their contexts were quite distinct and distant from the absolutist position being advocated by the media fraternity, especially commercial media owners who define freedom to exclude of state control and the employment of legal regulation. The latter is a concept of *negative freedom* and does not receive backing from International law. What the libertarian position proposes is an idea of *positive freedom* whereby freedom itself is not deemed as a finished product requiring protection, but a mechanism to ensure that other

elements like peace and democracy are able to flourish (Nordenstreng, 2007:16). Furthermore, “no one can reasonably make a demand for freedom in an unqualified sense – a freedom to do anything one pleases. For it is morally impossible to approve all freedoms” (Hook, 1970:10).

## **2.2 Media Independence: Defining the Concept**

Media-government relations, specifically freedom from government interference and pressure, has attracted much debate and discussion (Asante, 1997:11) because “a free press is needed everywhere, no less in developing countries than in advanced industrial society” (Ungar, 1990). It is in line with this, perceived value and significance that heavy investments have been made by western governments in training media practitioners and conducting media reforms to realise media freedom in developing countries. Also, indices of press freedom have been developed by several governmental and non-governmental agencies to assess its consequences and the necessity to introduce and maintain media reform (Becker, Vlad and Nusser, 2004). For instance Thomson Reuters Foundation, World Bank Institute and the International Institute for Journalism (IIJ) have run courses for journalists in Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. Many of the journalists in these courses are not well educated and write poorly. They lack training and skills and have shallow insights about issues like business and economics they report on. The fruits borne by such journalism are perplexing stories and press releases issued by government and businesses (Schiffrin, 2010:409). Apart from Africa, media assistance activity has been carried out in South Asia, Latin America and other places (Miller, 2009:15).

Though agreement has not been reached on the exact meaning of press freedom, it appears that this sort of freedom changes over time and across all countries globally (Weaver, 1977:152). The major defence for instituting press freedom is to ensure that free media serves as watchdogs over activities of the government (Whitten-Woodring, 2009:595). Thus, press independence is a precursor to demonstrating the „watchdog“ role to enable the media become vigilant in relation to the powerful, particularly, that of large businesses and government (McQuail, 1994:142). Press freedom is a concept whose definition is traced to the Post-Second World War geopolitical construction that was basically concerned with and considered freedom from government control (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm 1956). Nixon (1960:17) defined a free press system as

one marked by the absence of such a permanent censorship or constant and general control; it is one in which private owners and independent journalists are free to supply news and opinion to the general public under statutes of libel and decency which are applicable to everyone and not capable of arbitrary and discriminatory interpretation by the ruling power. In other words, the chief criterion is the degree of control normally exercised by any official agency which has the power to interfere with the dissemination and discussion of news.

Lowenstein (1970) wrote that “a completely free press is one in which newspapers, periodicals, news agencies, books, radio and televisions have absolute independence and critical ability, except for minimal libel and obscenity laws, the press has no concentrated ownership, marginal economic units or organized self-regulation”. Lowenstein’s definition makes clear that three entities tend to affect media freedom; these are media owners, economic motives and legal tendencies. Merrill (1974:26) argued that the concept of press freedom is fundamentally „press autonomy“; that is, freedom from outside control in the professional activities of the news media. From the point of view of Merrill, “maximum journalistic autonomy is the imperative of journalism”. Merrill’s position was focused completely on external forces and ignored internal pressures which might emanate from structures within the press. From a more institutionalised perspective, Pratte (1986:31) opined that editorial independence may be said to refer to

newspapers not subject to control by government, religious groups, political parties, business, or other outside interests. Independent newspapers may also be described as those publications that are self-reliant and whose employees are able to think and act for themselves with a minimum of arbitrary outside authority. Another characteristic of an independent newspaper is the ability to remain objective.

In a more inclusive perspective of defining media independence, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) saw media to be free and independent if it is distinguished “from one that is directed or even overtly controlled by government or private interests to one that is more open and has a degree of editorial independence that serves the public interests” (USAID, 1999). USAID’s stance appears to suggest that a free media should be independent editorially, exhibit pluralism and ultimately pursue the interests of the public.

However, the “interests of the public” whom USAID subscribes as one of the features whose fulfilment by the media determines its independence, remain undefined because conversely it may influence the institution’s autonomy in content presentation. Due to the complexity of the notion of freedom of the press, because different nations with different cultural backgrounds define it differently (Ogbondah, 1994:9), Weaver (1977:152) defined press freedom from three key angles

(i) as the relative absence of governmental restraints on the media; (ii) as the relative absence of governmental and other restraints on the media; and (iii) as not only the absence of restraints on the media, but also the presence of those conditions necessary for the dissemination of a diversity of ideas and opinions to a relatively large audience such as enforced right of access to newspapers and radio stations.

In agreement with USAID, Weaver makes pluralism and the eradication of government influences visible but seemed to obscure *enterprises* who may be important players in determining the independence of the media in *other restraints*. The [British] Royal Commission on the Press [RCP] (1977) defined press freedom as that “freedom from restraint which is essential to enable proprietors, editors and journalists to advance the public interest by publishing the facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgments” (cited in Curran, 1979:76). The Commission seemed to highlight that an independent press is vital to citizens’ appreciation of a well-functioning democratic order. Defining press freedom from two major perspectives, Powe (1991:285) was of the view that editorial independence from government and inability of government to direct reportage puts the press in a position to execute its role as a fourth estate - “a role more secure than the nebulous and inconsistent possibilities in the public’s right to know”. Similarly, Ogbondah (1994:13) explained that press freedom is the “absence of prior restraints and governmental attacks on the press and journalists for expressions of ideas, information and opinions made in the overall interest of the citizens of a society”. Furthermore, Martin (1992:335) asserted that independence of the mass media entails that the press be set free from “state control and coercion” and specifically for the newspaper, it connotes the absolute termination of “direct or indirect state ownership”. From three different descriptions, Asante (1997) pinpointed that the press is free if

there is: “relative absence of government restraints; prevalence of autonomy; and ability to serve as the fourth estate that checks the three official arms of the government”.

From a more global perspective, Freedom House (2007) explained the concept of media freedom broadly which covers three clear-cut domains as the *legal*, *political*, and *economic* environments in which media operate to determine their independence. This casts lights on the position of Brunetti and Weder (2003:1806) who contended that the dimensions that violate press freedom are the influences that affect media content through laws and regulation, political interference, economic and repressive actions, under which harassment and arrest among others, is present. Moreover, Peksen (2010:454) highlighted that in an attempt to consolidate media’s independence, the use of economic sanctions by the international community as a coercive measure has rather intensified media’s reliance on government subsidies, thus allowing the government able to control the free flow of information. Croteau and Hoynes (1997:67-68) have questioned whether press freedom really means government should take a *hands off* approach towards the media, as the very media tend to seek government intervention in some matters. An example of this is that, copyright is inseparable from regulation which protects media instead of threatening it, thus the relations between government and media is a complex one suggesting that the definition of regulations should differ from print and broadcast. It is in this state of complexity that Asante (1997:12) noted that generally all countries spell out in their constitution, or statutory laws, or decrees specific items that speak to press freedom and freedom of expression; so the extent of these freedoms differ in different societies. Asante’s position presupposes that media independence should be defined by law. McQuail debunks this assertion on the grounds that notions of the independence of the media should be a continuous and practical activity.

From the above divergent views on the definition and explanation of what media independence really means, almost all the scholars acknowledged the fact that *government*, with its legal and political apparatus, is a key player in determining freedom of the media. At the same time, the majority of commentators gave either no, or limited space, to *enterprises*, and where recognition is given, their influence has tended to be obscured into *other restraints*. Based on the bits and pieces of media freedom in the literature above, the concept may be defined as: the absence of influences on the media attributed to the institutions of legal, political, economic and socio-cultural settings of society, as well as internal organisational structures of media itself,

which inhibit it from executing its role as a watchdog for public interest within the public sphere. Overall, it can be deduced that the independence of the media is tied to the interplay of both immediate (internal) and remote (external) stakeholders of a defined society.

### 2.3 Previous Studies

McQuail (1992:103-106) presented four editorial models of media freedom (Press Market, Broadcasting, Book Market and Common Carriage Models) and argued that most media systems do not answer *whose* freedom is being fought for; whether owners, editors and staff, writers and producers or audience. He explains that in each of the model is the „second law of journalism“ which states that “[t]he content of mass media always reflects the interests of those who finance the press”. This explains why Rozumilowicz (2002) maintained that the issue of whether media is free and independent should be critically considered on the basis of who controls it. Arguably, a diffusion of control and access backed by a country’s legal, institutional, economic and social-cultural systems must exist. Thus, a media structure is able to sustain and back the competitive and participative elements that better defines the concept of democracy and its related processes if it is free from government, business or dominant social group’s interference. Rozumilowicz, on this basis, explained that two media sectors namely market-led and nonmarket-led media sectors composed the media environment. In the *market sector*, advertisers are at liberty to present products to target audience, programmers can utilise generated revenue to attract audiences and to the extent that the market allows, the audiences are informed and entertained. The *nonmarket sector* ensures that a balance is provided to meet the needs of non-dominant groups and creates a forum where discourse begins for people to participate in the society. Finally, she argued that for the two sectors to exist, they must be backed by legal, institutional and social-cultural support (cited in Becker, 2007:9).

Using four (4) newspapers published in Argentina, Tella and Franceschelli (2009:13-14) investigated the extent of advertisement received by these papers and their level of coverage of official corruption. Their study showed that coverage of corruption-related stories within newspapers fall when government expenditure on advertising is high, and also revealed that even within a specific newspaper and president regime, coverage of corruption in government occupies less front page space when a government sponsored advert is relatively generous. Their findings give an indication that government and newspaper ideological similarity is a

determinant in explaining the allocation of advertising and the coverage of corruption scandals. In a related argument, Gehlbach and Sonin (2014) theorised using media bias and ownership as dimensions of media freedom to determine government control of media across nations over a time period. Their model showed that in both state and private media, bias falls with a large advertising market, but with a high chance for government to take over private media. The more government embraces democratic ideals, the more divergent state and private media bias becomes, while in both democracies and autocracies, media bias converges as positive external factor from mobilisation increase. They further argued that media bias increases and there is possibility of state ownership of media when government has a specific interest in mobilising people to achieve political aims, but such actions may not advance the interests of the people. However, Petrova (2011) sampled nineteenth-century US newspapers in a study that sought to test whether three hypotheses hold. The study established that there is likelihood for newspapers to be autonomous of partisan parties in places where higher advertising incomes abound. Also, the higher the advertising rate at a place, the more likely those newspaper entrants into the market will be independent; and lastly it established that beyond economic development considerations, strong political actors thwart the incentives of media organisations to achieve independence through given sponsorship to party affiliated outlets.

Jenifer Whitten-Woodring (2009:595-6) explored the mismatch between a media culture and the type of regime and highlighted that there is an expectation that free media is associated with democratic states whereas state-controlled media is prevalent in autocratic states; however, the reverse is also visible in some situations, where democratic government controls the media and the autocratic government is somewhat liberal towards the media. Based on this, Whitten-Woodring examined the relations that exist between media freedom and the manner in which government behaves with respect to human rights. She identified that this relationship differs, depending on how autocratic or democratic the government is. She reported that “while media freedom is associated with higher governmental respect for human rights in countries that are most democratic, in countries that are autocratic, or not fully democratic, media freedom is related to lower government respect for human rights”. For example, in tune with Whitten-Woodring’s position, Kellam and Stein (2014:2) found in their study spanning twenty years, from 1993-2013, that democratic Ecuador, as well as most democracies in the Latin American countries, irrespective of the ideals of democracy that they claim to practice, extensively

trampled on the freedom of the media. Putting the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) evolving democracy under scrutiny, Balule (2008) examined the impact that insult laws exert on freedom of the media. The study revealed that though nations forming the SADC have democratic governance systems with constitutions that safeguard media freedom and expression, there exist obsolete laws in the same constitutions that protect public office holders from critical voices raised against them. Balule argued that most of these laws are incompatible with the current systems of government.

Ogbondah (1994:28-9) investigated press freedom and political economy within Africa and noted that many of the continent's socio-economic and political issues such as corruption, bribery, mismanagement, poverty, inefficiency among others, are primarily due to the fact that the press is not free. He explained that though mass media alone cannot achieve the task of curbing corruption, its role will bring to light the act of discouraging administrative stealing and hasten the development of the continent's political economy. Ogbondah finally argued that:

if the press is free to engage in the discourse of how to spend public resources, the poverty, malnutrition and diseases may not be as severe as they are today. This is because there is an institution that is ready to speak out against corruption and the wrongful diversion of resources meant for development (1994:29).

The above revelation is buttressed by the work of Ahrend (2002) who investigated the relations between press freedom, human capital and corruption and produced evidence that higher corruption levels is associated with the paucity of press freedom. By this, Ahrend proposed that in the fight to curb corruption, press autonomy should be one of the major measures to consider because it is an indirect mechanism to deal with and/or manage human capital and corruption. This position has again been confirmed in subsequent study captioned "*A free press is a bad news for corruption*" by Brunetti and Weder (2003).

Alam and Shah (2013) recruited a panel from 115 countries to explore the role press freedom play in the development of a country, considering Economic Growth (EG) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as variables. Their study revealed that a free press enhances economic growth. Countries experiencing such a growth tend to allow more room for freedom of the press. This finding is consistent with the remarks of James Wolfensohn, erstwhile President of the

World Bank, who argued that “a free press is not a luxury” but is rather “at the absolute core of equitable development” (cited in Ahrend, 2002:3). In the African context, Julius Nyerere (1974:25) likened the interplay of *freedom* and *development* to the inseparable nature of the chicken and egg puzzle when he noted that “without chickens you get no eggs; and without eggs you soon have no chickens. Similarly, without freedom you get no development, and without development you very soon lose your freedom”. Furthermore, Dutta and Roy (2009:240) also conducted a similar study over a 20-year period and presented an argument that the higher the level of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the economy, and whose impact is felt on the media sector, creates an avenue for free and vibrant media. Their work established that FDI inflow is a vital contributor to media freedom and explained that larger FDI inflows finally lead to „financial comfort“ of the media industry, thus moving them a step further to *free* it from the major influences within both state and commercial interests. Using a panel of 31 nations from Sub-Sahara Africa spanning 1984-2007, Armah and Amoah (2012) investigated the relationship between freedom of the media and political stability. Their study revealed media freedom, investment, growth and economic policy are related significantly to political stability, with press freedom showing increasing trends to promoting stability.

Djankov, McLeish, Nenova, and Shleifer (2001) examined media ownership patterns in 97 countries globally and ran a regression analysis to find out the consequences of state ownership of media on press freedom, development of political and economic markets and social issues. Their study showed that globally, government and families own the largest media establishments but state-owned patterns of the media are more frequent in broadcasting than print. They added that government ownership of the media is associated with a combination of lower levels of press freedom, lower economic and political rights and inferior social outcomes in health and education domains. Similarly, Leeson (2008) examined the relations between media freedom from state control on one hand, and political knowledge of citizens, participation and voter turnout on the other. He found that a less regulated media that allows high private ownership creates an atmosphere that enables citizens to be politically knowledgeable, whereas citizens tend to be politically ignorant if the state owns greater share of media and its infrastructure.

Oloyede (2005) undertook a conceptual analysis of press freedom and argued that with the evolution of the notion of freedom of the press under libertarian reasoning in post-1688 England,

efforts to execute press freedom in society's interest, based on the perceived position as „ideal“ or „true“, have proved difficult. He further explained that the structure of the press and its accompanying freedom is dictated by the socio-political structure - thus making an *ideal* press freedom, which will be advantageous to entire society (regardless of socio-political class) tedious, if not impossible to implement. To deal with the socio-political structure and influences on the media, Oloyede made two concrete suggestions. Firstly, that control and ownership of media should be democratised to enable civil society to take the role of owning and managing the press in their own interests and that of citizens. This is because the form of control and ownership plays a part in defining and practicing press freedom; (2005:108). Secondly, he averred that media owned and managed by small groups within society should be supported through a system of government subsidy to enable media to fully represent the views of those neglected (2005:109). However, the latter proposition appears to be still-born because of the existing postulation that the *content of media is influence by its financiers*.

Arguing to disprove the beliefs that the notion of press freedom are traced to *liberalism* and a *free marketplace of ideas*, Nordenstreng (2007) pointed out that issues of marketplace of ideas coupled with self-righting truth is absent from the doctrines of Milton and Mill. However, he explained that both preached freedom of thought and expression with no prior censorship. Despite the above, Nordenstreng maintained that freedom of speech and of media should be accorded great importance due to their positions as contributing to human lives, and society generally. Writing on the performance of the Ghanaian press, Anokwa (1997:25) observed that it was under pressure and would be able to assume independent status only when a fully civilian government became the commander-in-chief of the military with a financially viable press. These concerns call for the need to investigate the independence of the present-day Ghanaian media especially now that a fully civilian government with no military features is at the helm of affairs amidst unclear funding situation. Similarly, Phiri (1999) examined the position of the media in Zambia amidst multiparty democracy to identify the factors that have crippled it. He pointed out that the democratisation process in 1991 did not impact significantly on the state-media relationship. Phiri concluded that any attempt to make the media independent was confronted by the state who owns and controls key news outlets. Moreover, media independence was feeble; a situation he attributed to intimidating political and legal settings and harsh economic circumstances which were largely financial. Above all, he explained the Zambian

media lacked professionalism to engage in pluralistic democratic discourse. Professionalism has been cited by several scholars as one of the factors hindering the development of media worldwide. For instance, Kasoma (1994:41) discussed from a generalised media perspective whether the implementation of *media law* or *media ethics* ensured responsible media practice. He concluded that overall, the realisation of ethical journalism is possible only on condition that journalists as individuals or as a group jointly observe ethical practices under all situations. Media laws exist simply to check some unethical behaviour of some media personnel but its attainment is largely due to the desire of journalists to allow themselves to be guided by these laws.

Martin (1992:335) delved into “building independent mass media in Africa” and revealed that independence of the media goes beyond merely putting an end to government ownership and control but also required the institution of legal mechanisms that enabled journalists to operate without state interference and protection against influences and financial pressures from the economic giant (multinationals) from Africa and abroad. Faringer (1991) presented issues of press freedom in Africa confined to Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya and kicked against the notion of *development journalism* on the basis that the position of the West in defining the press as the „fourth estate“ is inapplicable in Africa and far from realisation. She pointed out that the objective with which colonial authorities launched the press on the continent was to advance government policy and the press has often become a prey for censorship. Moreover, the multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic composition of African societies is a factor that influences participatory media.

From the above works, the significance of media independence to every society globally cannot be underestimated and seems to suggest that no human settlement / institution can do without its functions. However, these studies have not given much space to issues of media funding, diversification, ownership, legality beyond Constitutional provisions, other forms of influences such as professionalism and ethics. This is especially true of the Ghanaian print media context, and specifically under its Fourth Republic and its impact on editorial independence. This study fills a significant gap because it sets out to go beyond the traditional debate on legal and political dimensions of „government-media“ relations and dwells extensively on the economic domain using content analysis to determine firstly, who funds the operations of

the media (government or businesses), in the first instance through the placement of adverts into the print media specifically newspapers. This is a pre-requisite to better approach issues of media independence in Ghana. Secondly, the study also intends to find out whether the media has diversified its operations for revenue generation purposes beyond the confines of the media industry to mitigate the reliance on any single revenue source within the industry.

## **2.4 Media and Society: Issues of Ethics, Standards, Accountability and Responsibility**

The media occupy a very strategic position and as an influential instrument of education, its nature and diversity significantly shape the collective values of society (Anderson and Gabszewicz, 2005:2). In the same light, Mohd Hamdan Adnan (2003) re-echoed that in today's society, the media is of critical importance due to the plethora of functions it performs in our lives. The hours of media consumption for many of the audience have been overwhelming and the trend appears to be increasing. Society is indistinguishably hooked onto media whether good or bad and we are now living in a media culture whose influence continues to be ubiquitous (cited in Mohd Sani, 2004:341). Thus, Cohen-Almagor (2006: 241) observed that "the media don't only tell us the news; they also create the news. The media don't just tell us about our lives; to some extent or another they shape our lives". Society, in this context is defined as the "audiences who generate and also consume media content" (Kalyango, 2010:3). The position of the media in relation to the society explains why government expressed concerns that the South African media apparently refused to advance the *national interest*, culminating in the „Sun City Meeting“ of 2005, where the media explicitly determined its role in society as representing matters of public and not national interests. At this meeting, the South African media embraced the concept of *public interest* and defined its function as being at the service of the public (Wasserman and de Beer, 2005:42). As a result, the media may be instrumental in either calming down tensions and divisions or aggravating them (Cohen-Almagor, 2006:183).

The notions surrounding the meaning of media freedom should not assume an ideal world where pressures are non-existent, but an assumption that the media will endeavour actively to carve and hold an area to operate independently and to resist outside control and conformity to vested interest. Press freedom should pave a way for society and its audiences to benefit, and not merely shield the media and their owners from pressure and demands from society (McQuail,

1987:127). Freedom of the press is necessary to enable the inhabitants of a society to participate in issues concerning the use and management of their resources so as to better the welfare of the entire community (Ogbondah, 1994:13). By presenting a clear-cut stance on what independence of the media actually does not mean, the following was deduced: it does not imply independence from the African society of which the mass media is an extension, but rather provides an avenue for citizens to understand their own problems and how to solve them. Through the mass media, citizens communicate with other citizens and have the opportunity to exhibit criticality in order to identify failures and weaknesses (Martin, 1992:335). Through this, there is the expectation that an autonomous and a just press would be able to play a crucial part in the development of a society (Alam and Shah, 2013:18). Mohd Hamdan Adnan (2003) observed that at the society level, six roles of the media exist. These are that

(1) They serve an information or surveillance function. (2) They serve an agenda-setting and interpretation function. (3) They help us create and maintain connections with various groups in society. (4) They help us socialise and educate us. (5) They persuade us to buy certain items or accept certain ideas, and (6) they entertain us (cited in Mohd Sani, 2004:341).

#### **2.4.1 Media Accountability and Responsibility: An Obligation of Freedom**

While the media serve as *independent agents of accountability*, they themselves need to be accountable to the public. It is imperative that the media is made *answerable* to the different publics they service, and to face sanctions if they deviate in the execution of their *responsibilities* (Tettey, 2006:233). In line with this, Gauthier (1999:202) noted that

[t]he power of the media to shape and influence the character of public discourse through choice of information and its presentation gives journalists and news organisations this additional responsibility. The media, more than any other public institution, determine not only the content but also the quality of public discourse, whether it is valuable and enlightening or trivial and degrading.

This connotes that having been vested with a degree of authority as the fourth estate, the media have an inherent element of answerability. The concept of responsibility of the media traces its roots to the theory of social responsibility which is constructed on the 1947 Report of the

Hutchins Commission. This was further developed as part of the „four theories of the press“ (Siebert et al, 1956). American theorist, Fred Siebert, succinctly noted that “[f]reedom carries concomitant obligations; [the press] is obligated to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society” (Siebert et al, 1956). Christians (1989:35) agreed that though the acceptance of a vociferous press exhibits a society’s maturity, the question is: *Who guards the guardian?* He further explained that absolutist independence dismisses in the press a sense of accountability and that, in as much as independence is the „bread and butter“ of the press, it calls for enforced codes and good professional ethics. This led Sawant (2003:19) to write:

It is an incongruous situation where the functions of the vital institutions of democracy, and therefore of democracy itself, are monitored, scrutinised, and exposed (sometimes selectively to suit the interests of media operators) by private and undemocratically functioning media, whereas the media themselves enjoy absolute unaccountable power.

In essence, the information to be disseminated by media practitioners, especially in this context, should be trustworthy for public consumption and also justifiable. Montesquieu, the French Philosopher in dealing with *publicity*, noted that the “spread of appropriate and necessary information - is the cure for the abuse of power” (Holmes, 1990:27). It is as a result of this that

in covering controversial issues, the media have the ethical responsibility to uphold basic precepts of journalism, such as balance, fairness, honesty and accuracy, and must also make an effort to provide socially responsible coverage that fosters the common good in their communities and affirms Constitutional freedom (Cohen-Almagor, 2006:241).

By this, it is the responsibility of every journalist to ensure high journalistic conduct without which the media profession comes under threat because the trust of the very public it claims to represent wanes while its role in democracy and development weakens (Berger, 2004; cf Wasserman and de Beer, 2005:41). In response to McQuail’s position that media’s existence should benefit society, it has been noted that an independent media paves the way for communication between the government and its subjects. Overall, the media opens a debating platform where people can contribute to problem identification, suggest solutions, reach consensus and guide the public’s direction of society (Curran, 2002:225; Buckley et al. 2008). This forum for the public needs continuous vigilance and checking of the “societal war between the „haves“ and „have-nots“, the politically and socio-economically influential and those at the margins of society” (Opuamie-Ngoa, 2010:3). However, it is worth mentioning that

[c]ertainly, no matter how the press performs, depending on its general ideological-political complexion, it is bound to have critics and even enemies from the other side of the ideological-political divide in society. In other words, since the press anywhere, ultimately, articulate the worldview and values of particular social classes and their interests, no press can satisfy all of society all of the time (Karikari, 1987:31).

A further question that comes up on issues of accountability and responsibility of the media include a consideration of to whom the media is accountable or responsible. „The people“ is a social entity and that is the group to whom the media remains accountable (Merrill, 1989:21). The media“s target audience consumes the content they produce, and expresses their individual tastes and preferences on the subject under consideration (the agenda), as well as its usefulness and how pleased they are with the media messages (McQuail, 2003). In the context of media, *accountability* is the “process whereby media practitioners take responsibility for the consequences of their publications, and become responsive to the needs of the public and the expectations of society” (McQuail, 2003). Thus, *media accountability* can be defined as “the extent to which news organisations may be required or relied on to render an account of their actions and behaviour to their targeted audiences” (Pritchard, 2000). Furthermore, the term *media accountability* is said to be the “process of compelling the media to conform to the standards of society and holding them answerable to those standards” (Tettey, 2006:233). In going by the central views of the normative theory, the processes of media accountability should satisfy three major norms. As Denis McQuail (2000:181) has convincingly argued, “(1) they should respect rights to free publication. (2) they should prevent or limit harm arising from publication to individuals as well as to society; and (3) they should promote positive aspects of publication rather than merely being restrictive”.

Writing under *A Court of First Resort*, Merrill (1989:20) highlighted that „marketplace accountability“ is in line with high level of freedom and is the basis for including „the people“ in decision making and activities of the media. He proposed that (1) “freedom and authority each exists at two main levels and are symbiotic, and (2) that accountability is always related to the locus of the authority, that is, the authorities in the marketplace model are ultimately the people”. Though the people can be side-lined completely, this comes with the high risk of losing an audience who invariably represent the business. It is on these grounds that Merrill (1989:21) further noted: “[t]he publisher of an American newspaper has much authority; therefore, he or she has much freedom. But according to the market model, authority and freedom depend on the marketplace: ultimately the people”.

The issues of responsible and accountable media are always hooked on to ethical considerations in the practice of journalism. A journalist who deliberately twists the records should be guilty for acting in contravention to the convention as it is known to all. As a practice,

codes are endorsed as an indication of a discontent public that the press has its operations in order (Christians, 1989:44). To Lapham (1989:79), “the best press is probably the most irresponsible press. As soon as the press begins to try to be responsible, it suffocates itself under the blankets of its worst pretensions. Journalists are not statesmen. The question of accountability can be answered in two ways – by libel suit or by the loss of an audience. To me that is the nature of a democratic system, which I am prepared to defend in an uncompromising, absolutist, and strict constructionist sort of way”.

Henry (1989:154) observed that critics of the press have allegedly spelt out the following shortcomings which he labelled *primary journalistic sins* as shown in the *Table 2.0* below:

**Table 2.0: Primary Journalistic Sins**

“Violation of national security”
“Endangering governability of the country by bringing to light programmes or policy decisions better left private e.g. prematurely exposing that Abscam operation of the Reagan administration’s attempt to barter arms for hostages”.
“Violating the privacy of individuals”.
“Violating the privacy of corporations and institutions-e.g. publishing internal memos or other documents”.
“Damaging the reputation of an individual, either through falsehood or through truths that might best have been left unsaid e.g. revealing a prominent citizen’s juvenile criminal record or homosexual life-style”.
“Damaging the reputation of an institution, again either through falsehood or through overemphasis on minor misbehaviour rather than contributions”.
“Partisanship in domestic politics (sometimes a demonstrable excess, more often a vague charge amounting to an inadequacy of partisanship on the side of whoever is making the complaint”.
“Partisanship for or against a foreign nation or figure who may incur no direct loss but who may rely on a favourable image in bargaining with the US government-e.g., <i>Time</i> magazine’s alleged maltreatment of Ariel Sharon”.

Source: Henry III (1989:156)

Conversely, the subject of *national security violation* stated above has extensively been employed as a pretext to curtail the institution of the freedom of expression, information and of

media evidenced in most Southern African countries (Kanyongolo, 1996:3). Furthermore, the concept of media responsibility has been occasionally used also as a ploy to protect the powerful in society and their interests. A case in point is the „dignity laws“ in most nations in Africa, including Namibia, that bar the press from insulting political leaders (Blankson, 2007:24). Hovering around blame games on the operations of the press, some school of thought see the media as the cause of the numerous problems around the globe through the spread of politicians and advertisers *lies* on one hand (Barbrook, 1995:4), others are of the view that most people (audiences) have the ability to sieve out misleading content in newspapers, radio or television programmes (Barbrook, 1995:4; Lapham, 1989:77). However, on the subject of responsibility, Cohen-Almagor (2006:183) noted that without exemptions, all professions should have responsibility and ethical concepts, so the media in particular are expected to execute their functions in a responsible and professional manner without justification. The basic element is *awareness*: reporters should be conscious of their role and the repercussions of their reporting. Furthermore, Barbrook (1995:4) was of the view that since the freedom to publish had its roots in the right of every citizen, no limited organisation is made responsible for the content of a paper directly. This implies that responsibility is always directed at the individual reporter. When faced with the issue of a balance between media freedom and other competing interests in Malaysia, Nik Abdul Rashid, former law professor, gave the following summary:

How much freedom do we need in order to develop the kind of journalism fit for the country? Or how much freedom should be given to media people to develop that kind of Malaysian journalism? Is like asking how much water and fire are needed to prosper. With too little water, we go thirsty, but with too much water, we will be drowned. Too little fire, we may have to go „raw“, but too much fire, we perish. Press freedom is vital, but too much freedom is fatal (Abu Talib Othman, 2003; cited in Mohd Sani, 2004:358).

#### **2.4.2 Media Ethics, Standards and Professionalism**

Bertrand (2002:5) delved into media ethics and accountability and explained that three factors informed the evolution of media ethics. Bertand argues that firstly, the increase in social enlightenment through formal education made citizens (audience) able to better understand what a good media service was, and aggressively demanded to consume better news. Lando (2013:41)

concurrent. He noted that media users [readers, listeners and viewers] were constantly flooded with news and presentations that were unethical and raised eyebrows. Secondly, media practitioners were also better educated than previously, and valued the enjoyment of social prestige that comes with good practices. The majority found unethical behaviour of a minority in the profession as unacceptable. Thirdly, issues of ethics tended to hurt the very people who were to blame; falling newspaper sales and advertisement occur when advertisers consider media credibility prior to placing adverts. Thus, there has been a shift from the era where media is the preserve of journalists to the all-inclusive domain where the audience and society are not passive receivers of information but active and their concerns over ethics need to be catered for (Nassanga, 2008:648).

Tettey (2006:44) explored the politics of media accountability in Africa and examined the efficacy of mechanisms and institutions in place. He found that in Africa, whereas some media outlets and journalists worked effectively to maintain professional standards and ensure accountability for their operations, the performance of a section of the same media fraternity was questionable because they smeared professionalism with unrestrained party politics and/or economic considerations. Tomaselli (2003:432) undertook a critique of professional issues in African journalism from the perspective of the educational setup and highlighted that the existing curricula needs modification to encapsulate cultural dimension of society because there was a mismatch between students' perception of their culture as against ethics of the media profession. This position, Tomaselli believed, forms the core of media ethics. In agreement with this assertion, Teer-Tomaselli (2001) reiterated that "[c]ultural and media studies provide a way for journalism students to understand the deeper contextual and societal processes on which they will be reporting when they enter the media job market". Thus, media practitioners cannot operate in seclusion from the community in which they reside. Indigenous customs and traditions and an awareness and understanding of acceptable cultural and religious norms have a huge impact on what is perceived as ethics (Ross, 1999:23). For instance, studies in India and the Middle East showed that although journalists valued truth-telling as a basic ethical principle, they were willing to weigh truth against competing principles, for example, respect, protecting someone's privacy and religious tendencies (Rao and Lee, 2005:116). In such instance, truth will be suppressed if that would cause grievous personal, social or religious conflict (Musa and Domatob, 2007:321). Thus, ethnicity, sacredness of authority and community are significant

dimensions of the ethical landscape in African (Mfumbusa, 2008:145). In their article that seeks to design “ethics of universal being”, Christians, Rao, Ward and Wasserman (2008:136) opined that “[j]ournalism practitioners in Africa and around the world increasingly have to consider how the ethical framework underpinning their work is influenced by globalisation”. Bauman (2001) buttressed this position on grounds that:

We live in a globalising world. That means that all of us, consciously or not, depend on each other. Whatever we do or refrain from doing affects the lives of people who live in places we’ll never visit. And whatever those distant people do or desist from doing has its impact on the conditions in which we, each one of us separately and together, conduct our lives.

Furthermore, Sawant (2003:16) noted that in both print and broadcast media, the necessity for ethics has been felt everywhere, thus fueling the need for a mechanism to enforce ethical standards on the premise that the „world has become a global village“ where the global dominant influences of economic, political, social and cultural dimensions do not isolate any part of the earth. Lando (2013) interviewed 85 graduates from Christian tertiary institutions who work in the Kenyan media industry on issues of ethics. He observed a disconnect between Christian faith principles and professionalism/ethics exhibited on the job, and that even graduates from Christian universities who were trained beyond professional ethics were not able to integrate these virtues into the industry - instead the media environment dramatically influenced them. He further noted that ethical challenges were the same across all media outlets whether government, private enterprise or church-owned; and ranged from influences by owners, advertisers, gatekeepers, competition, pressure to conform, profit, pressure to produce a story, falsify information to coerce the subjects of the story to tell the truth, greed and desperation for money, or survival in the profession (either toe the line or get the doors shut to accessing news sources).

Citing incidences of irresponsible media activities, Wasserman (2010:583) identified that in South African and Namibian tabloids, there were occasional irresponsible reportage viewed from different perspectives. Wasserman identified three main areas in which irresponsible behaviours contributing to the erosion of the credibility of newspapers occurred. These were, firstly, sensationalism and sleaze, which as one politician described as „talking about what

happens in your pants“. Secondly, social movement intermediaries held a „tabloids focus“ on the failures of government on a shallow level and did not consider macro-economic and political challenges; and lastly journalists“ failure to admit and correct errors. To a large extent, “African journalists are largely seen as a *professional body* who cannot be trusted with the responsibility of carrying out journalistic chores competently and honourably” (Kasoma, 1994:26). This perception has raised questions and debates about the credibility of journalists and whether they qualify as a recognised profession (Nassanga, 2008:650; Ross, 1999:23). Critics have cited lack of universally accepted training levels, certification to entry and practice, and difficulties in implementing ethical codes as some of the measures that go against the recognition of media as a profession (Nassanga, 2008:651). As the number of print media outlets continues to increase in Ghana, an exploration into ethical concerns and standardisation of their operations will significantly contribute to defining future policies of media independence, and of expression generally, under the current democratic dispensation.

## **2.5 Media Freedom and Governance Systems: Democracy, Authoritative and Socialist forms.**

In all countries, freedom of the press is a product of not just laws, but of customs, habits and attitudes (Anderson, 1989:119). The type of media culture whether press repression or press freedom is determined by the general culture of the said country within which the media operates, thus making the national and media cultures completely different (Vliert, 2010:357). The baseline question is: “Who should govern the governors?” (Henry III, 1989:153). From the viewpoint of the *traditional liberal theory*, the major role of the media in democratic governance is to act as a check on the state. The media should closely play a monitoring part in all state activity and without fear or favour and bring to light abuses of power holders. Undertaking a critical survey of the state is a vital democratic function of the media. For instance, the revelation of the Watergate Scandal under Nixon’s administration is a case in point (Curran, 2002:217-219). Thus, the “conduct of democratic (or undemocratic) politics, nationally and internationally depends more and more on mass media” (McQuail, 1994). The smooth information flow is crucial for a functioning democracy. Society needs information to assess the current state of affairs and to alter their situation, thus the phrase „knowledge is power“. However, information access is hampered by governments, corporations and eminent persons because the state wants certain issues to remain secret, businesses wish their commercial interests to remain uncompromised, and privacy protection is vital to all persons (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007:143). In this regard, journalism uses its role of *education* to place the public firmly in the front seat to aid citizens to partake in self-government. Media holds power from the basic notion that it gives news that hitherto is unknown to us (Schudson, 2008). Considering an assessment of the significance of media in society, the famous declaration labelled as *Jeffersonian* becomes relevant. Thomas Jefferson noted that “if he is faced with decision to choose between a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter” (Jefferson, 1787). This illustrates how indispensable media is to society and for that matter democracy (Opuamie-Ngoa, 2010:2). Obviously, press freedom is only functional in a democratic society; apart from that, no press freedom is practiced. Thus, the two, free media and democracy, are two sides of the same coin. The media then ensures the preservation and

promotion of democracy by protecting the independence of its institutions, comprising of itself [media] and ensuring their accountability (Mohd Sani, 2004:343). Conversely, democracies require an independent media so desperately that society must be very vigilant to safeguard this independence (Christians, 1989:39). For instance, with the introduction of democracy in South Africa, matters of regulation and professional regime under which media operate changed drastically. This loosened the old fashioned ideological grip through which media outlets were tied, leading to the springing up of new markets for large media conglomerates (Wasserman, 2010:788). Disputing the above position to some extent, Lawson (2010:10) argues that the introduction of democracy might have created merely a “media establishment that is relatively independent of government control but beholden to the interests of private actors”.

### **2.5.1: What is democracy then?**

Democracy is defined as “governance based on popular will for the welfare of all citizens” (Gunaratne, 2002:363). According to this view, two main foundations should exist if democracy is to work smoothly. Firstly, “everyone must be allowed to speak freely” and secondly, “everyone must be listened to” (Nyerere, 1974:30). Furthermore, a society can be deemed as having a democracy that functions when three crucial requirements are visible: “a well-informed citizenry, freedom to participate in the decision-making process, and accountability to the citizens by those who on their behalf exercise power” (Opuamie-Ngoa, 2010:1). In this process, the major contribution of the media to democracy and good governance are three-fold: “function as *watch-dog* over the abuse of power (promoting accountability and transparency), [serving] as a *civic forum* for political debate (facilitating informed electoral choices), and as an *agenda-setter* for policymakers (strengthening government responsiveness to social problems).” (Norris, 2006:4). Furthermore, in the realms of democracy, the values that underlie *freedom of expression* can be summarised as:

- (1) everyone has the right to express oneself freely in the medium of one’s choice.
- (2) This implies the right to access, receive and disseminate information, ideas and messages of all types regardless of border, through all communication systems and media – be they oral, print or electronic.
- (3) The media shall enjoy editorial independence from undue influence from both state and corporate actors (Rønning, 2007:9).

When the right to freedom of expression is observed and protected in this order, citizens would have the ability to engage in rational discussions about their concerns, and collectively arrive at an understanding for appropriate action to be taken (Barbrook, 1995:12).

Page and Shapiro (1992) analysed five decades of survey research data and established that if the society is furnished with accurate, supportive information about public policy and is encouraged to partake in its own political education, democracy is then expected to be entrenched. However, they cautioned that when information communicated through the mass media is “affected by various elites, interest groups, and the government itself”, the processes of democracy can be “deeply undermined”. Gunaratne (2002:363) analysed the transformation of the concept of press freedom from an individual’s rights perspective and explained that “*Pressures* on the press are inevitable in a dynamic society, but letting those pressures – whether from governmental or commercial interests – transform into *compulsions*, would obstruct the practice of democracy”.

Gans (2003) explained that the normative theory of democracy depicts the interwoven functions of journalists and citizens as “(a) journalists first must inform citizens; (b) second, citizens must pay attention to the news if they want to be informed; (c) third, informed citizens are more likely to participate politically; and (d) fourth, the more informed citizens participate, the more democratic a country is”. Furthermore, as part of undertaking a survey on the implementation of independent media development activities by USAID and other supporting donors, it came to light that a country’s political conditions can have great impact on independent media development and that different approaches are required for five different political societies. These are (1) „closed“ (2) „semi-democratic / developing“ (3) „war-torn“ (4) „post-conflict“ and (5) „transitional“ (Government Accountability Office Report 2005:19). These findings are presented below in *Table 2.1*.

**Table 2.1: Definition and Media Approach for each Political Society**

<b>Political Society</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>USAID Media Approach</b>
Closed	Governed by monarchs, military dictators or ideologies with a relatively closed political system and underdeveloped economy. Free press is almost nonexistent in these societies.	No approach has been designed for independent media development. Situation is likely to change due to interest to promote democracy in the Middle East.
Semi-Democratic /Developing	Democratisation progress made but stagnation and backsliding occurs. Independent media remain fragile and journalist work under trying conditions. Subtle censorship / self censorship continue and legal/regulatory environment is not conducive to a free press.	USAID/other actors can under take media projects. It needs strong and diplomatic pressure to pushfor independent media. If multiple donors combine, chance to gain political support for independent media development increases.
War-torn	Countries with ongoing civil wars. They tend to have highly authoritarian regimes and predatory social and political structures. Ruling regimes capitalise on situation to stifle media freedom.	USAID / other actors do very little as the political, intellectual and economic conditions are not suitable for outside interventions.
Post-Conflict	Countries in which conflict has ended and legitimate government is established. A good feature of this society is that there exist avenues to establish democratic institutions and practices.	The following is possible: Setting up legal framework for free media, support the state to set up regulatory bodies, train journalists, help independent media outlets, set up civil societies that backs journalists” interests and free press.
Transitional	Relatively socially and economically advanced societies in which the political order has collapsed, opening the way for liberalisation and democratisation.	All strategies implemented in post-conflict societies are possible here. Opportunities exist to promote independent media.

Source: US Government Accountability Office Report, 2005:19

### **2.5.2: Authoritative governance and the press**

On the *authoritarian* front, the term *authoritative* can refer to two main extremes within the contemporary press measures. This could range from situations where press offers support or neutrality to government or state in situations where the press is purposely and directly employed as a means for repressive state power. The ways in which authoritarian theory is exercised are many and include “legislation; direct state control of production; enforceable codes of conduct; use of taxation and other kinds of economic sanction; controlled import of foreign media; government right of appointment of editorial staff; suspension of publication” (McQuail, 1990:111-112). In authoritarian systems though ownership of the press may be private, its sole mandate is to back the government in order to achieve its objectives, thus enabling the state to have full control through measures like licenses, patents or censorship (Asante, 1997). The ruling class deems mass media owners as incompetent of having a full understanding of the state ideology thus rendering them unaware of the policies of the state (Twumasi, 1981:22). The above positions are very consistent with the Ghanaian authoritarian regime under President Ignatius Kutu Acheampong of the National Revolutionary Council (NRC) (1972-1978), where the following pattern (which happened to be a model for the most parts of Africa at the time) was observed: (a) the existence of an almost absolute control of all apparatuses of mass media by government; (b) consistently, media encouraged the society to back the government, citing for example, the slogan to ‘*Operation Feed Yourself*’; (c) the press did not actively investigate the government, but only published what was given to them by the government, thus making them dependent on government access; and (d) there was little opposition, and direct criticism was virtually non-existent (Hachten, 1973:459). This leads to the position that in reality, media structures in developing nations were (and to some extent still are) rated as „authoritarian“ (McQuail, 2000:155).

### **2.5.3: Socialist governance and the press**

After the 1917 Revolution, the Russian press and other media were restructured entirely and furnished with a theory derived from simple postulates of Karl Marx and Engels, while also applying the rules of Lenin (McQuail, 1990:118). Under the soviet system, the state or leading

political party has ownership of media and operates it. The restriction was prescribed as two-fold, in positive and negative senses. That is, issues that must be published and those that must not be published. The objective was to see to the furtherance of state goals (Nord, 1977 cited in Asante, 1997). Furthermore, in the Soviet model, the existence of mass media was to aid in the dissemination of social policy and not functions in pursuit of the „truth“ as defined by the ruling party. The media then was an apparatus of government and an extension of the state. Owned by the state, its operations were solely handled by them and the definition of „what is worthwhile“ was determined by the ruling elite of the state (Twumasi, 1981:22).

Showing the relevance of this governance system and its consistency with Ghana’s political history, and most importantly the media, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of the Republic of Ghana deemed himself a *thinker* and *doer*. As Pan-Africanism took the central position with the party stiffening control of all aspects of Ghana’s political life, Nkrumah adopted a normative framework, „*Consciencism*“, which encompassed African adaptations of Marxist teachings and principles. In his castle were Russians serving as „revolutionary guards“ with rumours that in some parts of Africa, Chinese agents were used (Apter, 2008:20). By this, the Marxist-Leninist theory greatly influenced the viewpoint of Nkrumah, thus leading to his declaration that Africa’s plethora of problems could not be solved unless it was steered by a powerful and creative doctrine-scientific socialism (Smertin, 1987). On issues of the media, knowing the strategic position of the press in Africa to mobilise people and how it aided the freedom struggle, Nkrumah remarked in a 1963 speech:

It is part of our revolutionary credo that within the competitive system of capitalism, the press cannot function in accordance with a strict regard for the sacredness of the facts and that the press, therefore, should **not** remain in private hands (Nkrumah, 1963 cited in Gadzekpo, 1997:35).

In agreement with his views being influenced by Leninism, Nkrumah designed a hierarchy of state information apparatus that networked institutions like the Information Ministry, Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, Ghana News Agency and his own Guinea Press Limited. Nkrumah also owned *The Evening News* whose content was filled by exaltations of the president and his party news. Commercialisation of the private press was resisted as politically irresponsible, so the private newspapers were harassed. John and Nancy Tsiboe’s newspaper, the

*Ashanti Pioneer* founded in Kumasi (1939), boldly opposed the government in the 1950s and 1960s but was censored frequently and in 1962 shut it down completely. For criticising the government, the *Pioneer* editor was detained for seven months while the city editor was detained for four and half years in Fort Ussher Prison (Hasty, 2005).

It is in the light of the above that after independence, Nkrumah's government, having designed an African form of socialism that regarded the media as a device of state authority, took control of the circulating four newspapers within a short time. For instance in 1963 he bought *The Daily Graphic* newspaper and incorporated it as a state apparatus. The newspapers were used as propaganda devices to unite the nation and back ambitious development moves of the newly formed government (Hasty, 2005). In essence, the independence of the media was completely compromised under this system because the room to operate freely was completely shut.

## **2.6 Media Ownership and Control**

Though not all owners can be said to engage in editorial interference, *ownership* always suggests a level of actual or probable control which subsequently serves as a hindrance to pluralism and diversity (Buckley et al. 2008). It is worth noting that the "growing commercialism of media in the twentieth century and the concentration of ownership cannot very well coexist with media pluralism. „Conglomeratisation“ is not favourable context for the needed independence of the media" (Bertrand, 2002:3). Viewing media from an organisational horizon, the level of freedom is often measured in terms of the extent of control that owners and managers exercise over media practitioners such as editors and producers; and how they in turn control subordinates like journalists, writers and artists in a structured organisation. The most fundamental concerns here have to do with editorial freedom from owners and controllers (McQuail, 1987). In another context, Miller (2002:106) referred to Ronnie Dugger, the owner and editor of *Texas Observer* in the States, as having said

keep in mind how the structure of corporate journalism works. The owner of the corporation appoints the CEO who appoints the manager who appoints the editors. Those [dependent ...] editors hire and fire the reporters and decide what stories the reporters are assigned to write, what stories they are not assigned to write, what the

stories that are published say and how they say it, and what stories get killed.

The expectation is that the press contributes immensely to the promotion and development of widespread support for the ideals and interests of entities who own and/or control it (Karikari, 1987:31). However, there still remains a justification for controls by proprietors over capitalist press on the traditional notion that the media is a „fourth estate“, thus making its operations autonomous of *government* and *economic interests* alike (Curran, 1979:60). Writing on „freedom versus control“, McQuail (2000:30) highlighted that the newspaper press holds on to its historical position of operating freely, directly under its political functions of expressing opinion and disseminating political and economic messages. Nonetheless, the same newspaper is also deemed as a major business entity for which freedom to produce and distribute its key product is an essential condition for operating successfully.

Changes in the structure and ownership of media present a problem for the liberal tradition. Currently several media outlets are owned by large conglomerates. This appears to “fly in the face of the much vaunted claim that the media are neutral institutions which have severed links with sectional interests” (Curran, 2002:130). Regarding the significant position of the media, governments may want to either control or influence the media’s spread of information that reach their citizens. Issues of control can be executed directly through government monopoly of media ownership or exhibited indirectly through the funding pressure on private media houses to frame content in a certain way (Leeson and Coyne, 2005 cited in Leeson, 2008:155). Apart from controlling the media directly, governments, through indirect ways, can grip the media through the acquisition of essential infrastructure and distribution facilities of a privately-owned media house (Dutta and Roy, 2009:244).

Assessing the repercussion of an ownership type, state ownership of the media may not be good because the government who possesses power use it to benefit its own media establishment with a high degree of distorting or stifling information supplied. Private intervention on the other hand brings to the market competition so that diverse and alternative viewpoints are supplied to voters and audience (Djankov et al, 2001:5). This explains the position of A. J. Leibling who once remarked, “[f]reedom of the press belongs to whoever owns one” (cited in Owers, Carveth and Alexander, 2004:4). The fact that ownership gives birth to

control, tends to shape the content supplied to audience and entire society (Djankov et al., 2001:5-6). Despite these positions, in matters of ethical obligations owners are not placed on the same horizon in comparison to their employees (editors/reporters) with respect to subjects such as objectivity and lobbying. They tend to renounce certain editorial responsibilities to external interests (Pratte, 1986:32). It is not a question of ownership that matters, but broadly a matter of *who really pays for the media product*. Instances of media owners who pay personally to influence content, though rare, do exist; profit is the motive of most owners and it is usual that several sources jointly fund media. Some of these are shareholders, consumers, advertisers, government and other subsidised groups. Consequently, the path of influence by owners is indirect and complicated and it is seldom the sole path of influence (Altschull, 1984:198; Djankov et al., 2001:5-6). Furthermore, Guthrie argued that

Despite all the talk about threat to newspapers, the biggest threats come from within them. As newspaper managements struggle to please both shareholder and readers, it is journalism which suffers. Proprietors, increasingly conglomerates or with aspirations to be so, want maximum returns, while readers have a right to expect their papers, particularly broadsheets, to fulfill their accepted societal role. Both these demands are entirely understandable. But are they reconcilable? At the very least they are creating a kind of identity crisis in newspapers [...] For the sake of circulation, or profit, we are being urged to compromise our journalistic integrity. We might win short-term circulation gains, or a better-looking bottom line, but we do our own industry's reputation long-term harm (Guthrie, 1997:57; cited in Grattan, 1998:7-8).

As part of effort to lessen the dreads that come with ownership and control of media, Akhavan-Majid et al (1991) referred to Knight-Ridder's comment: "We bought them. But we don't own them". However, this stance does not erase the fact that there exists the tendency of control in the event of a change in a firm's policy or indirectly influencing editorial independence (Akhavan-Majid, Rife and Gopinath, 1991:60). Hallow (2011:350-1) concluded that whenever owners assume the position of caretakers in the newsroom to advance their own economic or partisan programme, there is a high possibility that all-inclusive news will be shattered for content that promotes their interests. Such owner-shaped news is lop-sided and hinders the process of democracy because the populace are not informed fully. By this, any

attempt by owners of big newspaper chains to influence content on issues of national concerns would spell the greatest threat to freedom of accessing information in a democratic order (Akhavan-Majid et al, 1991:60).

### **2.6.1: Media Ownership in Africa**

Overall, independent sub-Saharan Africa had a population of 240 million as at 1974, but published 71 papers, the least of daily newspapers published compared to any other continent. Putting the control of information flow in Africa under a microscope, of the 71 dailies, 47 were owned and managed by the state or quasi-state organisations. Incumbent political parties, especially those in one-party state also owned and run another four while the remaining twenty papers had private ownership (Wilcox, 1975:45). Currently, the population of the Continent has increased sharply and is estimated to be around 1.166 billion in 2015 (World Population Review, 2015). However, compared with other continents, Africa is deemed the world's poorest in terms of media facilities with fewer print, broadcasts and information technologies (De Beer et al., 1995:212). Notwithstanding this, the control of the media is seen by most African governments after the colonial era as a crucial means to consolidate and personalise the power of the state. As a result, strict legal channels and actions were applied to silence privately-owned print media when they occasionally attempt to disseminate diverse point of views contrary to content of the state-owned media (Aginam, 2005:125). Governments in poorer countries tend to hold ownership of the media and their regimes are autocratic and above all, hold ownership of the state economy. On average, 61% of the topmost five daily newspapers in circulation in Africa are controlled by governments (Djankov et al, 2001:4, 18). Nonetheless, there exist a real threat in Africa that newspapers and sister publication units may escape from government control just to be „swallowed“ by foreign interests (Martin, 1992:335).

In the media horizon, *public interest* is of prime importance but if the media in most parts of the African continent are controlled and suppressed by relevant state authorities or private entities, then there is likelihood that such interests will be ignored and rather the agenda of the few elite class in such countries will be pursued (Mukhongo, 2010:348). In this instance, where alternate views are absent or ignored, the media deviate from its core mandate of representing an entire nation, to rather being a representative of specific ethnics, groups and segments of society (Gecau, 1996:207). McChesney (2008:72) argues:

Just as they are today, the political and economic interests of the elites were naturally conservative and deeply intertwined. Publishers depended on retailers to advertise; retailers depended on manufacturers to produce; and everyone depended on the financiers to float the upper echelon of economic development. The politicians often came from these ranks and served this class with quite explicit design. They presided over the status quo and had no intention of allowing that favourable situation to change newspapers became a powerful device for social control and public manipulation.

But if the media environment is to be one that stimulates participation leading to the overall development in Africa, then content diversification alone is inadequate and requires ownership diversification which encapsulates the ownership of profitable, non-profitable, public and community media outlets (Buckley et al., 2008).

## **2.7: Advertising Defined**

Advertising is centuries old; however, what is currently viewed as the advertising industry only took a formalised structure in the latter part of the nineteenth century with the springing up of advertising agencies (Shaver, 2004:249). By definition, “[a]dvertising is the structured and composed *nonpersonal communication of information*, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, services and ideas) by *identified sponsors* through various media” (Arens, Weigold and Arens, 2009:7). In another context with similar view, the concept of advertising has been defined as “*nonpersonal, paid announcements by an identified sponsor*. It is used to reach large audience, create brand awareness, help differentiate a brand from its competitors and build an image of the brand” (Duncan, 2005). Putting advertising into a workflow perspective, the business of advertising is composed of four players: the *client* (advertiser) who buys advertising to promote business; the *media* who receives about 90% of the budget to make paid-for communication to reach targeted audience; *consumers* who on receiving advertising (hopefully) become persuaded; and lastly the producers of advertisements called *advertising agencies* (Powell, 2009:13). In terms of categorisation, adverts published in newspapers come in three key forms:

national advertising from large companies with business outlets or products distributed throughout the country; retail advertising (sometimes called display advertising) from local businesses making retail sales for goods and services; and classified advertising, small ads by businesses and individuals that are divided into categories by the type of goods or services offered or sought (Picard, 2004:114).

This informs why this work's methodology designed its content analysis to code advertising from selected Ghanaian newspapers to comprise *national*, *businesses* and *classified*.

### **2.7.1: Advertising as a Funding Source**

As the pivotal force in the operations of contemporary mass media, advertising provides the chunk of revenue for newspapers, magazine, radio and television (Croteau and Hoynes, 1997:54). It is for this reason that many businesses have invested heavily. Ghana, for instance, is experiencing an increase in advertising campaigns on a large scale witnessed by the plethora of huge billboards and the repainting (branding) of private buildings as advertising hoardings around the environs of Accra (Commonwealth Network, 2012) and many parts of the country. Thus, Ghana's advertising is progressing above the traditional avenues such as newspapers, radio and billboards to television and World Wide Web pages (Debrah, 2002:504). In spite of this score, it appears that most private print media function on a budget that is insufficient and a portion of newspapers have low circulation figures and hustle to survive mainly on sales from subscription and newsstands (Smith and Temin, 2001:166; cf Arthur, 2010:215). It is an undisputable fact that advertisement is the life-blood of all media houses thus advertisers are those who provide the main revenue streams (Lando, 2013:28). In the broadcast media, advertisers buy airtime from broadcasters to place advertisements for their products or brands and are a major source of revenue for broadcasters (Byrd-Bredbenner, 2002; Kotz and Story, 1994; Kunkel and Gantz, 1992; cited in Osei-Hwere, 2011:74). However, there are worries as to how well the media can perform its watchdog role while at the same time depending on maximising revenues from external sources in order to survive. Media companies attract advertising only if they are able to have wide coverage and provide content that is relevant to their target audiences (Musa, 1996:85-6). However, the questions that arise are: Why should media houses suffocate financially if they are not able to tap into advertising revenue? Why must

media houses over-rely on advertising revenue? Are media houses diversifying their operations in terms of revenue generation sources beyond the media industry? In attempts to counteract the above state of affairs, media houses have sought to increase sales (subscription) with the objective of raising revenue which is not glued to advertising. However, newspaper and magazine sales cannot sustain and ensure the continuous existence of media houses without advertising revenues (Musa, 1996:85-6). Media houses are not able to travel on reporting missions and often do so through corporate sponsorship because they do not have the money to embark on such trips, thus making them stand the risk of presenting skewed stories (Schiffrin, 2010). In Sierra Leone for instance, journalists in print media are suffocating, chiefly through a lack of financial resources as a consequence of infinitesimal revenue from advertising and sales. True, there are other main problems faced by the press in Sierra Leone (as indeed with the press across Africa), which include regulatory restraints, lack of distribution and infrastructural facilities, illiteracy, poor journalistic practices, lack of technologies and electricity (Wahl-Jorgensen & Cole, 2010: 2).

Sight should not be lost of the fact that advertisers (businesses) have aspirations and tend to be affiliated to particular political parties. For fear of withdrawing advertising contracts, media houses may be unable to report exact stories but are compelled to tow the advertiser's line labelling them as less than impartial (Lando, 2013:28-29). Furthermore, media's reliance on advertising revenues can make them extremely susceptible to the fortunes of business profits and recession (Brierley, 2002:83; McQuail, 2000:195). This suggests that the principle of *we swim together and drown together* will be at work, --- which is not good for the media institution if it is to assume the status of an independent entity. It is on this basis that Herd (1952) referred to Francis Williams as saying:

The dangerous dependence of newspapers on advertising has often been the theme of newspaper reformers – usually from outside it ranks. But the daily press would not have come into existence as a force in public and social life if it had not been for the need of men of commerce to advertise (Herd, 1952:65).

Clearly, danger looms with regard to the independence of the newspaper industry, and it is also clear that the search for other acceptable substitute of sourcing funds must continue: “[f]inancial support, because we chose to draw our financial backing from industry itself” (Morgan,

1989:148). This points to the fact that the need to *diversify* operations beyond the media industry to generate substantial revenue is imperative if the industry is to remain independent. Moreover, Brierley cautioned, the economic dependence of the media on advertising affects it in various means because in as much as it brings *marginal profits* to owners of media, it also comes with *marginal costs*. Consider the exorbitant cost of gaining advertising contracts to publish to a new medium: “[h]iring a sales force, advertising to advertisers in trade press, producing documents such as media packs and running conferences and exhibitions and awards as well as a separate production to produce the ads – these are substantial cost to media owners” (2002:81). In this respect, writing on the relationship between the press and advertising in the nineteenth century, Ivon Asquith (1975:721) noted that

Since sales were inadequate to cover the costs of producing a paper, it was the growing income from advertising which provided the material base for the change of attitude from subservience to independence. The chief methods by which governments could influence the press – a direct subsidy, official advertisements, and priority of intelligence – were rendered less effective because proprietors could afford to do without them (Asquith, 1975:721).

Apparently, it was through the increase of newspaper returns obtained mainly from advertising that enabled newspapers to liberate themselves from the state and party subsidies and develop an independent institution for dissemination of news to emerge as the Fourth Estate (Curran, 2002:79). However, the very funding source (advertising) that liberated the press now seems to be the one being able to manipulate their reporting. The pressure that aggravates the restrictions of the media as fourth estate is traced to the search for revenue as a crucial means of survival. This pressure from the commercial front on the press has positioned the media institution to stick to formats of “words and images, themes and orientation and general focus”, that have gained acceptance by the readers (Musa, 1996:85-86; Anderson and Gabszewicz, 2005:4). Thus, as long as the *Guardian* or *New Nigeria* remains relevant to their target readers, advertisers get convinced to invest and sell widely.

These concerns have led to the realisation that just as the press in Africa had to commit itself to the struggle against colonialism; it now actively has to commit itself to maintaining its

independence in the face of commercialisation. Opuamie-Ngoa (2010:10-11) noted, “a *global village* disease called *profit motive* derived from the economic logic of diversification and the creation of giant industrial concerns has infected the traditional watchdog role of the media”. In a similar vein, Faringer (1991:41) warned: “[e]ven today, aspiring African newspaper entrepreneurs frequently find that they must not only provide the financial security for their ventures, but also have to ensure their political credit-worthiness” if they are to surface in the market. Thus, almost all media houses operate as commercial bodies with the sole objective of amassing profits for its proprietors or shareholders. This sets the ground for media appraisal to be undertaken based on the level of sales and advertising returns by stakeholders instead of how the public positions media, based on independence, diversity and creativity (Croteau and Hoynes, 2001:1). Due to this state of affairs, “[i]n the marketplace approach, the people have no direct authority over the press; its power is indirect and largely *financial*. Authority lies with the state or the media itself – or in a more limited and indirect way, in the market system where the people themselves exercise considerable power as they operate through the market” (Merrill, 1989:21-22). The contradictory situation in which the media finds itself is succinctly summarised by Everette Dennis (1989:189) who concluded

the mass media are different than other businesses. To survive, they must, of course, be commercially successful, but they are also expected to defend the public interest. They are thus both profit-making enterprises and quasi-public interest organisations. How these priorities are sorted out depends on the owners of the media and their employees. Henry Luce, for example, has been paraphrased as saying: “first the nickel, then the news”. Others speak first of the free flow of information and freedom of expression and second of the necessity of advertising and other revenue producing activities.

### **2.7.2: Media Commodification, Profitability and Consumption**

The escalating growth in commercialism and corporate control has extensively introduced a media political bias (McChesney, 2008:323). For instance, as the United States press runs in a market economy, in which newspapers come under intense pressures to accrue profit and ensure company value and are hugely affected by fluctuations in business cycles, increasing and decreasing rates of interest among other factors like fluctuations in the prices of

shares of public entities, pressures from owners of the means of production and the dynamics of creating, producing, sales and circulation of the newspapers (Picard, 2004:55-6). With advertisement being the hub of this media commercialisation, it is argued that the advertising industry is the most persuasive institution of socialisation in contemporary human settlements. It organises content of mass media and takes centre-stage in partisan campaign strategies. In the arena of public policy, advertising has recently surfaced as a dominant mouthpiece on the subject of regulation and energy; it extensively controls some crucial aspects of society's most vital cultural settings like music and sports and has earned it a position worth discussing frequently (Jhally, 1990:1). In the print industry, the economics that surround advertising-funded newspapers come with it „built hedges“ that make it difficult, if not impossible for infant private newspapers to thrive regardless of press freedom safeguards provided for under Constitutions (McChesney, 2008:28) of most nations across the globe.

In another context, it is held that the complete removal of official state censorship from the statute books due to democratisation is not a strong ground to safeguard independence of the media because political and economic ambitions still persist in controlling media directly and indirectly (Entman, 1993:532). This gives an impression that the economic policies of liberalisation and privatisation as well as Constitutional provisions of media independence can further be defeated by the same economic indicator through capital requirement and financial stability. These measures above can sometimes be politically calculated. For instance, the government of Kenya on one occasion threatened to starve *Kenyan Television Network* (KTN) and *The Standard* newspaper of advertising slots because they perceived these media outlets as being too critical of the government (Mukhongo, 2010:347). These kinds of threats yield expected result for the media to succumb because with the media besieged with serious economic and financial challenges, the overall economic conditions are deteriorating in several parts of the African continent since 1975 which further worsens the performance of the mass media. These harsh conditions, which confront most African nations include huge debt abroad, poor income levels with lower living standards, continuous forex scares and bitter Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) (Munyuki, 1996:171). In Sierra Leone, a major hindrance to the smooth running of the newspaper industry is attributed to the absence of a sustainable national economy (Paila, 2005:12). This concern informs the position of Tomaselli (2003:428) that

insufficient revenue from advertising for independent commercial press elsewhere in the world, including South Africa, remains a barrier to the independence of the media and their growth.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the lower living standards of the populace in most nations in Africa alone make it difficult if not impossible for the masses to consume media products channelled through newspapers, journals, television and radio among others because they cannot afford them. (Munyuki, 1996:171). This suggests that the market in most parts of Africa is either not available or limited. For instance, with Ghana's minimum daily wage fixed at the GH¢3.00-5.00, the print media in the country, especially newspapers, is costly for most citizens to afford (African Media Barometer [AMB], 2011:22), a situation that is true for television and internet.

## **2.8: Media Diversification**

The reliance on a lone income source is risky due to the frequent changes and uncertainties in markets. This explains why occasionally managers attempt to lessen the dependency level as a measure to control and reduce the risk (Picard, 2004:59). Generally, Booz, Allen, and Hamilton (1985:524) defined *diversification* as

a means of spreading the base of a business to achieve improved growth and/or reduce overall risk that (a) includes all investment except those aimed directly at supporting the competitiveness of existing businesses, (b) may take the form of investments that address new products, services or geographic markets; and (c) may be accomplished by different methods including internal development, acquisitions, joint ventures, licensing agreements, etc.

In a more narrow perspective, the term "diversification" refers to the "supply side of media firms, particularly to the number of business areas in which a firm is involved, the variety of its product offerings, or the range of geographic regions in which it does business" (Roessler, 2009:467). The move towards media diversification may centre on product or globalisation (international) (Jung and Chan-Olmsted, 2005:184). *Product diversification* occurs when a firm goes outside an industry to run businesses in many other fields whereas *diversification internationally* encompasses a strategy that extends the operations of a business beyond its

original national boundaries to other geographic markets (Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson, 2001). Diversification has been used as a strategy to deal with dependence on revenue through the creation of extra revenue generation streams. The application of this strategy has led most newspaper firms to enlarge the scope of their work through acquisitions in magazines, book publishing and broadcasting in the 1980s and 90s (Picard, 2004:59). For instance in Britain, all the ten leading publishers of provincial evening newspapers have economic interests beyond publishing, nine of which are very pervasive. This state of affairs is true also for the ten leading publishers of provincial weeklies, eight of which have very pervasive interests beyond publishing (Curran, 1979:60). The most profound merit that firms accrue from diversification is the massive ease with which they can generate resources from both internal and remote sources (Lang and Stulz, 1994 cited in Jung and Chan-Olmsted, 2005:184). Chan-Olmsted and Chang (2003:213) used a case-study method to carry out an analysis of seven media conglomerates with emphasis on the diversification of geographic and product lines. They reviewed the trends of diversification and postulated a framework to examine influential factors that determines these strategic moves. Jung and Chan-Olmsted (2005:183) analysed the influence of product and geographical diversification of the topmost 26 media establishments based on their financial standing, spanning the years 1991-2002. Their study revealed that related product and global diversification yields a strong revenue base but where diversification is excessive, the extent of diversification becomes unrelated, leading to a fall in performance. Sutter (2002) found that threats to cancel advertising contract might not be successful if media outlets can easily sought for advertising from other advertisers.

This chapter has discussed media generally from its origins and delved into its independence from the perspectives of political, legal, economic, societal domains as well as standards and professionalism contexts. The next chapter puts Ghana's print media landscape under the microscope and reviews literature related to its history, patterns of print distribution, media laws, regulators and associations. It presents an overview of the operations of the media within the framework of the theory of media political economy.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PRINT MEDIA LANDSCAPE OF GHANA

#### 3.0 Foundation of Print Media in Ghana

History of journalism, especially the print, medium in Ghana, has long roots traced along African and global lines. Faringer (1997:3) recorded that the press in Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa seems to trace its origins from four diverse classes of early newspapers labelled as: “(1) the official government gazettes; (2) the missionary press; (3) privately owned newspapers; and (4) the underground political, anticolonial news sheets”. “The genesis of African journalism lay in dry official publications of colonial governments. The press in Africa began with the publications owned and/or operated by officials of the British government. It began in Sierra Leone in 1801 with the publication of the Royal Gazette.” (Wilcox, 1975:1; Jones-Quartey, 1974:1) A handwritten paper, the *Gold Coast Gazette* was published twenty one years later in Ghana (then the Gold Coast).

At the time, the premier Crown Governor of the Gold Coast was General Sir Charles MacCarthy and he is credited with his role as having started journalism in Ghana dating back **27 March 1822**. The general launched a paper, which he officially named as the *Royal Gold Coast Gazette*, in the central region of Ghana, Cape Coast, shortly after his arrival in the colony (Jones-Quartey, 1974:1). However, in the year 1824 the Gazette’s publication came to an abrupt end. Subsequently, in 1857 another newspaper publication was launched and run by two African brothers called Charles and Edmond Bannerman after some period of no paper in the colony (Twumasi, 1981:14). Their paper, initially named *Accra Herald* was hand-written and subsequently called *West African Herald* and printed in Cape Coast (Jones-Quartey, 1974:4). Between 1873 and 1874, their intermittent publication also stopped. The *Gold Coast Times*, started by James Hutton Brew, occupied the newspaper publishing scene between 1874 and 1885 and it was released every two weeks. The *Western Echo*, also a fortnight paper, came afterwards. During this era, several newspapers sprang up as a result of the free press environment at the time. The media landscape was completely under the ownership of private African hands for a period spanning the 1930 and 40s. The premier daily newspaper to be published in the Gold

Coast was established by Dr. J. B. Danquah in 1931, namely *The Times of West Africa* (Twumasi, 1981:14-15). These developments point to the fact that though the colonial government was in charge of administration, their gripe as the rulers of the colony was loosening, as the struggle to attain independence took roots.

From 1931-1956, there were 40 different newspaper establishments that existed in the Gold Coast, 11 of which were active as at the beginning of 1956. They included the *Catholic Voice* (1926), *Ashanti Pioneer* (1939), *Gold Coast Weekly Bulletin* (1939-40), *Ashanti Times* (1947), *Ghana Evening News* (1948), *Daily Graphic* (1950), *Sunday Mirror* (1954), *Daily Mail* (1955), *Liberator* (1955), *West African Worker* (1956) and *New Nation* (Jones-Quartey, 1974:27). On attaining independence in 1957, the media landscape in Ghana was vibrant as a consequence of the many of the private-owned newspapers in existence who spear-headed the liberation struggle. The government under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah took over the most promising foreign-owned press house (The Daily Mirror Group) and established a state news agency i.e. The Ghana News Agency (GNA) (Jones-Quartey, 1974:27). As using the word *takeover* implies, the „Mirror Group of London“ in 1950 started the *Daily Graphic* and with time sold to the Ghana Government. The *Ghanaian Times* had its roots from the *Evening News* and was expected to be the mouthpiece of the government --- most importantly to counteract the influence that the *Daily Graphic* exerted on the Ghanaian society. The Guinea Press was also set up in this era (Gadzekpo, 1997:36). By this, two major media categories emerged in Ghana after her independence; the state-owned and privately-owned media. In the eyes of Kwame Nkrumah, the key function of the press was to defend the sovereignty of Ghana and its independence (Bond, 1997). However, the local press, both state-owned and privately-owned, co-existed without any ban from the state (Twumasi, 1985; cited in Kwansah-Aidoo, 2003:46) initially.

### **3.1 Geographical Distribution of Ghana’s Print Media Resources**

As with the general distribution of broadcasting, both radio and television, print resources which are skewed towards the urban population. Between 1929 and 1939, out of the fourteen newspapers in the Gold Coast, the eight most read were published in Accra; three were Cape Coast based; and Kumasi, Saltpond and Koforidua had one each. „Popular“ newspaper circulation was insignificant compared to today’s standards. There was a daily circulation of

2,500 and 4,000 for *Times of West Africa* and *African Morning Post* newspapers respectively. Newspaper circulation was limited as it depended on literacy, which incidentally was very low, thus making the press more urbanised (Twumasi, 1981:15-16). This presupposed that the trend of wide disparity in print circulation can be traced to the colonial administration which has been bequeathed to the current generation.

Forty-six years afterwards, Kwame Boafo (1987:26) wrote that publication of newspapers is circulated primarily in the cities and nearby localities. Two national daily newspapers, one tri-weekly and roughly 58 weekly newspapers, monthlies and some irregular publications were registered in Ghana in 1985. Of all the newspapers, magazines, journals and other periodicals in Ghana, around 85% comes from the capital Accra and the rest (15%) comes from Kumasi and sometimes from regional capitals like Cape Coast and Takoradi. Irrespective of the paper's publishing frequency or content focus, the main location for circulating print publications is Ghana's capital. Most private-owned weeklies and monthlies, among others, do not circulate papers beyond Accra and few main cities. This confirms the position of Hachten (1972:464) who observed that several newspapers in Africa attempt to supply nationwide coverage, citing an instance of the Pioneer published in Kumasi (Ghana), which could have performed better if it had focused on distributing to the Ashanti region market other than fighting a losing battle to reach Accra and the coastal markets.

Furthermore, the distribution of Ghana's media resources in terms of its geography is highly skewed between its wide rural-urban divisions because the media system is centrally based in the urban areas where power, resources and services of the media are concentrated. The urban areas hold a population of 31%, newspapers, radio and television are concentrated there (Boafo, 1987:25). The media do not reach those in Ghana's remotest rural vicinities. *Commercialisation* has excluded the vast portions of the rural community as it has made it essential for private newspapers and broadcast stations to run in urban centres. Thus, societies outside the regions of Greater Accra, Ashanti, Eastern, Central and Western Ghana were left out by the media, leading to political expression confined to the socio-economic elites and large urban residents of the country (Smith and Temin, 2001 cited in Arthur, 2010:214). By this, a huge impact is made on urban, literate, southern populations by the independent newspapers and television stations (Morrison, 2004:437). As confirmation that this trend is still the situation, the International Research Exchange Board [IREX] (2012:181) concludes that

Even for the local or indigenous media, the commercial imperative means that the preponderance of (private) newspapers and radio stations tend to gravitate toward the capital cities of Accra and Kumasi, to the relative exclusion of the majority rural populations. Most of these private media stations also do not have correspondents in all regions of the country, much less internationally. Television reception in certain parts of the country is very poor and in some cases is restricted to only the state-run GTV (Ghana Television).

With this background, one is given the impression that the issue of funding of the press houses seems to determine even the location of their establishment. At the beginning of the Fourth Republic (1992), Ghana witnessed a rapid increase in private media leading to a quick developed number of tabloids amidst the existing two state-owned newspapers (Morrison, 2004:437). The newspaper landscape in Ghana is composed of both state and private owned press houses. However, due to unaffordability of print media by ordinary members of the Ghanaian society (AMB, 2011:22), a paper bought by one person will be read by several people (Temin and Smith, 2002:597) thus forming a network of ten to hundreds readers (Hasty, 2005:1). The circulation figures for the main newspapers are presented in *Table 3.0* over page.

**Table 3.0: Schedule of Newspapers Publication in Ghana**

Schedule	State-owned	Private-owned	Cost (Price)
Dailies	- <i>Daily Graphic</i> - <i>The Ghanaian Times</i>	- <i>The Dispatch</i> - <i>Accra Daily Mail</i> - <i>Ghanaian Chronicle</i> - <i>The Daily Guide</i>	Between GH¢1.50 -3.00 Equivalent to (US\$ 1.00 and 2.00)
Weeklies	- <i>The Mirror</i> - <i>Weekly Spectator</i> - <i>Graphic Sports</i> - <i>Junior Graphic</i>	There are abundant weeklies, bi and tri- weeklies: According to one list 30 titles with print-runs between 200 and 1000.	
Others	<i>Graphic Advertiser (bi- monthly)</i>	?	

Source: African Media Barometer [AMB] (2011:22)

The above situation (disparities in print media circulation) explains why currently most rural communities in Ghana read “dead newspapers”. Commenting on this state of affairs, Temin and Smith (2002:598) revealed that due to the bad nature of roads in Ghana, it is sometimes a herculean task to transport newspapers to rural areas thus ensuring that some papers reach their destinations at least a day after publication or even much later. However, with radio, information can be disseminated quickly because broadcasting is expanding fast. Hasty (2005) specifically pinpointed that it may even take a week for newspapers to reach very remote audience. Furthermore, there is the likelihood for Ghanaians in cities to assume that with plethora of newspapers in the cities so is the access in every part of the country. This impression is far from the case, resulting in overestimations of media’s influence and importance (Temin and Smith, 2002:596). To this end, African Media Barometer (AMB) (2011:22) explained that several private papers were more interested in disseminating ideological viewpoints rather than running businesses, thus impacting their sales negatively. The *Daily Graphic* newspaper is deemed as more refined and professional thus earning the position of the premier medium of state news (Hasty, 2006:75); however, both state and private newspapers publish advertisements (Debrah, 2002:504) and do compete in the same market. This explains how strategic *funding* through advertising, whether emanating from *government* or *commercial enterprises*, has become crucial to media houses in Ghana to guarantee their survival. Currently, a combined listing from NCA, NMC and the GJA shows the media ecology as explained in *Table 3.1* below, and further indicated that Ghana is still below the sustainable media system:

**Table 3.1: Ghanaian Media and Operational Status**

<b>Media</b>	<b>Statistics</b>	<b>Status</b>
Newspapers, Magazines and Journals	466	Registered
FM Radio Stations	286	Registered
Free-to-Air/Subscription Television Stations	28	Registered
Internet Hosts: Ghanaian Domain	59,086	Registered
Cellular Service Operators (Covers over half population)	6	Registered

Source: IREX: Media Sustainability Index (2012:175)

Considering the distribution of media resources on the entire African continent, Wilcox (1975:25) argued that the above state of affairs is a trend in the entire black Africa: “[i]n terms of the mass media, the paucity of the press is only exceeded by the mammoth contrast between the urban and rural areas”. Furthermore, Kariithi (1995:10) recorded that infrastructural facilities and technologies for both print and broadcast media for disseminating information in Africa have grown at a rate corresponding to the economic development of the continent. However, this state of affairs has become evident in the imbalance and concentration of media facilities and reportage in key city centres to the exclusion of the large rural zones due to high poverty levels (cited in Wahl-Jorgensen and Cole, 2010:7).

By this, in Africa, the term „mass“, as assumed for media audience, may to the greatest extent suit an urban phenomenon because the rural and urban populations are different. For instance, large corporate bodies, economic activities and the political hub is urban based but the huge rural occupants who are mainly poor, unemployed and illiterate have less chance to read dailies or view television (Opuamie-Ngoa, 2010:13).

### **3.2: Media Regulatory Institution(s) and Advocacy / Professional Groups**

Advocacy groups are created purposefully to advance a course of action and their establishment may be as a result of Constitutional provision or by the consensus of its members to govern their own daily operations on issues such as freedom to operate without fear of intimidation, professional standards, conduct, funding among others. Ghana’s media landscape is dominated by a number of advocacy groups and institutions, and regulatory bodies. For the purpose of this work whose focus is on the print media, discussion is confined to only the National Media Commission (NMC), Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Private Newspaper Publishing Association of Ghana (PRINPAG). Also, light will be cast briefly on some international media bodies such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Declarations.

### **3.2.1 Formation of Press Councils**

Historically, the idea of the formation of *Press Council* was conceived and implemented in the Scandinavian region of Norway and Sweden in 1912 and 1916 respectively (Morgan, 1989:138) and by 1985, there were in existence 22 press councils beyond local scope in eighteen countries which quickly expanded to Canada (Balk, 1989:66). By description and definition,

a [p]ress Council is a panel of journalists and public representatives that exist for two purposes: (1) to receive complaints about the accuracy or fairness of specific news reporting - not opinion - and to render public judgment of their validity and (2) to defend press freedom. The rationale is that in a democracy, where the press necessarily must remain free of government control, the citizens and institutions granting that freedom deserve-and, given the nature of modern society and media, require-recourses other than courts or political action (Balk, 1989:66).

This move was calculated to be of immense advantage to the smooth co-existence of media and society.

### **3.2.2 NMC Composition and Formation**

Ghana borrowed the concept of press council and promulgated it in her Third Republican Constitution labelled as the *Press Commission*, under Dr. Hilla Limann's presidency in 1979. However, the entire Constitution was scrapped the following year rendering the Commission dead at birth. Just over a decade on, the Commission was reinstated in the Fourth Republican Constitution in 1992 under the name *National Media Commission (NMC)*. By an Act of Parliament, the NMC was formally established on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1993, Act 449 in response to the provisions of chapter 12 of the 1992 Constitution (National Media Policy, n.d.). The 18 person membership of the Commission is composed of the following: 1 Ghana National Teacher's Association (GNAT) representative, 2 Presidential representatives, 3 Parliamentary representatives, 1 Ghana Bar Association representative, 2 Ghana Journalist Association representatives, 1 Federation of Moslem Councils/Ahmadiyya Movement representative, 1 Media Training Institutions' representative, 1 Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association representative, 1 Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana representative, 1 Ghana Association of Writers and Ghana Library Association

representative, 1 Institute of Public Relations and Advertising Association of Ghana representative, 1 Christian Group (Catholic Secretariat, Christian Council and Ghana Pentecostal Council) representative, 1 Trades Union Congress representative and 1 National Council on Women and Development representative (Media Monitor, 2004:12; AMB, 2011:11). The above composition affirms the position of the media as a „societally representative entity“.

The mandate (function) of the NMC is to establish and maintain in the mass media, the highest standard of journalistic practice; and to investigate, mediate and settle matters lodged against or by the press or other mass media. It is also to shield the state-owned media from government control and to promote and ensure the freedom and independence of the mass media generally (National Media Policy, nd; Afrimap, 2007:39). Buckley et al. (2008) contended that because media is employed by the government to mobilise the grassroots, it issues licenses to operators who are compassionate to the system. In the administration of all media regulation mechanisms, an autonomous body free from commercial and political influences is created to manage licensing. This empowers the body to assess the merits of each application for licence to ensuring that possible discrimination is arrested in the process. As important and challenging as the duties of the commission are, it appears to be besieged with financial problems making them under-resourced in terms of accommodation, budgetary allocation, enhanced remuneration and frequency allocation for the electronic media (Boadu-Ayebofoh, 2004:18).

### **3.2.3 Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) and Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG)**

These are two professional media bodies in Ghana. The GJA is the umbrella organisation of all media establishments in the country. It was formed on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1949 and was called the African Press Association (APA). Its objective then was to provide the local media practitioners a means to fight colonialism through boycott of the “white press” for a while (GJA, 2012:34). As the military administration of J. J. Rawlings approached its end in the early 1990s, most journalists in the Ghanaian media landscape were coming to terms with the position that media independence is inseparable from social responsibility thus making them devise their own standards. The National Council of the GJA officially adopted its Code of Ethics at Sunyani (27 July 1994). With massive

backing from civil society, the association staged aggressive campaigns against the Sedition and Criminal Libel Law that led to its abolition in 2001 (GJA, 2011:48). The GJA is now affiliated to some international media organisations such as the West African Journalists Association in Dakar, Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) and the International Federation of Journalists in Brussels, (IFJ) (GJA, 2012:35). The Code of Ethics of the GJA is binding on the state and privately-owned media as well as freelancers. PRINPAG is an association of independent newspapers in Ghana. To be able to guide its members on their day to day professional conduct, PRINPAG introduced ethical codes and constituted an ethics committee who meet at scheduled periods to discuss and resolve queries raised against a said paper or the entire private newspaper industry.

### **3.3 International Media Bodies/Protocols**

This section presents brief reviews on the operations of an international media organisation and the Windhoek Declaration. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is head-quartered in Brussels, and with a global membership size of over 600,000 media practitioners in about 134 nations, and is the largest journalists union. The federation was initially formed in 1926 and re-launched in 1946 and, in 1952, relaunched respectively to its current state (IFJ, 2015).

#### **3.3.1 Windhoek Declaration (1991)**

The idea of the „Windhoek move“ was conceived in 1990 following agitation from an African consul after a media conference had been organised for media practitioners from the East and West at a time the Berlin Wall had fallen. The consul proposed that Africa also needs such conferences to deepen its democratic ideals. This gave birth to the Windhoek Declaration which was intended to be an African seminar for Africans (Modoux, 2011:44). The declaration was then convened at a seminar sponsored by the United Nations on the theme: *“Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press”* in 1991 and subsequently received endorsement at a General Conference of UNESCO (MISA-Swaziland, 2012). The declaration, according to MISA-Swaziland, states:

The declaration defines an independent press as that which is „independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.

A „pluralistic press“ is stated to “mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.

As the Internet in more recent years, the formulation „newspapers, magazines, and periodicals“ should now include “online news-sites and the various types of blogs that offer people access to information.

The Declaration states that „the worldwide trend towards democracy and freedom of information and expression is a fundamental contribution to the fulfillment of human aspirations.

Apart from the UN and most of its subsidiaries such as the UNDP that backed the seminar, the programme got massive support from twelve agencies worldwide, such as the World Association of newspapers, Nordic funders, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the International Federation of Journalists. The conference attracted 63 attendees from 38 nations as well as representatives from global organisations and NGOs (Modoux, 2011:44). It is no wonder that the Ghanaian media, considering its strides on media independence, was represented by Ajoa Yeboah-Afari, John Nyankumah and Paul Ansah (Modoux, 2011:46). At the 32<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) convened in the capital of Gambia, Banjul on 17th October 2002, the Commission adopted the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (Mendel, 2011:50). The Windhoek Declaration injected a new drive that awakened media independence notions in most African nations. Diversity and pluralism heightened from 1991 but the failures of the declaration have exceeded the benefits. While some embraced it, others could not sustain it, with most of them scrapped by their political heads who constantly objected to the declaration’s call (Lister, 2011:49).

### **3.4 Regulatory Environment of Media: Survey of Media Law**

According to Libby Lloyd (2011:6), the term „regulation“ refers to “systems and mechanisms put in place to ensure adherence to an agreed upon code of ethics/standards (such as truth, accuracy and fairness) and therefore facilitate media accountability”. However, Lloyd further explains that such accountable system does not replace the *laws*, for instance, those concerning defamation among

others. The freedom to acquire, disseminate and receive information in any particular nation primarily depends on mindful and thorough decisions prior to their implementation at national level by government. The majority of these decisions are concluded in the forms of media laws (Kasoma, 1992; cf Gadzekpo, 1997:49). As a handover from British Law, many Ghanaian laws were promulgated by an act of parliament or military decrees to prevent seditious, defamatory, and obscenity, or contents that contradicts the Official Secrets Act (Rockson, 1990:39-40).

Ghana's history of *press freedom* is traced to the colonial era during which the media system enabled African-owned private newspapers to spring up and dominate the media landscape in 1930 because the colony had no paper at this time. The requirements of the press laws at the time were for that the editor was to send returns of total circulation and title of paper, its offices, printers and publishers to the Colonial Secretary; and that the printer should print the name and address on the newspaper's first and last pages. During this era, British authorities embraced the liberalised media philosophy because the Gold Coast had high illiteracy levels and the press tends to be urbanised. The simple baseline was press self-control (Twumasi, 1981:14-15, 26). This state of affair seems to suggest that a press freedom may be a thorn in the flesh for a government in a country whose literacy rate is high and dominated by nation-wide covering press. Bond (1997) deduced that the essence for the imposition of the above press laws was to enable the colonial administration to easily identify publishers and locate their publication premises as well as to determine the circulation reach of those newspapers to track critical papers.

However, there was a dramatic change in the press setting in 1934 when the „sedition ordinance“ was adopted as an amendment to the criminal code in Ghana. This law extended the “concept of sedition to include raising discontent or disaffection against the government, promoting a feeling of ill will between „classes“ or in „one colour against another“ and distributing seditious matter” (Faringer, 1991:42-43). Overall, the colonial administration frowned upon and vigorously discouraged the publication of most of these papers (Wilcox, 1975:4) because the farther the Ghanaian press demand the legitimacy of colonial rule, the farther that the colonial administration questions the need for *freedom* of the Ghanaian press (Bond, 1997). It is in this direction that Wilcox states:

It is obvious that the colonial administrators thought a press of any kind was dangerous in the hands of “barbaric” Africans and a critical nationalist press was particularly dangerous.

Consequently, colonial governors used their power to punish newspapers that practiced a watchdog role in relation to government. This, of course, included the commercial press operated by expatriates who had the idea that their presses should operate with the same degree of freedom then found in Europe (Wilcox, 1975:5-6).

Despite these developments, in terms of comparing issues of liberalisation, overall, the British administration was more liberal than the French towards press freedom in all African colonies (Faringer, 1991:8). This may be due to Hachten's (1972:462) observation that Ghanaian journalists, lawyers and generally the educated elites believe in the notion of critical and independent journalism so the significance attached to press freedom is deemed as an extension of the cultural inheritance from Britain which informed Ghana's common law system and influenced its educational approach.

### **3.5 Post-Independent Ghana and Press Laws**

With Ghana attaining independence in 1957, several laws were promulgated during the Convention People's Party (CPP) era under Kwame Nkrumah's leadership to control communications. The passage of the Criminal Code Act 29, 1960 demanded that: "newspapers and other publications which had been indulging in the systematic publication of matters calculated to prejudice public order or safety" could only be published after they had been submitted to the authorities for scrutiny. This law enhanced the censoring of both local and foreign publications. Films were previewed to regulate cinematography exhibitions under the Libraries Act 76 (1961). The Newspaper Licensing Act (1963) was passed under which editors and publishers needed licenses subject to yearly renewal (Asante, 1996; Rockson, 1990:39-40; Gadzekpo, 1997:36-37). After toppling Nkrumah's government in 1966, the National Liberation Council (NLC) assumed power and with most of the existing laws in place, several newspapers sprung up, allowing even those published by political opponents, thus making the press *fairly* free. However, it became an offense to air statements --- whether true or otherwise --- against the NLC government, police or the army under the Prohibition of Rumours Decree - NLCD 92. Two decrees made it impossible to sue the state-owned media and the State Publishing Corporation or their journalists for defamation without Attorney-General authorisation (Asante, 1996). The democratically elected government

under the Third Republic, Dr. Busia, in 1970 abrogated the Newspaper Licensing Law but at the same time pushed out of office the editor of the *Daily Graphic* (Faringer, 1991:47).

The Newspaper Licensing Law 1989 (PNDC Law 211) was reintroduced along with a Legislative Instrument (L 11417), Newspaper Licensing Registration 1989, Section 1 (1) of Law 211; these are two laws that generated „private“ discussions. The former stated that “[n]o person shall print, publish or circulate any newspaper except under and in accordance with a license granted to the publisher by the Information Secretary” (Rockson, 1990:44). The repeal of this law by President Jerry John Rawlings was effected just six months prior to the general elections in 1992 leading to the springing up of three dozen autonomous privately-owned newspapers (Temin and Smith, 2002:588; Hasty, 2005). The Fourth Republic Constitution of Ghana (1992) explicitly spells out the „Freedom and Independence of Media“ under Chapter 12, Article 162 that states:

There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a license as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper; journal or other media for mass communication or information.

In other countries, political office holders to some extent tend to control the establishment and growth of newspapers and other journals through „special tax“ levies which is expected to limit production and suffocate these papers to shut down business. On the extreme, the move also accrued marginal revenue for the British monarchy. For instance, the 1719 *Stamp Act* made it mandatory for editors of newspapers to pay a penny and a shilling for each sheet printed and published advert respectively (Thompson, 1995:68). However, in subsequent years, Ghana’s transition into democracy made it necessary for some fairness in the regulation of the media. This ushered in the establishment of the NMC and the NCA by the Constitution as discussed above. In terms of mandate assignment difference, whereas NMC is mandated to regulate the registration of print media and publications, promote high journalistic standards and ensure freedom and independence of the mass media including broadcasting in the country, the NCA was established by a statute in 1996 and is responsible for broadcasting (radio and television) frequency spectrum management (Afrimap, 2007:7).

The NMC remains the highest media regulatory body in Ghana and it is a product of the Fourth Republican Constitution. Since the passage of the legislative instrument *1587* by Parliament

of the Complaint Settlement Procedure of 1994, the NMC has settled several cases brought before it by aggrieved public officials, politicians, businesses and institutions, journalists and ordinary citizens (Media Monitor, 2004:4-5). However, despite the transition to democratic rule in 1992, the Constitution still held its provisions contained in the *Criminal Libel Law* which stifles press freedom and expression and hunted journalists, especially from the private press who were anti-government, for years till its abolition by parliament on 27 July, 2001 (Fobih, 2008; Arthur, 2010:210; Hasty 2005; Gyimah-Boadi and Brobbey, 2012:4-5). Writing on ways to ensure autonomy of a media regulator, Jane Duncan (2008:26-27) made reference to Deputy Chief Justice Pius Langa who identified that two major factors influence independence as “financial and administrative independence”. Duncan deduced from the above position that though a regulatory body should exist within a state, it should not exist within government if it to be independent. The body should be adequately resourced (financial independence) and it should exercise autonomy over the Constitutional mandate that established it (administrative independence). Membership tenure of the regulator should be clearly provided for so that removal can only be based on a member’s non-performance. On Constitutional matters, parliament should play a role in recruiting and firing (institutional independence).

With Ghana’s fourth republic being deemed as having offered the most liberalised landscape ever for the media, accessing information in government’s custody has remained an obstacle and sometimes depends on the “whom you know” norm (AMB, 2011:17). Moreover, it is still unclear why Ghana’s *Freedom of Information Act Bill* has been held in parliament since 2003 (Schiffrin, 2010) while the threat for one to be prosecuted with huge fines under civil defamation is still in the books under section 208 of the Criminal Code (1960) (AMB, 2011:14). From the African perspective, Kanyongolo (1996:2) observed:

[d]espite the shortcomings in enforcement, it is heartening to note that media freedom is granted Constitutional protection by 11 out of the 12 countries of the southern African region. But the extent of the protection in any particular country depends on whether its Constitution expressly provides for the freedom, whether it also separately provides for the right of access to information, and whether there is a restriction on the extent to which media freedom may be limited or derogated from on such grounds as *national security*.

Furthermore, the Constitutions of countries like Uganda and Nigeria continues to include laws like libel, sedition and licensing requirements (Schiffrin, 2010:6). This is not entirely dissimilar to other international cases. In America for instance, the term „national interest“ has been employed as a mechanism to regulate and stifle information flow in the name of protecting the security of the state (Wasserman and de Beer, 2005:45). Drawing the line between *national interest* and *public interest*, Wasserman and de Beer (2005:47) explained that the former is a „precautionary“ mechanism that the government uses to manipulate and convince the media to get it to do its bidding whereas the latter is a „society representative notion“ of the media that makes it solely duty-bound to provide first-hand unadulterated information to society to enable them informed choices politically.

In summation, it became apparent that countries are classified based on their constitutional guarantees or laws about press freedom, however, this has little impact in determining the actual media landscape. This is because most nations have constitutions or regulations that *pay lip service* to the principle of freedom of expression and of the press, but their practices normally are completely quite different (Nixon, 1960:17). From this position, an enlightened society should be sought, for through the formal education system to enable the citizenry that the fourth estate represent to monitor and question attempts by any entity, whether public or private, to apply unfriendly regulation to hamper its operations.

### **3.6 Theoretical Framework**

This thesis draws on the *political economy theory of media* to delve into the independence of the media in Ghana under its Fourth Republic. The theory encapsulates the interplay of political, legal / regulatory and economic systems and their relationship to state institutions and agencies which the media, now the fourth estate, is a part, as well as the entire system of market structures within which business enterprises and most importantly the media itself operates. It also brings out issues of ownership and control of media establishments. In a wider scope, political economy asserts that, whereas the policies and structures it adopts will indirectly enhance some values like content types among others, it also discourages other options. Policies recognise this and implement structures that generate information requirements for the citizenry and calls for diverse opinions, freedom and much sincerity and this is the freedom of the press (McChesney, 2008:140). Also, another school of thought holds that political economy “focuses on material issues such as capital,

infrastructure and political control as key determinants of international communication processes and effects” (Kraidy, 2002). In their *propaganda model* based on the political economy of the mass media of the United States, Herman and Chomsky (2008:1-2) theorised using the following news “filters” “(1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and “experts” funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) “flak” as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) “anticommunism” as a national religion and control mechanism.” The model asserts that equality of wealth and power has impacts on media interests and choices and establishes that “money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public”. They noted that there is an interaction and reinforcement of filters 1-5 to determine final news. Thus, different entities such as governments and partisan politics, privately owned commercial ventures and other interest groups within society individually have different relations with the media and these can foster prospects or pose threats to their very set goals (Buckley et al., 2008). This presupposes that in most governance structures where connection between the ruling class and the subjects is based on power of legitimacy, responses are expected from the ruled, with the system harbouring many overlapping interests, compromises, mutual agreements and tolerance between holders of political power and the citizens is inevitable. But to cement their legitimacy, political office holders employ the media to communicate to the masses to secure acceptance in society and the entire process involves “some control of information as a way of controlling the public” (Barkan, 1992:167; cited in Gecau, 1996:190).

The notion of the “political economy of news”, for instance, seeks to relate news publication to the economic standing of the media entity itself (Zelizer, 2004:77). Political economists extensively contend that the governing capitalist group dictate to the news media what stories their newspapers should carry (Garnham, 1979; cited in Zelizer, 2004:77). Kwame Karikari (2007:18) observes that “[t]he sources of threats to the development of independent media and journalism in many parts of the African continent today appear to include politicians, religious organisations and possibly commercial interests of dubious origin”. This is informed by the political dynamics of this modern-day democratic practice where political figures and state officials tend to capitalise on their office to have access to private circles in which one’s association with the state is critical to

determining power and wealth access. The state, in this context, seems to be manned by the same group of people as the private sector (Gecau, 1996:190). It is worth-mentioning that when media, both print and broadcast/electronic, are independent and competitive, they are more open in their operations and tend to have an enhanced and functional economic setting. With the availability of private capital, media houses do not rely on funding from government to continue operations. Such a conditions do not make the media mouthpieces for the government and they remain free to publish unadulterated content (Dutta and Roy, 2009:243-244). However, by and large, the news media functions not as a key rival of political or enterprise policies but the fact is that these entities have a different ideological bases. Collaboration of the political and corporate class is an imperative without which a typical media outlet cannot function (van Dijk, n.d:28-29) despite the fact that in terms accountability as a fourth estate, the media have the single duty to scrutinise government and businesses (Dutta and Roy, 2009:240). This probably explains to some extent why the media should function as a *guide dog* instead of a *watch dog* (Kasoma, 1999:3).

### **3.6.1 Globalisation**

Deregulation and advancements in technology have considerably changed the face of the communication industry globally, but whereas policy framers are busily finding more sophisticated ways of holding information within their satellite and computer networks to prevent accessibility beyond its national borders, media at the national and local levels are altering their positions in a market that has exponentially grown in size (Wasserman and Rao, 2008:164). Globalisation has been defined as “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson, 1992:8). Also, it....

refers to the rapidly developing process of complex interconnections between societies, cultures, institutions and individuals world-wide. It is a social process which involves a compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in the time taken - either physically or representationally - to cross them, so making the world seem smaller and in a certain sense bringing them “closer” to one another (Tomlinson, 1999:165).

The authors in both definitions seem to highlight on the subject of transnationalisation and this confirms the *global village* phenomenon as postulated by Marshall McLuhan. With privatisation

and deregulation taking firm root, it has led to trans-border movements of capital and technology (Wasserman and Rao, 2008:165).

Writing on cultural globalisation through media, Kraidy (2002) explains that culture has been globalised as a result of global mass media. Nevertheless, advancements in modern media technologies like the World Wide Web and satellite television have introduced a smooth inflow and outflow of cross-border images to link audiences globally. Kraidy further inquires how, “[w]ithout global media, according to the conventional wisdom, how would teenagers in India, Turkey, and Argentina embrace a Western lifestyle of Nike shoes, Coca-Cola, and rock music”? The map below (figure 3.0) highlights that media operate in all parts of the globe but most of them are not able to operate as freely as they wish, and even in instances where they are ranked as “satisfactory”, there seems to remain some limiting factors that call for the need to investigate. This informs the position of Gwen Lister (2011:49) who, while assessing the impact of the “1991 Windhoek Declaration” twenty years after its adoption, noted that the battle for media independence and information access is still far from being achieved and though some progress is evident regarding ownership and control by governments now, as compared to the period prior to the 1990s, there should be constant calls on the ruling class to promote a media landscape that is free, diverse and pluralistic.

By the application of the *political economy theory* in this study, this study hypothesise that influences on the media which negates its independence is more *economic* considering global capitalists structures and trends than legal tendencies as it pertains within Fourth Republican Democratic Ghana. Moreover, it hypothesises that *issues of ethics* form an inseparable component of the forces on the media within a defined political economy of media.

Figure 3.0: Global Freedom of the Press Index: Rankings



Source: Reporters without Borders (2014)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.0 Research Design

This study used an exploratory mixed research method. By definition, mixed methods research is a

research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a *methodology*, it guides the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a *method*, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell, 2006:5).

This work used interviews and coding instruments through both *manifest* and *latent content analysis* as a means of data collection. 15 participants were interviewed from media or quasi-media organisations and twenty newspapers were selected from both state and privately owned newspapers to code advertisements inserted in them, as well as editorials and news. These were to enable conclusion to be drawn on the subject of *media independence in Ghana under the Fourth Republic from the perspective of funding, ownership, legality/regulation and professionalism/standards*. Reliability and validity were ensured using *percent agreement* and/or the *pi* for inter-coder reliability. The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version-22) and Microsoft Office [Excel] (Version-2010) for data organisation and extraction and applied *thematic analysis* as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to present the final results in *narrative* and *tabular* formats.

#### 4.1 Data Collection Sources

Statistically, data come in two main forms, namely, primary data and secondary data (Singh and Mangat, 1996:1). Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. By definition, primary data are those collected by the researcher tailored specifically to a particular

research question implying that they probably remain the best data suitable to answer that question (Montello and Sutton, 2006:36). Primary data are sourced by the investigator from the original source (Singh and Mangat, 1996:2). Thus, the term is used to represent information gathered mainly for a specific purpose (Churchill Jr. and Iacobucci, 2010:171). In contrast, secondary data are those collected mainly for another purpose, normally by someone other than the researcher (Montello and Sutton, 2006:36). This suggests that some persons or institutions had already collected the data which exists in the form of published or unpublished records for sourcing by others (Singh and Mangat, 1996:2). Considering the interrelatedness of the two data sources, secondary data can be seen in either primary or secondary sources. Whereas the primary source is credited as the source where said data originated, the secondary source is a repository for the data from the original source (Churchill Jr. and Iacobucci, 2010:171). Primary data for this study was sourced mainly from interviews and coded content analysis of advertisements and headlines news in selected Ghanaian newspapers. Secondary sources came from *statutory sources* (media policies, the Constitution, legal documentation, documentation from the National Media Commission (NMC) and Ghana Journalists Association (GJA); *published documentation by independent local and global media organisations and foundations* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, Freedom House, Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA); and Media Foundation for West Africa [MFWA]) and *scholarly journals, books and theses*.

#### **4.2 Qualitative / Quantitative Research**

Qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experiences as it appears in people's lives. Qualitative data are gathered primarily in the form of spoken or written language rather than in the form of numbers. Possible data sources are interviews with participants, observations, documents, and artifacts (Polkinghorne, 2005:137; Strauss and Corbin, 1998:10-11). Furthermore, observation, interviews, focus groups, collection of extant texts like business records, elicitation of texts like participant diaries, and the creation / collection of images including photos and video form part of qualitative methods of collecting data. Internet-powered methods such as interviewing participants through e-mail, or inviting them to create blogs, are more recently used as data collection source (Carter and Little, 2007:1318-19). It is for this reason that good qualitative research needs to add enough information concerning how data collection was done, for example describing the contexts and how and why techniques or focus were altered. This enables a clear

process to be established allowing readers to assess whether the methods employed and data collection decisions were reasonable (Meyrick, 2006:805). In justifying the employment of qualitative methods to conduct research, it is noted that much a wider range of empirical data is possible for the researcher (Punch, 2005:57). Thus, qualitative methods of covering a wide number of different research methods, for instance, participant observation, ethnographic research, interviews by researchers with different views, makes qualitative method an *umbrella term* (Muijs, 2011:4).

In contrast, “[q]uantitative research involves experiences (such as randomised control trials (RCT)) and surveys, where data are collected using standardized methods such as questionnaires and structured interviews. The data are in the form of numbers from which statistical generalizations can be made” (Meadows, 2003:520). Thus, quantitative data are defined as empirical information that come in the form of numbers, generated by measurement. Thus, the vital way to carry out quantitative research is through the idea of identifying variables and their measurement (Punch, 2005:56). Justifying the merit for its employment, quantitative research enables familiarisation of the problem or issue to be studied by the researcher and further creates the avenue for the generation of hypotheses to be tested (Golafshani, 2003:597).

#### **4.2.1 Qualitative and Quantitative: Merger or Dichotomous Debate**

Whereas qualitative methods are ideal in matters where an examination of the meaning of specific events or circumstances is required in a study, quantitative methods are suited for considering cause and effect (also termed causality) (Muijs, 2011:8). Furthermore, “qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things. In contrast, quantitative research refers to counts and measures of things” (Berg, 2001:3). Despite the opposing views of qualitative and quantitative approaches and the fact that their dichotomy is visible based on the different features they exhibit, they should be used in conjunction as they do complement each other. While qualitative research can provide formidable groundwork for quantitative research in matters where not much is known, quantitative research on the other hand, can delve into matters where further and in-depth investigation is required (Meadows, 2003:519). In such situations, where the need arises to consider both “breadth and depth” and “meaning and causality”, it is ideal to employ a *mixed-methods* design that combines both quantitative (for example questionnaires) and qualitative (for example case studies) (Muijs, 2011:8).

Thus, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can be done in a way that retains the benefits of each (Punch, 2005:58). Overall, it is an undisputable fact that the employment of *mixed methods* in research comes with its own challenges, however, it enables the researcher to cover a wider scope through the collection of relevant data that serve as a solid evidence to deal with complex problems compared to the use of a single method (Yin, 2014:65-67).

### **4.3 Content Analysis: What Is It?**

The current study employs both qualitative and quantitative *content analysis*. Content analysis is a term captured by the 1961 edition of the Webster English Language Dictionary as the “analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communication (as a book or film) through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect” (Krippendorff, 2004). Broadly speaking, content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by *systematically* and *objectively* identifying special characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1968:608 cited in Berg, 2007:240). Deducing from Holsti’s position, videotape, photos or anything that can be converted into texts are amenable to content analysis (Berg, 2007:240). “Content analysis is used to study a broad range of „texts“ from transcripts of interviews and discussions in clinical and social research to the narrative and form of films, TV programs (sic) and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines” (McNamara, 2005:1). By this, “[i]nterview, field notes, and various types of unobtrusive data are often not amenable to analysis until the information they convey has been condensed and made systematically comparable. An objective coding scheme must be applied to the notes or data. This process is commonly called *content analysis*” (Berg, 2007:238). Furthermore, content analysis is an “*empirically grounded method*, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent” (Krippendorff, 2004). Lastly,

[c]ontent analysis is a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The text is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication. It includes books, newspapers or magazine articles, advertisements, speeches, official documents, films or videotapes, musical lyrics, photographs, articles of clothing, or works of art (Neuman, 2006:322).

To buttress Neuman's stance, the meaning of visual and verbal units, that are content analysis objects, are defined by the medium that produced them as isolated, self-contained or separate such as paragraphs, framed images, pages or photographs. Whether verbal or not, I termed these **texts**. For instance, an advertisement displayed is a visual text (Bell, 2001:14-15).

#### **4.3.1 Media Content Analysis: The Roots**

Max Weber, in 1910, suggested the need to use content analysis to study newspapers during the premier meeting of the German Sociological Society (Neuman, 2006:322-223). However, in the context of research method, *media content analysis* is a specialised aspect of the well-known content analysis and was introduced by Harold Lasswell in 1927 as a systematic method for mass media studies, applied initially to propaganda studies. The popularity of media content analysis increased rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s as a method of investigating the content of movie communication. Also, in the 1950s, the concept's position as a method in mass media and social sciences studies research escalated, especially with television's arrival (McNamara, 2005:1). Content analysis was ideal for this task because it enabled researchers to reveal the content - messages, meanings among others - in a source of communication such as a book, article and movie. Also, it provided the ability to probe into and discover content in a way that was different from the conventional way of reading a book or viewing a television programme (Neuman, 2006:323).

#### **4.3.2 Applicability of Qualitative and Quantitative: Revisited in line with Content Analysis**

Having considered qualitative and quantitative research methods as standalone approaches in the generic sphere above, in the arena of content analysis, one of its profound debates is whether qualitative or quantitative means should be used for its analysis (Berg, 2007:241). The validity and importance of dichotomising qualitative and quantitative approaches is also questioned under content analysis, just like the other fields of studies. Even if certain features of a text are changed into numbers, eventually, all readable texts are qualitative (Krippendorff, 2004:16). Thus, qualitative and quantitative blending should be sought for in analysing content on the argument that "qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form" (Smith, 1975; cited in Berg, 2007:421). No wonder, for many decades, content analysis has been deemed one of the most extensively cited

media studies evidence, firstly, in relation to newspapers and radio (verbal and visual content can be analysed) and, later, turned to television and sometimes at the cinema. Thus, content analysis has been employed extensively as it seems to be the „common sense“ way of researching media content, or for the reason that little theoretical analysis is needed (Bell, 2001:13). Similarly, it could be said that content analysis has developed into a range of research methods that promise to produce inferences from all forms of verbal, pictorial, symbolic, and communication data. After its 1970s brief stagnation, content analysis has exponentially grown (Krippendorff, 2004:17). See *Table 4.0* below for its penetration and use compared with other methods on the basis of a 2003 Internet search via Google.

**Table 4.0: Content Analysis Usage as a Method**

<b>Methods</b>	<b>Content Analysis</b>	<b>Survey Research</b>	<b>Psychological Test</b>
<b>Hits</b>	4,230,000	3,999,000	1,050,000

Source: Krippendorff, 2004:17, as at August, 2003

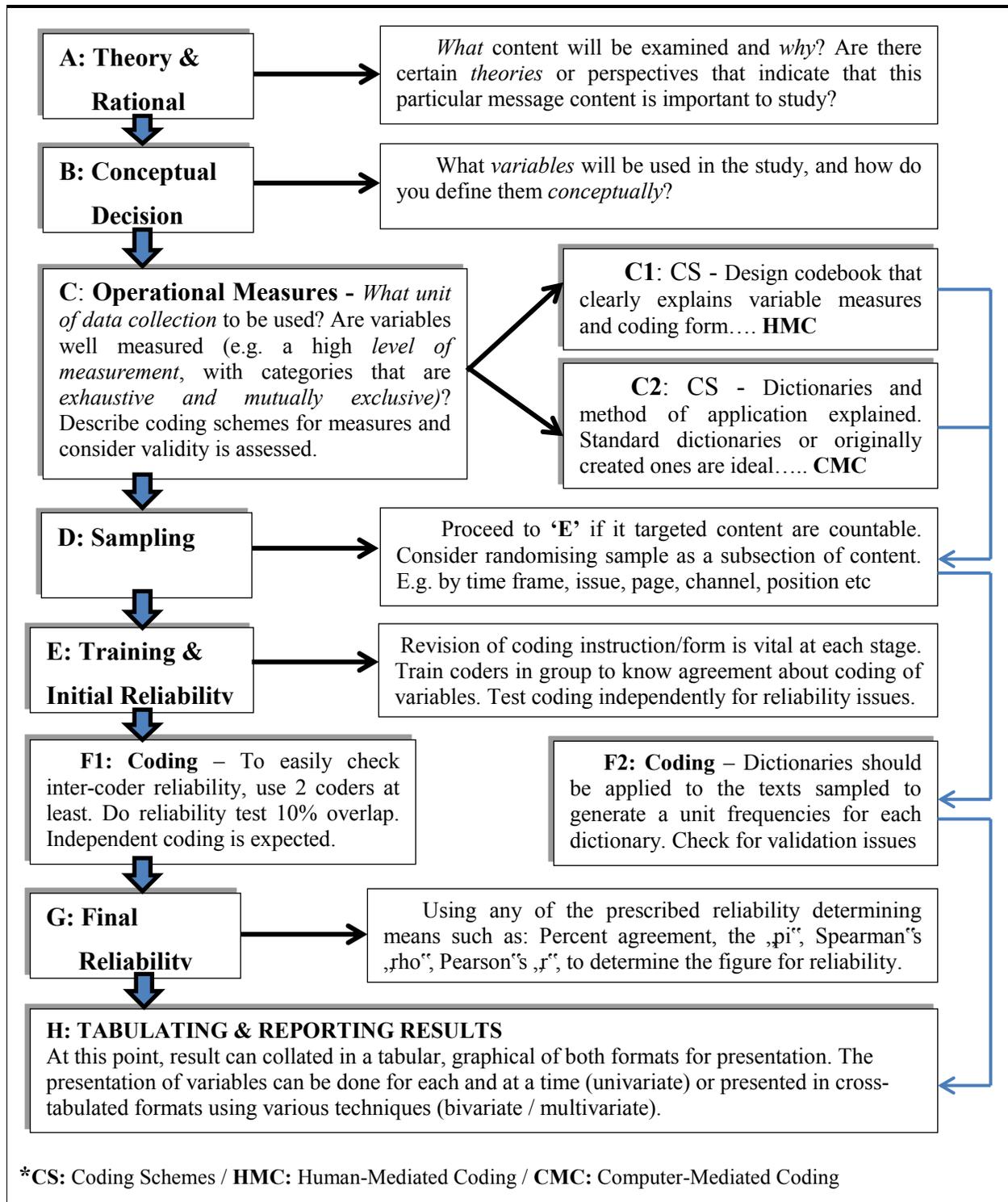
### **4.3.3 Content Analysis: Procedural Measures**

As shown above, content analysis may come in different forms as visual, verbal, graphic or oral. That is, it is applicable to any form of meaningful information whether visual or verbal. To carry out an analysis is to break something down into its constituent elements (Bell, 2001:14-15). „Breaking down“ we mean the classification of the subject under consideration into manageable units to aid coding and collating. This process identifies that “content analysis is useful for studying a broad range of „texts“ from transcripts of interviews and discussions in clinical and social research to the narrative and form of films, TV programs and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines” (McNamara, 2005:1). Furthermore, the workflow of content analysis covers instituting categories, and then counts the number of times in which they are used in a text or image. It is an analysis that partly utilises quantitative method in determining the frequencies of the occurrence of particular categories (Joffe and Yardley, 2004:56). Content analysis is carried out either as manifest content or latent content (Berg, 2007:242; Neuman, 2006:325; Babbie, 2008:356). *Manifest content* is where those targeted elements are present physically and can be counted by the researcher (Berg, 2007:242; Babbie, 2008:356); whereas *latent content* is where coding is done by

looking out for the underlying, implicit meaning in the content of a text. For example, a researcher reads an entire paragraph and decides whether it contains stimulating themes or a romantic mood (Neuman, 2006:326; Babbie, 2008:356). Both the manifest and latent content coding were employed for this work. This makes content analysis an appropriate method with which to code the placement of advertisement (as manifest) and editorials / headline news (as latent) through agenda-setting/framing in state and privately-owned newspapers amidst interviews to determining media independence in Ghana under the Fourth Republic from the perspective of media funding.

A typical flowchart depicting the process of content analysis research by Neuendorf (2002) was adopted for this exercise (cited in Mcnamara, 2005:19-20). This is depicted in *Table 4.0* over page.

**Figure 4.0: Media Content Analysis Flowchart**



Source: Adapted from (Neuendorf, 2002; cited in Mcnamara, 2005:19-20)

#### 4.4 Sampling / Sample Procedures

The sampling procedure is the method through which a sample is selected from a population. The two categories through which this procedure can be used are *probability* and *nonprobability* sampling (Singh and Mangat, 1996:6). “Nonprobability sampling involves choosing samples not so much to be representative of the target population, but on the characteristics of the target population” (Meadows, 2003:522). The nonprobability sampling has under its umbrella the *convenience* and *purposive* types of sampling (Singh and Mangat, 1996:7). By definition, convenience sampling is where a part of the population is preferred as the sample due to its accessibility; while purposive sampling is where a subset of the population deemed as possessing special skills is selected as sample (Singh and Mangat, 1996:7; Meadows, 2003:522). This study used *purposive sampling method* to select *media practitioners to participate in the interview (this will be revisited under thematic analysis in subsequent pages)*. The benefit that goes with using non-probability sampling is that it is applicable in both qualitative and quantitative situations and ensures flexibility to select samples purposively to represent views and experiences, while in surveys, it helps to reach hard-to-find groups (Meadows, 2003:522). *The process of sampling newspapers for content analysis in this work is described below.*

#### 4.5 Sample Size for Newspapers

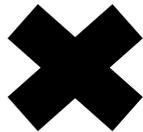
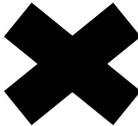
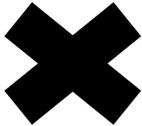
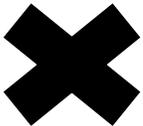
Consistent with section “D: sampling” labeled on Figure 4.0 above, the current study *sampled newspapers using a „grid selection pattern” that spans over a two-month period. With an aspect of this work requiring physical counting (manifest) from the sample, this randomising process of selection ensured that adverts and all other topical issues conveyed by the media have a fair chance of being captured for analysis.* The selection grid utilised in this project is indicated in *Table 4.1* below.

**Table 4.1 Media Selection Grid**

<p>This grid explains that within a period of two months, a total of <b>20</b> newspapers were sampled for content analysis exercise. In the <i>first month</i>, weeks <b>2</b> and <b>4</b> were targeted and selected while weeks <b>1</b> and <b>3</b> were also picked for the <i>second month</i>. Since only dailies / weeklies were focused on, <b>equal</b> numbers of newspapers were selected from state-owned and privately owned papers.</p>				
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Month</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Month</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Key:</b>	Selected week	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unselected week	<input type="checkbox"/>

The exact periods for collecting the sample (newspapers) spanned from the *beginning of May, 2014* through to the *end of June, 2014*. These samples were obtained directly from the concerned newspaper media outlets that they retrieved from their archives after publication. The essence of this strategy was to save time by obtaining them in bulk instead of daily purchase from different newspaper sales stands and also to avoid the situation where researcher becomes pre-informed of daily news within the public sphere. The above selection grid was further synthesised and developed as shown in *Table 4.2* over the page to reflect actual fieldwork experiences.

**Table 4.2 Further Synthesis of Media Grid (Sampling)**

<b>First Month (May)</b>		<b>12/05/2014</b> Week 2-Monday <b>4 Papers</b> <i>Graphic, Guide, Times, Agenda.</i>		<b>26/05/2014</b> Week 4-Monday <b>4 Papers</b> <i>Graphic, Guide, Times, Agenda.</i>
<b>Second Month (June)</b>	<b>02/06/2014</b> Week 1-Monday <b>4 Papers</b> <i>Graphic, Guide, Times, Agenda.</i>		<b>16/06/2014</b> Week 3-Monday <b>4 Papers</b> <i>Graphic, Guide, Times, Agenda.</i>	
<b>..Second Month Continued (June)</b>		<b>30/06/2014</b> Week 5-Monday <b>4 Papers</b> <i>Graphic, Guide, Times, Agenda.</i>	<b>Total Newspapers = 20</b>	

*Mondays* of the selected weeks were targeted on the assumption that *major agenda* is deemed to be set from the beginning of a new week. The above papers were selected based on coverage/circulation throughout the area of study under consideration whose map is presented in Figure 4.1 below:

**Figure 4.1: Map of Ghana Showing Ten Regions**



Source: google maps

For instance, the *Daily Graphic* was established in 1950 and it is Ghana's leading and most successful newspaper, with the largest circulation, controlling 65% of the print media market. It publishes a daily issue of 450,000; while among private print media publishers, the *Daily Guide*, is the most circulated and commonly read paper with a circulation ranging from 35,000- 40,000. The *Ghanaian Times* circulates 70,000; and the *Public Agenda* publishes a total of 4000 copies.

#### 4.5.1 Sections of Content Selection for Newspapers

To ensure that the most salient sections of the selected twenty (20) newspapers (drawn from four most popular dailies/weeklies with good coverage in Ghana) were captured through the content analysis exercise to determine agenda-setting / framing of news, five major sections were targeted for the purpose of representativeness. These were: (i) *headline*, (ii) *headline news*, (iii) *news [local/regional]*, (iv) *editorial* and (v) *opinion/column*. Overall, 641 adverts [N=641] and a hundred stories [N=100], published in twenty newspapers were coded as *manifest* and *latent* content respectively (Berg, 2007:242; Neuman, 2006:325). Inter-coder reliability was calculated as .98% for advertising placement and .92% for stories. Some major variables (see section B: conceptual decision – Figure 4.0) used for agenda-setting and framing of headlines and stories were defined as:

*Favourable*: One-sided stance showing favouritism.

*Defensive*: Reactionary/responsive to other stories (a counter posture).

*Neutral*: Does not take sides and straight-forward posture.

*Unfavourable*: Negative tone but head-on reflecting criticality.

These variables were used to code how content in the major sections of the selected newspaper stated above (i, ii, iii, iv and v) were framed to determine issues of media independence as it pertains in Ghana. Other variables and units of data collection (see C: operational measures– Figure 4.0) that aided easy coding of adverts and agenda-setting issues are spelt out in appendix 2 and 3.

Table 4.3 below presents the selected newspaper media outlets that owned them; their schedule and respective universal resource locators.

**Table 4.3 Selected Newspapers, Ownership and Schedules**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Schedule</b>	<b>URL (Uniform Resource Locator)</b>
<i>Daily Graphic</i>	State	Daily	<a href="http://graphic.com.gh/">http://graphic.com.gh/</a>
<i>Ghanaian Times</i>	State	Daily	<a href="http://www.ghheadlines.com/agency/ghanaian-times">http://www.ghheadlines.com/agency/ghanaian-times</a>
<i>Daily Guide</i>	Private	Daily	<a href="http://www.dailyguideghana.com/">http://www.dailyguideghana.com/</a>
<i>Public Agenda</i>	Private	Weekly	<a href="http://www.ghanaweb.com/public_agenda/">http://www.ghanaweb.com/public_agenda/</a>

## **4.6 Framing and Agenda-setting: Determinant of Media Independence**

### **4.6.1 Framing**

Fundamentally, framing encapsulates selection and salience (Entman, 1993:52). The concepts of framing and agenda-setting have been employed in this research because it is expected to aid the researcher to draw inference(s) on how vociferous, silent or indifferent the media are about issues of society, to determine independence of the media under the Fourth Republic in Ghana. „Framing“ is a term whose origin is traced to the discipline of social psychology (Bartlett, 1932; cited in Van Gorp and Vercruyse, 2012:1275) but the concept has been applied extensively in many other fields (Gorp and Vercruyse, 2012:1275), and the mass media is not an exception. Frames in media are

principles of selection: codes of emphasis, interpretation and presentation. Media producers routinely use them to organize media output and discourses, whether verbal or visual. In this context media frames enable news journalists, for example, to process and package large amounts of diverse and often contradictory information quickly and routinely (O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery and Fiske, 1994:122).

Furthermore, to frame entails to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993:52). In short, the term „frame“ as used in media is an “attribute of an object under consideration because it describes the object” (McCombs, 2005:546). Thus, the act of framing involves a way by which “people organise and interpret information and events. It is used in various ways in media studies. Journalists operate with a set of assumptions or frames which provide a way of organising and filtering the information they receive and which they subsequently transmit as news” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007:142).

To discern if the content of a newspaper has given space to societal issues and rights, one needs to assess how its stories are framed (Hallow, 2011:344). For instance in the years 2002 -

2005, during an mumps, measles and rubella (MMR) vaccination exercise in the UK to curb some diseases, allegation emerged that the vaccines came with undeclared side effects. However, a group of journalists *framed* the incident as consisting of parental conflict who were concerned for their children while the government was eager to lessen expenditure through giving protection to prevent three diseases in one immunisation (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 2007:142). By this, framing create an essential doorway for reasoning about language use in combination with the connection between journalists and their audience (Zelizer, 2004:142).

#### **4.6.2 Agenda Setting**

Agenda setting, on the other hand, is defined as

a type of social learning where individuals learn about the relative importance of issues in society through the amount of coverage the issues receive in news media. Thus, the more coverage an issue receives, the more concern individuals have with the issue. In other words, individuals learn how concerned they should be through the amount of coverage the issue receives (Wanta, 1997:2).

In the same vein, the principal proposal of the theory of agenda-setting is that the significance of elements in the news influences the significance of those elements among the audience. This process of influence starts with the agenda of objects receiving vital attention in the media (Carroll and McCombs, 2003:36-37). In agenda-setting parlance, the term „salience“ explains the degree of significance of news item. Thus, „salience“ is defined as the act of “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to [an] audience” (Wanta, 1993:53). Newspapers vividly expose their assessment of the significance of a news item through the style of presentation: size of the headline and its position within the paper (Sutherland and Galloway, 1981:26; Carroll and McCombs, 2003:37). Newspaper and other media forms together put across the entire populace matters of the day and through this, fix the agenda for “inquiry, debate and discussion that continues in legislatures, courts, businesses, universities, churches and homes throughout the country” (Gauthier, 1999:197).

In all the media platforms, continuous attention (repetition) given to an object makes it a more commanding message above other offerings with respect to its salience. Society then applies these salience cues that the media publishes to organise their personal agendas so as to make a choice regarding persons, issues and other objects they consider significant (Carroll and

McCombs, 2003:37). For instance, if a specific newspaper continuously presents headline stories on energy, the reading audience (populace) will deem the issue of energy as more salient compared to if the same subject story has been run infrequently on inside pages. As a result, energy will be a highly rated „agenda“ compared to others like economy and taxation (Sutherland and Galloway, 1981:26). It is for this and other motives that McCombs & Shaw (1972) referred to Lang and Lang as saying: “[t]he mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass media should think about, know about, have feelings about” (McCombs and Shaw, 1972:177). Furthermore, this becomes clearer in the words of Wayne Wanta, a former editor of a newspaper who noted that “as journalists we decide which issues were deserving of prominent display and which issues were to be ignored. It was our job as journalists to tell the public what was important. Before this, we call this *news judgment* instead of the term *agenda-setting*” (Wanta, 1997). That is, having informed the citizens and organised a debate, the media then conveys society’s consensus that the debate generated to the government (Curran, 2002:225).

Agenda-setting viewed from the perspective of both the traditional and attribute effects still encompass the transfer of salience. This ushers in the two-stage notion that is also labeled as the *first* and *second levels* in agenda-setting. It connotes that those elements that are significant on the *media agenda* become significant subsequently on the *public agenda*. By this, the media, which may prove effective in telling public what to think about, may also prove effective in telling public how to think about it (McCombs, 2005:546). Thus, level one deal with the salience of objects which encapsulates “public issues, public figures, or corporate entities”; while level two concerns the salience of the characteristics of these objects (Carol and McCombs, 2003:38). The above position is confirmed by McCombs and Shaw who did research on agenda-setting among undecided eligible voters preparing to vote in the 1968 elections in the United States. The results showed that significant correlations exist between political subjects that received much coverage in the news and what electorates deemed as vital issues in the election (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Thus, the manner in which news is put across to the public can shape opinion and persuade people’s voting decisions, leading to either to establish a government or remove presidents (Anderson and Gabszewicz, 2005:1). To define the two levels in agenda-setting, the first considers the object’s salience which includes candidates, issues, organisations, and public

officials among others while the second focuses on the salience of the attributes (Kiouisis and McCombs, 2004:38).

The concepts of framing and agenda-setting is being applied in this study because it is expected to aid the researcher to study and analyse the pattern of newspaper editorial presentations so as to make an argument into the present-day Ghanaian media and to suggest a way forward. Overall, both framing and attribute agenda-setting pulls attention to the viewpoints of communicators and their audiences, how they perceive headlines in the news and more specifically, to the special prominence that certain attributes or frames have in the message.

#### **4.7 Reliability and Validity Differentiated**

One of the most significant characteristics of any instrument is its ability to measure the concept being studied in a stable and consistent manner. These issues are broadly tackled under the major topics of *reliability* and *validity* respectively (Coughlan, Cronin and Ryan, 2007:662). Reliability and validity are issues fundamental to all measurements. They deal with connecting measures to constructs and are imperative on grounds that constructs are often ambiguous, diffused, and not directly observable (Neuman, 2006:188). In drawing the distinction between the two terms, generally, validity describes the ability of an instrument to measure appropriately what it is expected to measure; and reliability is the instrument's ability to repeatedly and precisely measure the concept under study (Wood et al, 2006; cited in Coughlan et al., 2007:662). In line with this, reliability is deemed strategic with the reason that it serves as the foundation for, and literally defines, the limits of any evaluation of validity (Redding, Maddock and Rossi, 2006:85). This suggests that a relationship exist between reliability and validity thus making reliability a precursor to a well-defined validity measure.

##### **4.7.1 Reliability**

Content analysis covers data coding of huge numbers of units considering the fact that a study may encapsulate the observation of books, hours of television programming and newspaper articles in dozens, hundreds and thousands (Neuman, 2006:326). Reliability is

defined as “the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable” (Joppe, 2000:1; cited in Golafshani, 2003:598). Reliability connotes dependability and consistency. It implies the same result is capable of being repeated or recurs under identical or very similar conditions. The converse is when a measurement process that yields erratic, unstable, or inconsistent results (Neuman, 2006:188). Furthermore, reliability is the

degree of consistency shown by one or more coders in classifying content according to defined values on specific variables. Reliability can be demonstrated by assessing the correlation between judgements of the same sample of relevant items made by different coders („inter-coder reliability“) or by one coder on different occasions („intra-coder reliability“)(Bell, 2001:21).

#### **4.7.2 Inter-coder Reliability**

Inter-coder reliability is an extensively used term to determine the extent to which coders independently evaluate a feature of a message or object and arrive at the same conclusion. (Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken, 2004:2). Furthermore, inter-coder reliability is the “equivalence reliability in content analysis with multiple content coders that require a high degree of consistency across coders” (Neuman, 2006:326).

*High reliability levels* can be achieved in three main ways according to Bell (2001:22) who states that high levels of reliability occurs when researchers (i) Set precise and clear definition for variables and values and ensure that all assigned definitions are understood by coders similarly; (ii) Ensure during training, coders are thought to practically apply criteria defined for each variable and value and (iii) Carry out inter-coder consistency measurement after two or more coders have applied the defined criteria as coding examples. Agreeing with and further expanding on Bell’s postulation on achieving „high levels of reliability“, Lynch and Peer (2002:46) explained *four* measures for evaluating consistency and reliability. These are, firstly, to forestall future problems, devote much time prior to the entire content analysis process. This ensures that enough training has been given to coders. Secondly, coders to be recruited should be restricted to a small number. This makes managing the group [coders] easy. Consistent with

Neuendorf's position, "F1: coding" and "E: training and initial reliability" (Figure 4.0) two coders, though experienced, were recruited and trained to code newspapers in the current study. This training made coders conversant with the task under consideration. During this process, coding instructions and instruments (see appendix 2 and 3) were revised. Thirdly, time frame allotted to coding should be limited to a shorter period as possible. This quickens the coding process; and avoids coders re-studying coding instructions to enhance inter-coder reliability and finally, workspace should be kept away from daily tasks. Making provision for a spacious room and keeping stationery orderly helps coders to focus and raise concerns where need be.

Lynch and Peer further suggested that though scientifically there exist two ways of measuring inter-coder reliability, the best practice is to combine the two. Lynch and Peer's technique involves: (i) a set of same story samples is randomly selected and supplied to coders to code. Extracted coding is then compared for consistency and (ii) employing an expert coder to randomly select 10%-20% out of the total stories and after independently coding, compare coding for those stories. The current study, in line with Neuendorf's content analysis flowchart (Figure 4.0) labeled "E: training and initial reliability", the two trained coders selected 10% of the newspapers and coded them independently to ascertain the efficacy of the coding instruction and instrument prior to the main coding which lasted for two days.

The *percent agreement*, consistent with section "G-Final Reliability" on Figure 4.0 was used to calculate inter-coder reliability as .98% for advertising placement and .92% for stories. The reason for this is that numerous methods have been formulated for reliability quantification, however, the „percent agreement“ and „pi“ are the two that employs the least mathematical approaches in their calculations (Bell, 2001:22) and are therefore much easier.

### **4.7.3 Validity**

Validity is that quality of research results that leads us to accept them as true, as speaking about the real world of people, phenomena, events, experiences, and actions. A measuring instrument is considered valid if it measures what its user claims it measures (Krippendorff, 2004:313). "Validity concerns the confidence we have that we are measuring what we think we are; the accuracy of our results. Do our results actually reflect what is happening or are they due to something else?" (Meadows, 2003:523). Furthermore, validity

determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit „the bull“s eye“ of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others. (Joppe, 2000:1; cited in Golafshani, 2003:599).

Thus, validity advocates truthfulness and explains how well an idea “suits” actual reality (Neuman, 2006:188).

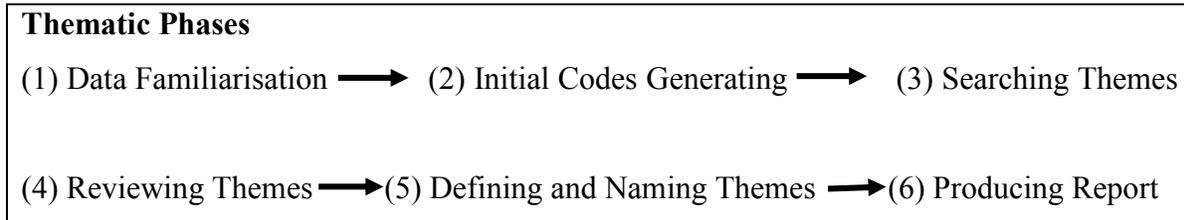
In simple terms, validity addresses the question of how well a social reality being measured through research matches with the constructs researchers use to understand it. Perfect reliability and validity are virtually impossible to achieve. Rather, they are ideals researchers strive for (Neuman, 2006:188).

#### **4.8 Thematic Analysis: What Is It?**

Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding demands an explicit „code“ that may be a list of themes; a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualifications that are casually related; or something in between these forms. A *theme* is a *pattern* found in information that at the minimum describes and organises possible observation or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). Furthermore, a theme captures something important about a data set in relation to the research question, and represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the data set. A significant question to answer in terms of coding is: what counts as a pattern / theme?; Or, what „size“ does a theme need to be? (Braun and Clarke, 2006:82). Adding to the above, thematic analysis is described as a form of recognising patterns with data so that identified themes become categories for analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006:4). The introduction of thematic analysis into this research was imperative to serve as the base upon which coded data from both the content analysis and interview processes were extracted and thematically arranged for analysis, discussion and presentation.

The procedural measures showing the phases of thematic analysis introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006:87-93) in six major steps was adapted for organising data collected from the interview, as depicted in *Table 4.4* below.

**Table 4.4 Phases of Thematic Analysis**



Source: Braun and Clarke (2006:87-93)

The benefits that come with the use of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006:97), are a result of its flexibility. Firstly, it is fairly easy method, quick to learn and execute and can be accessed by researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research. Secondly, it can be used to summarise main characteristics of a large body of data, and/or offer a „thick description“ of the data set. **Table 4.4 (Phases of thematic analysis) is discussed in subsequent pages to reflect procedural measures in the current study.**

#### 4.9 Interviews

It is rare that content analysis single-handedly supports issues about the significance, effects or interpreted meaning of a domain of representation. The use of content analysis, for instance, to show that prime-time television portrays a high level of physical inter-personal aggression does not, by itself, show that viewers are affected in any particular way (either by imitating what they see or by inhibiting their own aggressive behaviours) (Bell, 2001:13). It is for this and many more reasons that it became imperative to conduct interviews as an integral part of this study to complement this content analysis process. Moreover, interviews are usually a part of research that are case based (Yin, 2014:110).

By definition, interviewing is the means by which one gets to know other people’s beliefs, attitudes and expectations and to gain understanding into the cognitive models that shape their views of the world (Krippendorff, 2004:139). Considering the benefits that come with using

interviews, those done face-to-face address the hindrances of self-responding surveys such as illiteracy, so that a larger population could be reached and enables issues to be clarified and misunderstanding dealt with, ensuring that data is collected (Meadows, 2003:521). *See interview questions attached at (appendix one [1])*

#### **4.10 Sample Size for Interviews**

The interview population covered and targeted persons, businesses and institutions who could comment on the current state of the Ghanaian print media from the *legal, economic and political* spheres as well as *ethical tendencies* and the extent to which these environments influence the editorial independence of the media. The essence, as Bell (2001) explains, enables the use of interviews to help cast light on the results of any content analysis exercise. Interview population was composed of purposively selected Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of newspaper media outlets, editors, experienced journalists, media regulatory body (National Media Commission [NMC]), media professional association(s)/organisation(s) including the Ghana Journalists' Association (GJA), Private Newspaper Publishing Association of Ghana (PRINPAG), Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) and media activists from academia. All interviews took place in the Greater Accra region, Ghana's capital which has a population of 4,010,054 and a land area of 3,245sq. Km (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010:22). In all, 25 interviewees were expected to be interviewed. However, fifteen respondents granted the interviews because each media organisation/association targeted **appointed** only one representative to participate and speak on their behalf on how their organisations perceive the media climate in Ghana. Moreover, the researcher observed that the project had reached a *data saturation* point making it unnecessary to continue. But, overall, the data collected was representative of the population in Ghana considering the key stakeholders. All interviews took place in the *month of July, 2014* and lasted approximately one hour each. Due to the calibre of the targeted population who happen to be the elites (media practitioners), the interviews were conducted solely in English and responses were captured with an electronic recording device. However, the researcher respected the decision of two participants who chose not to have their voice recorded. The electronic recorder should not substitute researcher's attentive listening of responses during interview (Yin, 2014:110), therefore consistent with the norms of this study, the

responses of these two interviewees were captured manually through writing. The final interview data was subjected to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process.

#### 4.11 Thematic Analysis: Procedural Measures

Six stages were followed in the process of thematic analysis. Firstly, verbal electronic (audio) data captured during interviews were imported onto PC, transcribed and formatted with respect to uniform font size, colour and alignment of text. This made the text legible and easy to read. The use of the recorder ensured that moods and emotions of participants were tapped. Transcription was personally done by the researcher ensuring that text captured were exact (verbatim) words of the interviewees because according to Sandelowski (1994) transcribing is a complex process which can hardly be free from inaccuracies and may defy ethical issues (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong, 2007: 337) particularly when transcriptionist(s) is/are recruited. The process of transcription was the first instance that enabled the researcher to get *familiar* with the data. Also, hardcopy of the final transcript was retrieved (printed) and repeatedly read to further understand the views of participants in the context of the research. For reliability and validity purposes, some participants were approach to confirm their words on the printed material. During this process, researcher became more conversant with the raw data and some notes were taken as a preparation to launch into the stage of „initial code generation“.

In the second stage of the process, *preliminary codes* were manually generated from the printed data having gained some understanding and gathered ideas from the viewpoint of participants in stage one. Since the themes were data-driven, the initial coding was carried out around series of perceived questions that pertains to the study under consideration. By this, stage two prepared the data into meaningful manageable sections through code assignments. Every part of the transcript was systematically read thoughtfully and in-depth during which different colour markers were used to label likely patterns. Codes identified were matched with data extracts and finally collated within *each* case (code).

The researcher, under the third stage, used the codes identified under the previous phase to *search for themes* in the data. Here, the different codes and their extracts were clustered to form the broader main themes and sub-themes. To do this, the researcher opened the Word Document (softcopy of transcript) on the PC whose hardcopy was labeled / coded manually with

different colour markers. Using the „copy and paste“ strategy, codes that speak to specific subject were categorised appropriately under various themes using the printed data (transcript) as a guide because it is exactly the same as the softcopy in terms of structure (format). Themes were generated around the research questions of the study but whereas some of the codes easily fitted the themes, others appear to fall outside the domain of all the themes at this stage. These codes, along with their data extracts were captured under a „temporary theme“ for further synthesisation.

At fourth stage, themes that emerged from stage three were subjected to a *review process* based on some fundamental questions: (i) Has each theme identified sufficient data to be analytical? (ii) Is there a chance that a theme may slip into other theme(s)? (iii) Is a theme too big that it should be disintegrated to form two or more themes? (iv) Are there codes and extract that still do not belong to any theme? The researcher further synthesised the existing themes along with their extracts and noted that all the questions (i, ii, iii, iv) were true. All themes were reorganised and categorised such that those without sufficient data slipped into related subjects as main and sub-themes. Bigger themes were broken down to have sub-themes. Finally, the „temporary theme“ (unused codes/data extracts) was revisited and those that fit existing themes and sub-themes were sorted and added. To ensure validity and reliability, individual themes and sub-themes were thoroughly checked in relation to coded data extracts.

Themes and sub-themes were finally *defined* and *named* at the fifth stage. Though themes and sub-themes that emerged were somewhat labeled appropriately in previous stages (3 and 4), the current stage redefined them in the context of the study’s objectives, research questions and underlying theory to put them in the right perspective. As qualitative process, descriptive names that speak to the subject under consideration (independence of the media under Ghana’s Fourth Republic) were assigned to demonstrate some form of hierarchical flow and uniformity in its structure. To make analysis of results easy, themes and sub-themes were coined concisely.

#### **4.12 Interpreting Data and Presentation**

After gathering raw data, results were computed and interpreted. Basic statistics through software applications like Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version-22) and

Microsoft Excel (Version-2010) were employed for calculating *percentages* and *averages*. Thematically, final results are presented in *narrative* and *tabular formats*.

#### **4.13 Ethical Considerations**

The exploratory mixed research method combined interview and content analysis to collect data so the confidentiality of interviewees was ensured. On issues of privacy, participants were not coerced into commenting on subjects they were unwilling to do so. Furthermore, participants were informed beforehand that the interview exercise would not attract any financial payment (but souvenirs were given), and interviewees had the chance to opt out at any time they wished to discontinue. Furthermore, interviewees were made to understand that recorded audio during the interview would be completely deleted in accordance with the rules set by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) Ethics Committee after a five-year period and disguised identification such as [*participant 1, participant 2...*] would be used for verbatim quotations unless where interviewees consented otherwise. To ensure that interviewees were interviewed at their most convenient times, the institutions and persons (gate-keepers) concerned were contacted and furnished with letters prior to the start of this entire research. As part of the interview process, participants were advised and given ample time to read through the *consent form* thoroughly and signed willingly before the main interview schedule began. *See attached a copy of the consent form and ethical clearance under appendix four and five.*

#### **4.14 Limitations**

There are a total of 466 print publications in Ghana (IREX, 2010), of which 120 are newspapers published in the landscape (*Commerce Ghana, 2012*). From this number, twenty newspapers from four media outlets were used for content analysis to draw conclusions on media independence in Ghana under the fourth republic from the perspective of funding and editorial framing/agenda-setting. Moreover, the state-owned newspapers appear to have more pages compared to the privately-owned so there seems to be an imbalance prior to conducting the content analysis with respect to the total number of advert placements. Though all adverts were coded, philanthropic organisations such as religious entities, obituaries and classified were not

included in the final analysis because the study placed emphasis on government and corporate adverts and moreover their input was negligible. The findings from this work are based on newspaper samples and interviews data obtained between the period spanning May-July 2014 and that changes in the media landscape after that data collection in the same year may not reflect.

The researcher had difficulty in collecting information on funding (prices of newspaper adverts based on the space they occupy) because most media outlets held back on giving data about finances. Booking interview schedules with some of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and editors was a herculean task due to their tight schedules, but the researcher persisted once they had already given prior notice to granting the interview. Moreover, two interviewees declined to have their voices recorded so the researcher switched to a shorthand writing format which to some extent affected the smoothness of data collection process because the researcher had to struggle with posing questions, listening to responses given speedily and scribble down the responses concurrently. Electronic (computer) data lost or corrupt files is rampant in a project of this magnitude so frequent backups were run as well as hard copies kept of information throughout this work to arrest possible problems associated with data storage. Fortunately, no data was lost in the process of the project. Lastly, *funding* the entire project was difficult because the nature of the research demanded frequent trips to Ghana's capital city (Accra) where accommodation is expensive, as was and shuttling from one organisation to another.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the information collected has been deemed sufficient by the researcher and his supervisor to provide an insight into the financial workings of the Ghanaian press; and to offer concrete ideas on the interrelationship between funding, framing and media freedom in this part of Africa. The following chapters deal with these matters more explicitly.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### MEDIA FUNDING VERSUS AGENDA-SETTING / FRAMING: THE CONDUIT FOR MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

#### 5.0 Introduction

Independence of the media is a precondition to strengthening the „watchdog“ role of the media to enable them to become vigilant in relation to the powerful, particularly large *businesses* and *government* in any defined community (McQuail, 1994:142). Once this independence is attained, the media become a powerful tool to hinder corruption, enhance good governance (Petrova, 2011:790) and serve as the eyes of the governed on all matters. For instance, the benefits of investigative media reportage led to the exposures of the Watergate scandal, the Enron accounting irregularities and many more such revelations, all of which point to the fact that the media can do more (Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin, 2006:188) if it is given the freedom to operate. Thus, the media occupy such a strategic position that as an influential instrument of education, their nature and diversity significantly shape the collective values of society (Anderson & Gabszewicz, 2005:2). This, among other reasons, has stirred up organisations such as Thomson Reuters Foundation, World Bank Institute and the International Institute for Journalism to advance the cause of achieving independence of the media, thus culminating into a wide body of scholarly knowledge on the subject.

Tracking the history of advertising with respect to the media institutions (Starr, 2004:395–96; Baldasty, 1992:128–34; Smythe 2003, 49–70; Asquith, 1975:721) and applicable postulations (Besley and Prat 2006; Gentzkow, Glaeser & Goldin 2006; Petrova, 2011:805), it is evident that the growth of the advertising market is a crucial determinant of the development of media independence. This position is anchored on the notion that political control of newspapers is either lessened or even possibly quashed due to improved economic conditions for newspapers that have been triggered by high revenues from advertising. While this might be the case politically, “advertisers can also exert a direct influence by supporting media which offer a

conducive environment for their products or politics, and withholding support from those who do not conform” (Curran, 2002:150). In the arena of funding of the print media and its repercussion(s) on the institution’s independence, much is not known in Ghana, and in Africa in general.

This chapter investigates the impact of funding through advertising using content analysis of media by first establishing the funding patterns of print media by government on one hand, and **private** corporate/**business** entities on the other, in both government and privately-owned newspapers; it also analyses the extent to which these two funding streams generally impact on editorial independence through the lens of agenda-setting and framing. It is expected that with the identification of who funds the media most in Ghana [government or **private** corporate **entities**] and subsequently tracking this funding’s impact on the autonomy of the media with respect to reporting, the findings would better inform future media independence policies.

## **5.1 Results**

This chapter delved into the impact of media funding on editorial independence by tagging advertising as newspaper revenue sources and showed that advertising and sources influence agenda-setting and framing of news.

### **5.1.0 Newspaper Funding through Advertising**

The government and corporate adverts placed in newspapers during the period under review numbered 641. Out of this, 560 adverts were placed in government-owned newspapers, whereas only 81 adverts were placed in privately-owned newspapers, representing 87% and 13% respectively, as shown in *Table 5.0* below.

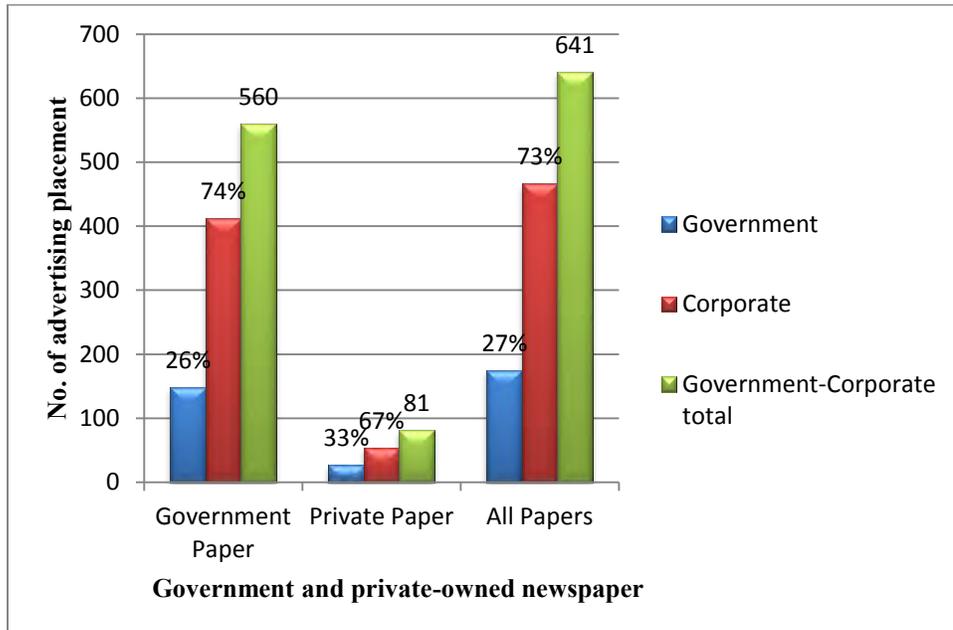
**Table 5.0: Government-Corporate Newspaper Media Funding Mix through Advertising**

<b>Government Newspaper</b>	<b>No. of Adverts</b>	<b>% [N=560]</b>	<b>% [N=641]</b>	<b>Private Newspaper</b>	<b>No. of Adverts</b>	<b>% [N=81]</b>	<b>% [N=641]</b>
Government Sponsored Adverts	148	26	87	Government Sponsored Adverts	27	33	13
Corporate Sponsored Adverts	412	74		Corporate Sponsored Adverts	54	67	
<b>Total</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Total Adverts</b>				<b>641</b>			

Field Survey, May-June 2014

Tracking government-corporate funding numbers with respect to specific newspapers, the study determined that in government newspapers, 148 adverts were government sponsored and 412 adverts were corporate sponsored representing 26% and 74% respectively; in the private newspapers, 27 adverts were government sponsored and 54 adverts were corporate sponsored representing 33% and 67% respectively. Overall, in the Ghanaian newspaper industry, the government sponsors 27% of advert placement whereas the corporate world sponsors 73%. The above shows that there is a significant difference between media funding of advertising from Ghana's corporate bodies, compared to that by the government. These statistics hold in terms of aggregate spending, but as units, the government is a single entity with the most spending. It is evident that the government's two main newspapers draw 87% of adverts in the newspaper advertising market, in comparison to the many private newspapers that share the remaining 13%; this shows that most of private papers run with very few adverts or none. The above table is also presented graphically as depicted below in Figure 5.0.

**Figure 5.0: Government and Corporate Advertising in Newspaper**



Field Survey, May-June 2014

The following responses shed lights on the above developments in the Ghanaian newspaper media market:

The media does not depend much on these categories of individuals or institutions. The media are rather disappointed about the business community, the corporate world. In the sense that under normal circumstances they are supposed to help strengthen the media because the media is also playing a certain advocacy role for the entire society so if the business organisations, individuals, government agencies would starve the private media of advertisement, then, I don't think they are being fair. Looking at the risk especially of the private print media and the pioneering role they played as long as democratic governance in this country is concerned. A system of governance that has given us all the freedom to operate both businesses and whatever enterprises that people are engaged in. Today, we are all enjoying that air of freedom as compared to the dictatorial days of yesteryear. (Participant 13)

The above participant presents an argument from the struggling past of the Ghanaian media. The participant describes how the press, particularly the private press, has strived towards achieving independence, and most importantly, developing a medium of expression for the entire civil society which before 1992 (and even immediately afterwards) was impossible because of the *culture of silence* that dominated. The participant continues saying that, despite the sacrifices made by the private media, corporate Ghana, citizens and government alike have abandoned them *financially* by not advertising in their newspapers. Social actors should acknowledge that the media are the watchdog of the very community in which they operate and thus need to be helped to sustain them in business. A tendency of *bias* was read by Participant 13 into how corporate bodies and government allocate advertising in the newspaper market.

By referring to „private media“, the above response suggests that the government-owned media were cowed at the time thus *criticisms* of major public issues were a feature of the private press. The disappointed position of this participant is reflected in the wide margin between the quanta of advertising in government papers (87%) compare to that of private papers (13%). Furthermore, another respondent remarked:

The government and/or other actors very often control the media through the allocation of advertising. Consider most of the state newspaper media houses. *Daily Graphic* for instance gets all the adverts and even the *Ghanaian Times*, also a state newspaper does not get the advert numbers *Daily Graphic* receives from the government. The situation is terribly worst (sic) for the private media because we hardly get adverts from the government and even the little ones we get from corporate bodies they [the government] try to influence them not to give you adverts to run to make profit. Funding is wholly from private source[s]. (Participant 5)

The above quote also establishes that private press is surviving utterly on the support of private avenues because the government newspapers get most of the adverts in the newspaper advertising market and emphasises that the private media find it difficult to attract government-sponsored adverts. Despite this state of affairs that is already financially suffocating the private press, government is in the business of discouraging the corporate community from placing large

numbers of advertisements in private newspapers. This situation will have a significant impact on public debate if smaller newspapers should shut down as a result of bankruptcy. Moreover, an external manipulative hand in the operations of the media by government and corporate entities cannot be ruled out in advertising allocation. As to why most private media are denied adverts, a respondent explained:

When you look at advertisers, on the part of the ruling party, the government sends most of its adverts to „friendly papers“ or pro-National Democratic Congress [NDC] or pro-government newspapers. They will rarely send adverts to anti-government or anti-NDC paper like the *New Statesman* or Ken Koranchie’s *Daily Searchlight*. But when we come to corporate Ghana, government is the mega spender in our system and some of these companies and their owners depend on government patronage for their contracts so some of them when they see that a paper is anti-government, they will rarely give you an advert so that they will be in good books of government so that is how advertisers influence content in the newspaper industry. (Participant 9)

The above highlights that two major factors explain the significantly wide gap between adverts published in government and private newspapers. Participant 5 argues that firstly, government gives more adverts to papers that support their policies and ideology, thus allocating advertisements based on political lines. In a situation where papers that are anti-government are denied government sponsored adverts, this suggests that government wants to silence critical voices on major issues of public concern. Secondly, the corporate community disassociates itself from newspapers that are critical of government so as not to offend or alienate the government. Taking a clue from Participant 5 above, because the government gives contracts to the corporate world, it can influence them in where they should place their adverts. Thus, in order not to alienate their revenue source, corporate entities will publish more adverts in the government newspapers to maintain friendships with the government. Consequently, content of those media outlets who want to attract adverts from corporate sources are influenced by taking a less critical stance or no critical stance in their publications. Furthermore, another respondent observed:

The media in Ghana is argued to be highly economically dependent on other actors to survive. It is not rare that journalists take payment for taking a certain political stand. The government cannot directly limit the freedom of expression, but financially it can undermine a free and deliberative public debate. The consequence being that the democratic functions normally managed by media in a democratic society are undermined, and so is the public trust in the media. (Participant 12)

The above response shows that Ghana's democracy has reached a stage of evolution where it is practically impossible for the ruling class to physically stifle expression freedom. Participant 12 argues that the government and other society groups have capitalised on the fact that the Ghanaian media is ailing economically, and used this circumstance as a bait to condense the substance of their discourse in the public sphere. Eventually, two factors surfaced in this regard. Firstly, critical voices are lessened, secondly, at the extreme of the continuum, the very community media is serving – civil society, business, public life – has lost confidence in media reportage because it is perceived to lack objectivity due to the high levels of bribery and corruption that occur within the print media.

### **5.1.1 Justification: Advertising Allocation Gap**

Irrespective of the factors advanced for the allocation of advertising which is skewed in favour of government-owned newspapers as against the private, it was noted also that several factors inform where an advertiser puts his investment to make the expected returns. Firstly, the quality of the medium especially its clarity is important, and secondly, the reach of the medium is considered. Most of the newspapers have poor print quality and do not circulate beyond the capital Accra and other cities including Takoradi and Kumasi. According to this respondent, the government-owned *Daily Graphic* is technically refined with a high quality print so it attracts a lot of advertising revenue despite its high placement price. Participant 14 describes this saying:

There are so many things that come into play when you want to advertise in a paper. One is the quality of the print. I won't like to advertise my important party information in a

paper that will not be clear and then, the [there is the] reach of that paper. For instance, you get so many people [who read the newspaper] in spite of the fact that it is the most expensive paper, *Daily Graphic* get a lot of adverts because their print is good. I don't work at *Daily Graphic* but you can see it. It's obvious. Their print is good and their reach is good. They get to the North. There are some papers that only circulate to Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi. (Participant 14)

Furthermore, another respondent argued that though private newspapers' criticality towards the government or other actors determines the allocation of advertising in the newspaper landscape, resulting in some papers being published without adverts, which is not sustainable. Participant 8 maintained that while the private press may have a legitimate stance to some extent, he questioned the benefits an advertiser may get by publishing adverts in a paper with the purpose to influence its readership, if the paper cannot deliver its message to audience on the grounds of poor quality. See response below:

Yes! ... If you are tasking us too much, we won't give you adverts and indeed especially the private newspapers have complained. Some of them don't get adverts at all. Yes! Some of it is valid but in some cases too it is not valid because some of them in terms of quality don't more-or-less deliver. Now, for the sake of influencing if I give you advert and the advert is not clear, what have I achieved? (Participant 8)

A participant, who was an editor of a newspaper, debunked the idea that both the government and corporate entities dip a manipulative hand into the operations of the media through the allocation of advertising. With regards to government, the National Media Commission (NMC) is in charge of the state-owned media thus rendering government powerless. In a more business-like posture, advertisers are treated as clients who need a service from the media at a fee. It is a „contractual offer and acceptance“ relationship where the media rather decide *when* to honour their part of the deal by publishing advertiser's advert. To this informant, advertising contracts do not inform the sort of content that they carry. This is evident below:

The NMC has been given power to make office appointments to the state-owned media so control of these outlets is taken utterly from government. For businesses enterprises,

as far as I know, they do not have any control or influence as well on advertising in my newspaper because I charge them, collect their money and provide them coverage as and when I deem fit. I do not go out there and put in the newspaper anything that they demand or influence me not to publish stories of their competitors or anything of that sort. It doesn't happen. (Participant 7)

From the above, Participant 7 argued that transactions in the Ghanaian newspaper advertising market are based on the *competitiveness* of the newspaper outlets in the market rather than an attempt to slant sharing of advertising revenue. This participant maintained that advertising is attracted rather than allocated by government and the corporate community, and is based on the quality of the product (medium) and how far it travels.

## **5.2 Media Funding Versus Agenda-setting / Framing**

Having established that 87% of government and corporate adverts were placed in government-owned newspapers while only 13% went to private newspapers, the study further used this funding percentage to track the impact on editorial independence with respect to newspaper agenda-setting and framing of stories. It considered the following themes: headline tone, criticality and news sources of reporting.

### **5.2.1 Newspaper Categorisation and Agenda-setting**

The study further showed that out of the hundred agenda sets identified by the research in Ghanaian newspapers, there were forty-four (44) political agendas, composed of nineteen (19) in government papers and twenty-five (25) in private papers. Only two (2) corporate agendas were identified in private papers, and none in government papers. Thirty (30) items were identified as setting a society/environmental agenda. These were composed of twenty-one (21) items in government papers and only nine (9) in private papers. Six (6) items identified as „official corruption“ agendas were captured, all in private papers only; and eighteen (18) „other agenda“ items, composed of ten (10) government and eight (8) stories in private papers, were discerned. This shows that private papers set more political, corporate and corruption agendas than government papers, whereas government papers set more societal/environmental and „other“

agendas compared to private papers. These items were identified within the major sections of the newspapers targeted by the study: [main headline, headline news, local/regional stories, editorial, and column/opinion]. *Table 5.1* below depicts this.

**Table 5.1: Funding, Agenda-Setting and Framing: Headline Tone**

Agenda Set	Newspaper Category		Framing: Headline Tone [N=100]				Total
	Government	Private	<i>Favourable</i>	<i>Defensive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Unfavourable</i>	
Political	19	25	<i>1<sup>g</sup> 2<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>1<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>16<sup>g</sup> 13<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>2<sup>g</sup> 9<sup>p</sup></i>	44
Corporate	0	2	0	<i>1<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>1<sup>p</sup></i>	0	2
Societal/ Environment	21	9	0	0	<i>20<sup>g</sup> 9<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>1<sup>g</sup></i>	30
Corruption	0	6	0	0	<i>2<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>4<sup>p</sup></i>	6
Others	10	8	0	0	<i>9<sup>g</sup> 7<sup>p</sup></i>	<i>1<sup>g</sup> 1<sup>p</sup></i>	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>					
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, May-June 2014 | <sup>p</sup> = Private Paper Framing, <sup>g</sup> = Government Paper Framing

#### 5.2.1.0 Headline Tone

This theme seeks to find out the tone of headlines with respect to the major agenda setting categories (political, corporate, societal/environmental, corruption and other stories) in government and private papers. Out of the nineteen (19) political stories headlined in government papers, one (1) was framed as Favourable, two (2) Unfavourable and a sixteen (16) were framed as Neutral. The private papers recorded twenty-five (25) political headlines, out of which two (2) were framed as Favourable, one (1) Defensive, nine (9) Unfavourable and thirteen (13) Neutral. Beyond these, both papers insignificantly showed one sidedness in their tone. Whereas government papers lean towards government (*1<sup>g</sup>*), private newspapers showed favouritism (*2<sup>p</sup>*) and defensive (*1<sup>p</sup>*) about partisanship. This shows that politically, the *tone of headlines* set by private papers were more head-on compared to government papers whose

posture was mainly neutral.

On the corporate front, only two (2) headlines were recorded in private papers out of the hundred (100) identified agenda setting entries, and their tones were classified either as Reactionary (*I<sup>p</sup>*) or Neutral (*I<sup>p</sup>*). The government papers did not publish any headlines on the corporate community. However, both papers featured several public relations (PR) subjects with positive tones outside the major targeted sections. With respect to criticalities, the study showed that Ghanaian newspapers were not very critical of the business community because they carried stories which were more-image enhancing in terms of project corporate entities and their products. Considering the 87% and 13% funding-mix of newspapers, two (2) possible inferences could be drawn. Firstly, it is evident that the quantum of funding that trickles down to government newspapers through advertising makes them silent on controversial corporate issues; secondly, on the part of the private newspapers who are already advertisement-starved, their less critical posture in reportage is a calculated one to help them attract some advertising instead of putting advertisers off further with inquisitive and vociferous stances towards them and government. These positions are evident in the response below:

On the level of independence from sectors such as business and so on, I think that there is a level of dependency on sections of business, [and the] financial sector which one may say is not very healthy for the independence of the media. In the sense that the media have not shown a real critical attitude, for instance, to the telecom companies who are big, who are wealthy, who have money and control a lot of advertising revenue for media in the country. Their services are not the best and yet the media have not been able to take them to task as much as they take government officials to task. So, it seems obvious to me that the media are caged and not able to exercise their independence as vigorously as should be required. (Participant 11)

The above participant draws two conclusions. Firstly, the Ghanaian print media is more aggressive towards the government and public officials, secondly, they are liberal towards the activities of the corporate world. The participant attributes this to the fact that some of the major and financially sound corporate bodies operating within the Ghanaian telecommunication industry provide substandard services to customers, but despite this, the media have remained

silent about these practices because of the huge advertising budgets that lie at their disposal. This response makes it clear that as long as the media lean towards the corporate community as the current study shows in *Table 5.0*, their independence will be difficult to achieve. The fruit of this situation is the plethora of one sided public relations (PR) agendas on businesses that media cover.

Also, from *Table 5.1*, the study showed that the tone of headlines in government papers on societal and environmental issues were mainly Neutral ( $20^S$ ) with only one Unfavourable entry ( $1^S$ ); whereas the private papers recorded headlines with Neutral tones ( $9^P$ ). On corruption, private papers published two (2) headlines with a Neutral tone ( $2^P$ ) and four (4) Unfavourable headlines tones ( $4^P$ ) but government papers recorded no headlines on official corruption. Finally, on all „other“ headlines, their tones were captured mainly as Neutral with government papers recording nine ( $9^S$ ) and private papers seven ( $7^P$ ). Both papers recorded one (1) „other“ Unfavourable headline tones as ( $1^S$ ) and ( $1^P$ ) respectively.

#### 5.2.1.1 *Criticality of Reportage*

The essence of this theme was to find out the extent to which newspapers were *critical* on public issues in relation to media funding through advertising. The study showed that on the political front, government papers took a Neutral posture in seventeen ( $17^S$ ) of their stories, with only one ( $1^S$ ) Unfavourable story while private papers took an Unfavourable posture in sixteen ( $16^P$ ) of their reportages. None of them showed Defensive intent, but there were Favourable positions on the part of the government papers, one ( $1^S$ ) story leant towards government, while the private papers published two ( $2^P$ ) stories that favoured partisan politics. As shown under headline tones, Ghanaian newspapers are not critical on the activities of corporate bodies. The private papers that made attempts published only two (2) stories which hovered between Defensive ( $1^P$ ) and Neutral ( $1^P$ ) positions. Furthermore, the private papers were vociferous and critical of official corruption and took Neutral ( $2^P$ ) and Unfavourable ( $4^P$ ) positions. Beyond these, most of the Unfavourable ( $16^P$ ) political stories published by private media focused on being critical on official corruption. These are shown in *Table 5.2* below:

**Table 5.2: Funding, Agenda-Setting and Framing: Criticality**

Agenda Set	Newspaper Category		Framing: Criticality [N=100]				Total
	Government	Private	<i>Favourable</i>	<i>Defensive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Unfavourable</i>	
Political	19	25	1 <sup>g</sup> 2 <sup>p</sup>		17 <sup>g</sup> 7 <sup>p</sup>	1 <sup>g</sup> 16 <sup>p</sup>	44
			3	0	24	17	
Corporate	0	2	0	1 <sup>p</sup>	1 <sup>p</sup>	0	2
Societal/ Environment	21	9			19 <sup>g</sup> 9 <sup>p</sup>		30
			0	0	28	2 <sup>g</sup>	
Corruption	0	6	0	0	2 <sup>p</sup>	4 <sup>p</sup>	6
Others	10	8	0	0	18	0	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>					
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, May-June 2014 | <sup>p</sup> = Private Paper Framing, <sup>g</sup> = Government Paper Framing

Also, the study showed that government papers pay more attention to societal and environmental issues and their criticality in this regard was tagged as Neutral (19<sup>g</sup>) and Unfavourable (2<sup>g</sup>) whereas private papers showed a Neutral (9<sup>p</sup>) stance. Finally, both government and privately-owned papers took Neutral (10) and (8) positions respectively with respect to criticalities of „other agenda“. Overall, it was noted that whereas private media tends to be very critical on political issues and corruption but insignificant criticality on corporate bodies, government papers were Neutral on societal / environmental and „other agenda“. The response below shed light on the state of criticality in the Ghanaian newspaper industry.

The competitive environment the media operate in means that the media are not economically independent from other societal actors such as political parties and private companies. This gives the actors a great influence on media content. Political parties occasionally boycott media if they find them biased. In addition to this, some journalists practice self-censorship for political or commercial reasons. Thus, journalists are less

likely to be critical towards the actors they are financially dependent on. The end result is a less free media. (Participant 12)

The above participant explains that the level of criticality society expects of the media is lessened mainly by, what can be called, their „economic dependence syndrome“. By this, governments and/or their political parties as well as corporate bodies wield much power due to their financial standing and for media to tap into this financial reservoir of these entities, their reportage is framed such that it does not harm their funding source. Moreover, the competitiveness in the media market with respect to revenue acquisition makes the media liable to external influences which affect its content. There seem to be a sort of „trade-off“ in the media environment between being critical and getting blacklisted by advertisers or being less critical or non-critical and remunerated by advertisers as a result. This is evident in the study where, considering the size of advertising in government papers, they stay in a Neutral position in their reportage, with respect to political issues, and remained completely silent on corruption and corporate matters. On the other hand, the private media were critical on political and corruption issues in a position that suggests that they have nothing to lose because already they were advert-starved by government advertisements, but their criticality towards corporate bodies is insignificant. Again, this explains why the newspapers generally carry lots of public relations (PR) stories of corporate organisations. This is further buttressed by the response below:

Always, there is a „balancing act“ you need to make. I told you that there is commercial interest. If someone is giving you a lot of money, you need to know how to handle such situations. It's a factor in determining „what is news“ and for that, I am frank to tell you. It is not only in Ghana but it is everywhere. (Participant 4)

The response above shows that media treat their funders, especially advertisers, with the utmost care so that their revenue sources are not curtailed. To „balance the equation“ in the media market connotes either fact suppression, or at best adopting a centre-focused (Neutral) position in order not to hurt the funders – and this reduces criticalities or makes them non-existent. This shows that the media has not reached its potential to bring to the fore hidden issues because their wings are clipped due to commercial tendencies. By this, the content of news is externally determined to some extent and self-censorship becomes evident. The participant cited above maintained that beyond Ghana, media has become commercialised which further dictates „news

content“ and this practice is pervasive globally. In a similar argument, another participant observed:

As for influence, they will always be there. If you are a paper that gets a lot of adverts from government, you will find it difficult writing stories that will go against the interest of government. So, indirectly though government is not sort of censoring you *ha-ha-ha...*, you yourself engage in self-censorship. Not only government but whoever is sponsoring you by way of adverts or any other form that helps you to run and this goes a long way to influence some of the stories you carry. If you depend on those adverts to survive, then you are cut-off because that commercial interest is there. (Participant 10)

This reflects the funding-mix within the Ghanaian newspaper landscape and explains why government papers publish less political stories and remain less critical of them and silent on corporate bodies compared to private papers. This participant explains that media independence is doubtful as long as there is a level of financial dependence by the media which brings some level of loosely bounded exchange between media and other actors which seeks favour to be compensated with favour, and failure to comply leads to a future denial of advertising revenue. Thus, an outlet that over-dependes on adverts loses the credibility of independent media.

#### *5.2.1.2 Informants*

The aim of this theme was to track the sources of information available to Ghanaian newspapers and using the funding-mix as a base, to determine the extent to which both impact on their independence. The study showed that out of the hundred articles captured, only 29 were sourced from government or quasi-government institutions with as many as 71 obtained from other undeclared sources. On political issues, there were twelve (12) articles from government sources, far fewer compared to the Other sources (32); all corruption stories were obtained from the Other sources. Coverage of societal/environmental issues attracted twelve (12) sources from government and eighteen (18) were sourced from other means. „Other agenda“ had four (4) sources from government and fourteen (14) Other sources. The above suggests that access to

information is not readily available and government tends to withhold information on sensitive areas. See *Table 5.3* below:

**Table 5.3: Newspaper Media Agenda-Setting and Informants (Sources) Pattern**

Agenda Set	Informants		Total	Newspaper Category	Informants [N=100]		Total
	Official / Government	Others			Official/ Government	Others	
Political	12	32	44	<i>Government</i>	20	30	50
Corporate	1	1	2				
Societal/ Environment	12	18	30				
Corruption	0	6	6	<i>Private</i>	9	41	50
Others	4	14	18				
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>				

Source: Field Survey, May-June 2014

In terms of categorisation, the study revealed that of the twenty-nine (29) official sources of information from the government, government papers recorded twenty (20) while private papers had only nine (9). With respect to Other sources, while government papers recorded thirty (30), private papers had forty-one (41). In addition to government papers having received the majority of advertising from the government, there is also the question of how, having relied heavily on government sources, the government papers could be able to be critical of them? The trend in the preceding analysis seems to suggest that the government, having fed its papers with information, also go a step further to put limitations on what these newspapers were able to print. A participant explained:

To some extent it is not difficult [for government officials to release information] but in every endeavour you have constraints. Firstly, it depends on the confidence level of the one to release the information to the individual media house. That is, his confidence that on the release of the information, the house will carry out the information objectively without any bias then he will release that information but if he has doubts, then releasing

the information becomes difficult. But releasing information is not so much difficult as long as the work of journalists is concerned. (Participant 6)

The above response suggests that the release of information is hooked firmly on the degree of trust that the informant accords the recipient. The number of official sources that trickles down to government papers as shown in *Table 5.3* shows that the government releases more information to the government papers compared to the private media because it can trust how the former will frame their stories. This means that information is withheld from some media outlets (usually privately owned) because informants cannot determine beforehand how these papers will use them. Alternatively, informants give information if they feel they are able to determine how recipients could use it. Such a position always has a high tendency favouritism in the dishing out of data to parties seeking it. This revelation cast lights on the strategic role of the Freedom of Information law (FOIL) which, if implemented in Ghana, will help eradicate the „whom you trust“ element in accessing information. This is given much space under *chapter eight*.

### **5.3 Discussion**

The aim of this chapter was to establish funding of the media from government and corporate entities through advertising in Ghana, and to track the impact of advertising on media independence. The study showed that government papers published 87% of adverts in the entire newspaper industry while private papers published only 13%. Corporate bodies published more adverts in government papers (74%) and private papers (67%) than government in both papers. In a study of developing nations, it was evident that government, corporate and industrial establishments were often the major advertising sources. Countries like Samoa, Cameroun, Uganda, Bangladesh, Zambia, Malawi and Swaziland have witnessed advertisements channelled into specific newspapers or published entirely in government newspapers to the exclusion of other papers (Ross, 1999:13-14). This is consistent with the current study that showed that bias was found in advertising allocation in favour of government papers in Ghana. Despite this state of affairs, government has gone a step further to influence the corporate bodies to deny private papers advertisements; this is possible on the argument that many corporate bodies rely on government contracts. With this, businesses starve newspapers that are anti-government of

advertising just to maintain friendships with government. These revenue streams affected the tone of reportage of government and private-owned media and hence their autonomy. Thus, market factors have influenced extensively „dominant media discourses“ which is evident considering how policy issues are framed and agenda setting is conducted (Wasserman, 2006:82). Above all, the study also showed that in Ghana, adverts are allotted along partisan lines and generally newspapers rely so much on financial actors to survive, which undermines media independence. Consistent with this finding is a study that showed that the share of advertising a newspaper receives is dictated by the parity of ideology between the government and a said newspaper (Tella and Franceschelli, 2009:13-14). Furthermore, a study showed that beyond economic structures, dominant political players frustrate strides of the media to achieve autonomy by allocating advertising only to party affiliates (Petrova, 2011). Having received such favours, a paper is expected to toe a specified line. Reuter and Zitzewitz (2006:200) observed: “[i]n deciding whether to reward an advertiser, publications trade off the benefits (encouraging future advertising) with the costs”. This explains why it was evident in a study of United States newspapers between 1996-2005 that pro-Democratic papers covered more unemployment headlines when the governing administration was Republican than Democratic, and that the reverse held (Larcinese, Puglisi and Snyder Jr., 2011:1178). The current study also revealed that many factors determine the medium in which advertisers put their advertising investment, and these include reach, density of circulation and print quality; government papers tend to possess more beneficial qualities compared to private papers. This presupposes that advertising is *attracted* and not *allocated* in the newspaper market, thus newspapers need to be competitive.

Generally, Ghanaian newspapers are more focused on a political agenda in their reportage, while private papers particularly set a more corporatist, business-oriented agenda, and are more critical of the state than government papers, which were mainly neutral. Private newspapers were less critical of corporate entities, and government papers remained completely mute about their activities. However, both newspaper groups give a sizable space to corporate public relations (PR). This position is evident in a study that theorised that state and private media alike in many countries exhibit bias in their reportage with a boom in the advertising market (Gehlbach and Sonin, 2014). Private papers that received less advertisements showed criticality on official corruption and most of their political coverage had corruption exposure

undertones, while government papers with significant advertising did not show that level of aggression. In a study of four papers in Argentina, the authors came to the conclusion that corruption stories in newspapers decline when the size of government advertising rises (Tella and Franceschelli, 2009:13-14). This paints a picture that the allocation of advertising requires a favourable response from newspapers by being less, or non-critical, and that failure to comply may mean a denial of future advertising allocation. For instance, in Kenya, media assessors noted that because *The Standard* was critical of the state, the government stopped publishing its adverts in the paper until this move was opposed by some opposition figures to reinstate it to receive advertising (IREX, 2010:207). Thus, the economically dependent setting within which media establishments operate is a major hindrance to their freedom. One reason is that the media is under pressure not to hurt advertising clients, thus leading to self-censorship. Michael Rediske cautioned that “there is increasing pressure on journalists not to be too critical of those companies the newspaper or broadcaster receives money from through advertising” (Fürstenau, 2011). Furthermore, writing on “Why I have resigned from the *Telegraph*” in the UK, Peter Osborne (2015:n.p) recounted in *The Guardian* (online) that the paper’s “stories had been suppressed, removed, downplayed, boosted or discouraged in order not to offend – or, alternately to please – advertisers and/or financial institutions”. In another release on the website of *open-Democracy*, He noted, at the onset of 2013, critical headlines directed at HSBC were discouraged. The bank subsequently put on hold its adverts in the *Telegraph* purportedly due to the paper’s attempt to investigate the “Jersey accounts”. According to a former staff of the paper, “HSBC is the advertiser you literally cannot afford to offend”. The above is reflected in a study “A free press is a bad news for corruption” that showed evidence across countries that the level of independent press determines corruption levels, where the more press is independent, the less corruption incidences (Brunetti and Weder, 2003:1801). In contrast, a study of nineteenth-century United States dailies argued that in markets where advertising revenue is higher, existing newspapers and new entrants are likely to be independent of political parties (Petrova, 2011). Government papers in Ghana were more societally / environmentally focused than private papers but both papers were mainly neutral in their reportage on this subject.

Media access to information from official sources is difficult. The Ghanaian government furnishes its own papers with more information than private papers. This informs the extent to which the state-owned print media in Ghana tends to use the „according to official...“ rhetoric in

its coverage, particularly with regard to political subjects, without actually delving deep to unearth related issues to the said speech. The central problem of professional journalism is attributed to its massive reliance on information from official sources to form the base of published news (McChesney, 2008:125). Thus, in the absence of FOIL in Ghana, release of information is based on the level of trust informants have about the recipients who determine its usage. In Latin America for instance, it was evident that due to political and economic tendencies, the media sustains channels to information access through alignment to the elite classes in society, thus making media practitioners able to depend more on official sources. This exclusive over-reliance on information from official domain places the media in a position to please their informants (Pinto, 2008 cited in Hallow, 2012:344). To Herman and Chomsky (2008:2), “the raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print”.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, funding through advertising impinges on media independence in Ghana. In terms of aggregation, corporate entities as a whole, fund both government and private-owned media more than government does, but in terms of individual organisations, the government remains the single unit with the biggest advertising budget. Historically, media criticalities have been a feature of the private media in Ghana and concerns are that this informs the reason why they get less, or no advertisement revenue from government and corporate bodies. The government papers, on the other hand, publish many advertisements and are mainly neutral in their reportage on both governmental (especially corruption) and corporate issues. Current trends show that government papers have graduated to a level of reporting where they step on some sensitive issues which was previously impossible. Furthermore, in Ghana, practitioners in the newspaper industry compensates advertisers and information sources by taking a less or non-critical stance in their reportage.

The next chapter (six) explores the independence of the Ghanaian print media from the lens of ownership and control under the country’s Fourth Republic, particularly the government and private media and their patterns of news diversity.

## CHAPTER SIX

### POSITIONING MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL: THE GHANAIAN CONTEXT OF MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

#### 6.0 Introduction

Global capitalist structures with their free market features makes Democratic Ghana accept the *free entry and exit* phenomenon in its market, and the media sector is not an exception. With the fourth republican Constitution's improved provisions on media independence, it became possible for Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians who have the means of production to establish and own a media entity amidst those already run by the state. Media ownership, in its entirety, can indicate some level of control which impinges on pluralism and diversity (Buckley et al., 2008). Thus, the growing numbers of media establishments appear to question the autonomy of the Ghanaian print media from ownership tendencies. The essence of this chapter is to evaluate the extent to which media ownership by government and private outlets / businesses affect editorial independence in Ghana.

#### 6.1 Results

The study showed that generally media ownership control is evident within the newspaper landscape in Ghana and this, to some degree, tends to impact negatively on their independence. However, structurally, the influence of ownership on state-owned papers was negligible when compared to what pertains in the privately-owned outlets. The results are presented under three broad spheres labelled as: *state ownership and control*; *private ownership and control*; and *diversity*.

##### 6.1.0 State ownership and control

This subject explored the impact of state ownership on the operations of the „public“ (state) newspapers and most importantly on their independence. State-owned newspapers operate through legally-created institutions and structures with the objective of checking external

controls. However, some respondents interviewed in this current research held contrary views and questioned the efficacy of state ownership. The following responses shed light in this regard:

Daily Graphic is a limited liability company solely owned by the state and we have been paying dividends annually to the state through the government. So by this the owners are the people of Ghana and they have vested authority in the NMC [National Media Commission] who appoints the Board of Directors on behalf of the people of Ghana. Ordinarily, in private companies, it is the shareholders who elect the Board member but in the case of the media, the NMC represents the shareholders so they elect the Board members in consultation with the president [of Ghana], but the primary responsibility lies with the NMC so that is how the system operates. (Participant 1)

The above respondent distanced „owners“ of the public media from the well-known „government-owned machinery“ definition to the „state-ownership principle“ which is an all-inclusive ownership, and labelled the newspaper outlet (*Daily Graphic*) as an entity owned by the 24 million citizens of Ghana. With this, the National Media Commission (NMC) is saddled with the responsibility of appointing the Board members of the state newspapers. The legitimacy of the NMC to compose the Board is evident considering the civil representative nature of major sectors of Ghana (See NMC composition under chapter three). However, the ruling authority is not left out of such appointments to the Board. Similarly, another participant argued:

In fact, I will say that none of those things happen. This is because today, the government has no influence absolutely on the media especially if the media decides to be adversarial. [In] the public media, which are the media for government, editors are not appointed by the government but rather by the Media Commission that is independent of government. That is, editors are appointed by the Board of Directors (BOD) in consultation with the Media Commission. The Managing Directors are directly appointed by the NMC in consultation with the government so the government has not influence at all. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 reiterated that the current organisational structures of the public media gives government no room to control the running of the media. Thus, the media can be confrontational in its operations. The following reasons point to this state of affairs. Firstly, government, the

owner of state media has no hand in the appointment of editors who man the various publishing houses. Secondly, operations of NMC are autonomous of government. Thirdly, Board members recruit editors through talks with the NMC and finally, the Commission appoints Managing Directors to head the government-owned newspapers through talks with the government. Participants 15 and 14 sided with the above participants but explained further that *human factors* sometimes weaken the structures as the comments below show:

There is a state-owned media and private media. In terms of influence, every one of us, if you get to know that a story is going to be published about you which is not favourable and you've got the means of influencing [the publication], you will influence it. The difference is the *authority* and the *power*. Fortunately for us and since we cannot forget the law, the constitution provides for the insulation of the state-owned media from governmental control therefore it is not the president who appoints the editor, so whereas in the past the president was appointing the editor and Managing Director and the implications about who pays the piper calls the tune but now, the president has nothing to do with the appointment, if anything at all, it cannot be a direct interference because the „decision to publish“ or „not to publish“ firmly rests with the editors and for that I can say if they fail, they cannot blame anybody for their failure because anybody who can influence may try to influence somehow. (Participant 15)

The above participant 15 established that naturally people resent negative news published about them and given the chance, they will thwart it. Constitutionally, the public media are safeguarded from controls of the ruling class by stripping of them power to appoint the entire management team of its own media firms. This curtailed the situation where owner, in this instance, the state, determines news content in that editors cannot be coerced to publish or shelve a story. However, in the respondent's view, the extreme scenario is an *indirect meddling* from external quarters. Thus, the management structures governing public media firms are so formidable that any external control should be blamed on editors who wield power to determine what comes out as news. Another, Participant 14, remarked:

In the print, there is no direct interference and I can say that for any government whether National Patriotic Party (NPP) or National Democratic Congress (NDC) who have been in power since 2000. If others come, it is going to be the same. You cannot have any

direct interference. For instance, *Daily Graphic* has nothing to do with government even though it is a state-owned newspaper. The *Graphic* boss is accountable to the NMC. It is the NMC that appoints the Board and the MD. Let's face it, there should be no fear if I am the MD of *Daily Graphic* that government can sack me. So, we must be fair to the system but is the human beings who operate the system so there could be some personal issues. For instance, I don't see anything wrong with Tony Blair calling Murdock if, in „*News of the World*“, there was something unfavourable you have said about my party so talk to your editor. The important thing is that you have given that man the freedom to choose. (Participant 14)

The print media has operated autonomously over successive governments and this trend will continue. To the above participant, Participant 14, external influence cannot happen directly because appointment procedures put a distance between a media house and its owner where no worker could be threatened on the basis of dismissal. The Managing Director of a public media newspaper is answerable to the Media Commission instead of government. Thus, a breakdown of these structures could be attributed to *human* and *personal factors*. In the participant's view, a follow-up call from government offices to express displeasure about a story concerning the government is a normal practice because the essential baseline in this interaction is that media is given the room to decide what is news. However, another respondent established (see quote from Participant 8 below) that government occasionally influences content by bringing to the attention of the editor, via telephone, articles in the paper that the government is unhappy about. The effect of this government-editor interaction makes the newspaper wary when commenting on sensitive areas of governance.

On ownership, government may influence but not always. Government points out to editor some of the headlines (the government) is displeased about. This happens through phone calls occasionally and this makes the paper cautious especially with issues of presidency and policy. The paper in such circumstances employs the inverted style. (Participant 8)

Participant 5 observed that government exercises some degree of control over the media firms it owns. Thus, the public media are not completely autonomous of government because they earn their income from there, irrespective of the fact that those media outlets accrue

advertising and source other revenue. Participant 5 argued that two factors point to this line of argument, firstly, occasionally some public media carry content that reflect government agendas and secondly, they lack the impetus to scrutinise wrongdoing in government:

There are a number of media establishments that belong to the state and there is that level of control over their operations and activities. I cannot wholeheartedly say that they operate fully independent[ly] once they derive their source of income from government, although they take adverts among others. They are still controlled in some way by government. Sometimes you read some state-owned media news and realise that this is indeed a government's hand. This greatly affects their operations because sometimes the paper cannot even do a critique of things that happen in government that are not right. (Participant 5)

From the above it can be seen that whereas *direct* control of state-owned newspapers is difficult due to legal structures put in place by the constitution, human and personal factors make *indirect* control possible. This is so because it appears that due to Ghana's thriving democracy coupled with growing literacy levels calculated to be 74.1% (refer Table 1.3 above), there is high probability that any direct interference will attract massive public outcry.

#### *6.1.1. Private ownership and control*

This theme explored the impact that private media ownership exerts on the operations of its newspapers, and most significantly, their independence. Some privately-owned newspapers tend to operate based on the owner's agenda, philosophy and preferences so some controls were evident within the private print media environment in Ghana. The following participants explain this:

Within the confines of newspaper or media operations, the contents and agenda set by any newspaper tend to be an agenda that is an extension of the ownership. The owners of the newspaper or media have a great influence on what is the content of the newspaper. I remember an instance where partisan and personal interests are what fuel the operations of newspapers here. So to that extent, the individual interests of the proprietor or publisher of a newspaper is usually paramount, that is what I have observed in what is put out there as public interest material. (Participant 3)

The above participant established that private media content within the Ghanaian newspaper environment is, to some extent, an integral part of the philosophy of the owner. Those who own the means of paper production have control over what eventually becomes news. In the opinion of this respondent, news churned out in Ghana's public sphere serves the personal desires of the owner instead of the interest of the public.

Also, a respondent explained: owners run newspaper outlet with diverse motives. Whereas business and profit motives propel the establishment of some newspaper firms, others are run to promote political ambitions. Beyond these objectives, the desires of newspaper owner cannot be ignored. To Participant 4, the only way to resist ownership interest is to quit the job:

Owners have various reasons for establishing a newspaper. Some may establish it for profit-making, which is purely a private enterprise, some for political reasons. They want to use it to champion their political aspirations. So, it depends on the motive but clearly you cannot discard the interests of your owner. It is like an owner of a car has engaged you as a driver to drive the car to safety. If the owner constantly influences you as a professional driver [you would be in danger]. I think I cannot be compelled to do what is against my professional ethics, the extreme is that I cannot be compelled to be here. (Participant 4)

Moreover, the some sections of the private sector of Ghana's print media lacks openness but they have made efforts to achieve it. As a result, ownership does not incorporate decisions of the very Board of Directors they have composed and also pay a daily wage, which, not entirely incidentally, is below the approved national level. Content published in the media landscape tends to meet the personal agenda of the owner. Any material contrary to this ideology is shelved. The voice below affirms this:

In private media usually the level of transparency is less [than in the state-owned media], although they strive to be transparent. For instance, though some private media have Boards, they are often side-lined and their decisions are not considered. Some private media owners in Ghana even pay less than the minimum wage which is a problem.

Private owners also do influence and determine the content. If an owner feels a story does not advance his/her course or affect it, then it is dropped. (Participant 5)

Furthermore, print media owners have their philosophies which determine editorial strategies. All these media establishments have lived to expectation with respect to sticking to their set ideologies. See response below:

Every media owner has his/her own agenda. At least every institution is supposed to have a strategic plan so in Ghana and certainly, all media houses have their own editorial policies and agenda. As much as possible, they are all executing their agenda to the best of their abilities. (Participant 13)

Also, Participant 10 was of the opinion that implementation of the purpose for establishing media house by its owners should not necessarily be misconstrued as a direct control of content. Beyond this, because proprietors use their own resources for running their establishments, controls will be evident if media practitioners are not given the freedom to work. Thus, the ideological objective(s) of a media outlet invariably draw clear-cut confines within which practitioners should report. Participant 10 explains:

Basically it depends on the philosophy of those who own the paper. Some set up the paper to promote their ideas, philosophy, principles and values. So, that goes a long way to determining what you carry and it does not mean direct influences in a way but of course, we know that there is this saying: „those who own the means of production controls mental production“. If the owners do not give free hand to media men to operate, definitely there will be influence of content. For example, *Public Agenda* is owned by Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) and [the NGO] stand for Sustainable Development, giving voice to the marginalised among others so if you are talking of sustainable development, good governance, voice to the disadvantaged, those things guide them [the newspaper] as to how they go about their news. Usually the paper talks about rule of law, promotion of rights, fair trade, and social justice among others. It's all about some paradigm within which they operate. You yourself cannot go outside because it will not be consistent with the philosophy and values of the owners. (Participant 10)

Finally, a participant summed it up that:

Owners can always influence the content because “he who pays the piper, calls the tune”. He has used his money to establish the paper so you can’t do anything against his interests. (Participant 4)

### 6.1.2 Diversity

This subject focused on the extent to which owners of print media outlet impact news content diversity. The study showed that ownership is positioned differently with respect to the multiplicity of content.

The participant below assessed news diversity on a different basis to that of the lenses of state and private media, and noted that all the public media are owned by the same entity (government) that permits coverage of subjects that embrace all sectors of the national economy. Thus, the state media devote different sections of their medium to convey assorted public interest materials. On the other hand, most private media ownership is dominated by „political proprietors” and this informs the question of why their agenda is politically-focused at the expense of other equally essential domains of society. Some private papers are partial and take sides in public debates to favour the partisan leanings of the proprietor. This shows most owners of private media do not offer the consuming populace diverse content so the *concept of development journalism* is given less space.

When you look at the state media, it has one owner, and that is the state, represented by the government in power. The ownership of the state newspapers actually allows a broad range of issues ranging from politics, environment, women, gender, children and all segments including rural reporting. They have metro and regional pages so they cover all aspects of human life. But when you come to [the] private press in Ghana and look at the ownership, most of them are owned by active politicians or allies of politicians, and because of that the issues they concentrate on are mostly politics. When you look at it, you also see that the politics are biased. If it favours my party or an official of my party, then they write well. If it is against my opponent, then they paint a negative picture so

they sacrifice some other vital aspect of society or human life in Ghana like the environment. Some of these papers just have a few pages or columns on [the] environment, a few have pages for gender or women's issue, few have children and other developmental issues. So when you look at the private papers, it is politics that carry the day at the expense of other developmental issues. (Participant 9)

Similarly, Participant 11 reiterated that political owners influence media to be politically diverse to the exclusion of some other sectors. As a result, the media environment witnesses a sameness of content and lacks pluralism. Two major media content diversification factors were identified in the Ghanaian print media environment: firstly, *media location-based language diversity* where outlets publish/air content in the dialect of the inhabitants; and secondly, *political orientation-based diversity* where diverse views come from different supporters of partisan groups. See below:

A large section of the media is owned by active members of political parties so they influence media in terms of diversity of political opinion. Beyond that, I don't see dramatic differences in terms of variety of social, cultural, ideological expressions. In other words, there is a certain level of consensus among the media or a certain level of lack of plurality of content. I don't know why that happens but of course when you go to any society, the news of the day is not going to be drastically different from this newspaper or that radio stations but if it is truly a pluralistic situation, it should have diverse commentary or analysis from diverse critical perspectives. Here you don't have that too often. So, I think there is weakness in the plurality of the content of media. The only level of diversity which is very healthy comes from two sources. One, the different languages different newspapers would use because of where they are located so if you are in Axim, Bolga or Kukurantumi, you will get your news radio station broadcasted in your language. You may also find some level of diversity in opinions in terms of political party affiliation but otherwise, it is not easy to find diverse analysis in terms of the intellectual component of the media. (Participant 11)

Participant 3, below, explains that society is composed of people with different political affiliations and this determines the sort of media material they consume. Thus, media consumers in the public sphere tilt towards media outlets that hold the same philosophy as them.

Furthermore, the respondent noted what seem to connote that society, i.e. newspaper consumers and readers, have no option and consume whatever media gives them, because they are in dire need of it.

[The] [m]ajority of news consumers are out there for the news and for public interests material, and for them, depending on what ideological or partisan leaning they have, they tend to align themselves with publications of media outlets that serve them [with] information that suits such leaning. But then, the human nature is such that our quest for information is almost insatiable and consumers consume information that is that is presented to them. (Participant 3)

## **6.2 Discussion**

This chapter delved into the degree to which *ownership* has impacted on the independence of the print media in Ghana. The study revealed that legal structures for the management of the state-owned media safeguard them from governmental control. Thus, controls of these media entities have been taken from the hands of government and assigned to NMC. The study argued that the state media is owned by the entire Ghanaian populace who are represented by the NMC to take decisions such as appointment of the Board, Managing Director and editors. *Daily Graphic* for instance is registered as a limited liability organisation and pays annual dividends to the state. The current management structures of state-owned print media in Ghana contrasts with the position of Ronnie Dugger, the founding editor of *Texas Observer* who remarked:

...keep in mind how the structure of corporate journalism works. The owner of the corporation appoints the CEO who appoints the manager who appoints the editors. Those [dependent]... editors hire and fire the reporters and decide what stories the reporters are assigned to write, what stories they are not assigned to write, what the stories that are published say and how they say it, and what stories get killed (Miller 2002).

There is no direct ownership control in the state print media in Ghana because editors reserve the

singular right to cover a story or not. The structure of management of state-owned print houses attempts to mitigate governmental influence, but the human elements mean that it has some flaws. It was evident from this study that government sometimes influences content of state-owned media through phone calls to editors to draw attention to unfavourable stories. As a result, the paper becomes careful when reporting on presidency and policy subjects. Related to the study of „who owns the media“, it was evident that ownership of state media may not to be the best because government employs its power to the advantage of its outlet with the motive of twisting or stifling content published (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova & Shleifer, 2001:5). The study identified two factors in this regard. Firstly, some state-owned media publish stories with undertones that favour government and secondly, such papers refrain from being critical on issues of government lapses.

The study showed that to some degree, the content of private media is an extension of owner's ideology and owners determine what is eventually published as news. Furthermore, the study established that material published as public interest content is rather the interest of the owner. Similarly, in his study of autonomy of journalists towards their superiors, Skovsgaard (2014:345) underscored: “[t]he concern is that news decisions will no longer be driven by a wish to serve the public interest, but rather by special interests – for example, political or economic”. Owners have established private print media houses in Ghana for business / profit and political motives, and since owner interest is pursued at all times, the only alternative to non-compliance by editor/reporter would be to quit the job. Content that does not advance owners' course, irrespective of its importance, is cut off. A study in Argentina showed that in instances where media practitioners [reporters and editors] try to be critical, they are frequently obstructed by political and economic desires of owners (Pinto, 2008). Furthermore, in Brazil a study concluded that in the event where owners are in the helm of affairs in the newsroom to spearhead their political or economic desires, there is a high chance that public interest news is sacrificed for personal interests. This owner-mediated practice leads to skewed news and condenses the substance of content for society (Hallow, 2011:350-1). For instance in India and some other countries, some owners of newspapers appointed themselves as editors, or basically refuse to hire one. This makes the medium prone to carrying the views of the proprietor in news (Ross, 1999:18). Beyond ownership influence of news content, different avenues together fund and influence media. These include advertisers, shareholders, government and other entities, but the

major motive of media owners is profit (Altschull, 1984:198; Djankov et al., 2001:5-6). The study revealed that the Ghanaian print media have stuck to the philosophy behind their establishments. However, they lack transparency to the extent that those with Boards do not factor in their decisions and pay low wages beneath the national ceiling.

In Ghana, ownership of print media impacts on diversity differently when comparing state to private media. The state print media have one owner who allows the publication of diverse content to cover all sectors of Ghana. The private print media on the other hand have large political ownership presence and most of them tend to narrow down issues of society to politics showing partiality to favour their political side, thus sacrificing diversity of content to include other spheres of society, so development journalism is not a priority. Opuamie-Ngoa (2010:11) for instance observed:

...objectivity as a journalistic paradigm had become antiquated. And when and where the media strives to perform, quite often it does so with some undertones, vested interests and „power-plays“ that smacks of the „master“'s voice“. The continents“ [i.e. African] media today seem to be at its best as proxies in the battle between rival political camps sowing hatred, cynicism, public apathy and divisiveness.

Ownership of some private print media in Ghana influences content in the direction of political diversity with respect to public views. This is consistent with the position that in Africa, tight legal frameworks were used to mute private-print outlets when they sporadically make efforts to publish diverse opinions that contradict the viewpoints of state-owned content (Aginam, 2005:125). With the intervention of private media into the market, competition was enhanced which enabled voters and citizens generally to be furnished with diverse and alternative opinions (Djankov, McLiesh, Nenova & Shleifer, 2001:5). However, in Ghana, they tend to cover similar issues in the media landscape and lack plurality. Thus, ownership often suggests some degree of actual or likely control which consequently serves as a limitation to plurality and diversity (Buckley et al., 2008). The study identified two forms of media diversity in the private sector. These are *language diversity* based on the native tongue of the locality to consume content and *political opinion diversity*. Beyond the necessity for diverse content, people choose specific media because it furnishes them with material consistent with their political

beliefs and the need for information generally is so indispensable that society consumes what is published. This is consistent with a study which showed that “In most countries the origin of the press is to a large extent political. Newspapers were either owned by or affiliated to political parties. Editors and journalists were active in politics and audiences were loyal to the newspaper supporting their preferred party” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In Ghana, state-owned print media published more diversified material that covers all sectors of the national economy in the public sphere. This is attributable to the fact that the state media is owned by a single entity. Most owners of private print media on the other hand tend to restrict diversity to the political sphere because they are either owned, affiliated or manned by active politicians or people aligned to political interests. Though diversity is essential, the readership align themselves to papers that furnish them content that meets their political beliefs. A legal structure put in place by Ghana’s fourth republican Constitution strips-off the organisation and management of state-owned print media from government and assigned it to the NMC. This safeguards the operations of state-owned print houses from government control. Occasional controls of state-owned media occur when government contact editors to point out stories they were displeased about. In the area of private media, owners’ desires circulate in the public sphere as society interest material and returns on investment, as well as political objectives, and are at the forefront of their establishment. Content that does not project owner desires does not see the light of day. Moreover, some owners of those with Boards tend to discard their suggestions into the running of the outlet. Ownership of both government and private media has implications for independence of the media (Ross, 1999:18) which is not fruitful for media’s development.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MEDIA DIVERSIFICATION: REDEFINING RELIANCE ON ADVERTISING FUNDING AND IMPACT ON MEDIA INDEPENDENCE

#### 7.0 Introduction

Considering the era of technological and economic instability which engulfed the media market globally from the beginning of the year 2000, media establishments were confronted with the challenge of reducing their reliance on traditional advertising incomes and seeking extra income stream opportunities (Chan-Olmsted and Chang, 2003:230). The advertising market and the impact it exerts on media, especially its editorial autonomy, has generated two dichotomous debates. Whereas on one side of the continuum, researchers have established that an increased advertising market leads to strengthened media independence because the media no longer need funding from government and partisan interests (Herd, 1952:65; Asquith, 1975:721; Besley and Prat, 2006; Petrova, 2011:805), on the other end, researchers have argued that advertising allocation, whether from government or enterprises, generally impacts negatively on editorial independence of media (McQuail, 1992:135; McQuail, 1994:142; Curran, 2002:150; Picard, 2004:54; Anderson and Gabszewicz, 2005:4).

Above all, it is generally established that advertising is a major source of income for media, and newspapers are no exception (Musa, 1996:85-6; Croteau and Hoynes, 1997:54; Wasserman and de Beer 2005:39; Lando, 2013:28). Commercialism in the media setting is blamed for the institution's inability to play its watchdog role as a fourth estate (Picard, 2004:54; Opuamie-Ngoa, 2010:11) because it has lost focus, but it appears to be the very means for the media to liberate itself beyond sourcing advertising revenue. As the World Association of Newspapers put it: "the sustenance and safeguarding of media independence depend critically on the financial stability of media establishments" (Modoux, 2011:45). However, the questions that arise are: Why should newspaper outlets suffocate financially if they are not able to tap into advertising revenue? Why is advertising revenue over-relied upon by newspaper outlets? Have newspaper outlets diversified their operations in terms of revenue generation sources beyond the

print media industry? Based on these, the current chapter firstly seeks to explore the extent to which the newspaper industry has over-relied on advertising revenue sources in Ghana; and secondly, to find out whether they have diversified their operations as a measure to expand their revenue generation streams. This study is expected to contribute significantly to the debate surrounding media funding and its influences on newspaper media, especially in Africa, and specifically in Ghana where there is little body of knowledge on this subject.

## **7.1 Results**

The study showed that Ghanaian newspapers rely on three major sources of revenue and these are advertising / public relations (PR), circulation sales and owner-funded sources. Among these, revenue from advertising funds most newspapers in Ghana. Moreover, some Ghanaian newspapers have diversified their operations with the objective to counteract over-reliance on advertising due to its effect on their independence and scanty revenue from circulation sales in the competitive media market. The results of this chapter are presented in the following thematic spheres: advertising over-reliance, sales from circulation and diversification for revenue generation.

### *7.1.0 Advertising over-dependence*

Investigation into this theme showed that most Ghanaian newspapers have over-relied on advertising as a revenue source. This over-dependence explains why most operators in the Ghanaian newspaper industry suffocate if they do not tap into advertising revenue. That is, they have not created formidable alternative channels to turn to if the door to advertising is shut. The following responses buttress the above stance.

I think in Ghana the media's over-concentration on „advertisement“ and „state advertisement“ for survival is a worry. Most of the media houses will not be able to operate if they do not get funding from advertisements – either private or public newspaper. (Participant 3)

The above participant explains that advertising is a single revenue stream that sustains newspapers in Ghana and without it most of them will shut down. This is based on the fact that

newspapers have given less or no attention to other revenue sources. Furthermore, this is compounded by the fact that some of these advertisements are government-sponsored and an over-reliance on state advertising does not augur well for the development of the media, especially in relation to its autonomy. This presupposes that both state and privately-owned newspapers will collapse if funding from advertising is curtailed. In a similar argument, another respondent observed:

To a very large extent, advertisement considerations drive the newspaper business in Ghana because most publications do not have wide circulation and so the media houses depend more on advertisements to generate revenue so they wouldn't want to „shoot themselves in the foot“ by putting out contents (sic) that hurts the advertisers. It is to a large extent, a major factor and consideration for media houses. There are two-fold [considerations]. In terms of funding, the state media depends almost solely on government interventions. They generate their revenue but are accountable to the state authorities who are responsible for their existence or operations; but in terms of the private media, their revenue depends mostly from private companies who advertise in their media. (Participant 6)

The above participant attributes newspapers' over-reliance on advertising to scanty circulation and, subsequently, meagre revenue from its sale. It explains that the importance of advertising in the running of Ghanaian newspapers leaves little or no room for them to exhibit independence with respect to the stories they churn out for fear of losing future contracts. The participant further observed that beyond Ghanaian newspapers' general reliance on advertising, government papers, in addition to fishing for their own revenue, they also rely on central government (as owners) for interventions where necessary, while privately-owned papers rely exclusively on corporate advertising. This shows that ownership is inseparable from issues of media funding, and hence plays a vital role in the implications on media independence. Additionally, another participant in a similar argument maintained that:

...it is all because of the circumstances within which we find ourselves in this country. Of course, the price for newspapers is generally low and if you will have to depend on sales,

you may even find it difficult to print, so a chunk of your revenue tend to come from adverts. The media is then compelled to rely on adverts but not because it is something they wish to. The circumstances have compelled them. (Participant 10)

However, the position of another respondent to some extent contrasts with the above argument as the response below shows:

...the media has over-relied on advertising. For revenue generation, most newspapers look forward to it but if they don't get it, they still remain in business. By this, the conclusion one could draw is that they do some sales of the newspapers to get revenue because the advertising in Ghana is concentrated in just some few newspapers like *Daily Graphic*, *Business & Financial Times*, *Ghanaian Times* and *Daily Guide*. Most private newspapers do not get the adverts so one cannot say that they concentrate on advertising for revenue. That will not be fair. (Participant 7)

Having concurred that generally newspapers have over-dependend on advertising, this participant also observed that the term "concentration of advertising" is at work within the newspaper industry in Ghana instead of over-dependence on advertising by all newspapers. By this term, the chunk of advertising is published in few papers at the exclusion of majority of the newspapers in the media market especially the private ones. This development shows that most papers go without major advertising, and considering the papers that receive a good deal of advertising (according to participant 7's observation above) we can see that government papers receive the most. As to why most papers in Ghana over-rely on advertising, a participant of a state-owned newspaper argued:

Once we increase cover price, sales will reduce or stagnate so we try to „synchronise and balance the equation“, thus the tendency to fall [back] on advertisements. By this, there is over-reliance on advertising but it is the strategy to go by. Nevertheless, this is not the best practice because we are looking at adverts taking 40% and content 60% [of the print space], but now it is rather 55% or 60% for adverts and 40% or 45% for content. Above all, the firm needs to meet its financial commitments through salaries, other staff entitlements and emoluments therefore we look at areas that can best help advance our course. (Participant 2)

The participant above attributes over-reliance by most papers on advertising to reader's unpreparedness / inability to pay for increases in the price of the paper. Thus, any attempt to earn extra revenue through an increase of price of the paper rather leads to a fall in revenue, and thus would require newspapers to tap into advertising for funding the paper and businesses generally become the only available option. The participant agreed that currently, the content-mix of his paper needs modification because advertising is assigned more content space, which overshadows the main watchdog responsibility of the fourth estate which is the provision of factual stories that are of public interest instead of the reverse. To this participant, efforts are made to ensure 50-50 equal content composition. This state of affairs confirms the escalating global trends in „media commercialisation“, and this is evident in the newspaper landscape in Ghana. As a firm, the need to fund its numerous operations is so imperative that it is given prominence over public interest content. In a similar framing, another participant further reiterated:

There are two sides to whether the print media has over-relied on advertising and it could be *yes* and *no*. The reasons are that in this part of the world incomes are generally very low and therefore any attempt at increasing the cover price of newspaper derails whatever arrangements you have made as a firm, that is, projections (estimates) are thrown overboard because there are competing interests. Therefore, the buyer may not even buy the paper if he gets so much exposure from the broadcasting stations. Considering the limitedness of increasing revenue from the market through cover price sales, the tendency is to shift the increase into advertising whose rates are generally borne by big businesses. We have structured our operations in such a way that we have newspapers that target the medium and small-scale ventures and the big multi-nationals among others. They advertise in our flagship paper, the *Daily Graphic*, but some other companies are even cutting down on advertising. However, in other areas like obituary even when we increase the rates, people still patronise it. (Participant 8)

### *7.1.1 Sales from circulation*

The study showed that a section of the newspaper community gets little or no advertising interest in their papers. This theme analyses the extent of newspaper reliance on circulation in

comparison to advertising to fund their operations. The following responses shed light in this regard.

If you look through the media you will see particularly that there are a lot of the newspapers who do not have enough advertisements so this means that they survive not on advertisement but on content through circulation. Thus, they rely more on circulation than on advertisement for their survival and operations. (Participant 1)

The above response paints a picture that the market situation in Ghana leaves some papers with the bulk of advertising with the majority of the papers in the same media landscape getting a miniscule amount. With such development, papers that fall within the „few or no advert“ category rely on sales from circulation to sustain themselves in business. This implies that without advertising, such papers will not suffocate for lack of funding. Furthermore, a respondent re-emphasised the necessity for newspapers to rely on advertising as the surest and inevitable way to make returns as a media establishment, however, he made a similar argument that with advertising revenue concentrated in few papers, circulation sales funds the other papers. The response below attests this fact:

Ah! How don't you rely on advertising? You see you have to. You have to over-rely on it if you want to make good money. You need to – but in our own case it doesn't [materialise]. You need [advertising] but that is not the reality, so you have a situation where maybe you have the larger chunk of your revenue from sales of the paper from the cover price. So that [i.e. attracting advertising] is the ideal thing but that is not the situation in our context. (Participant 4)

Capitalising on the concentration of advertising market in few papers, the participant below argues that both streams of revenue are not reliable and thus cannot sustain the running of most of the newspapers in Ghana, especially the private ones. Due to the weak financial state of most of these papers, they publish fewer pages compared to government papers, which circulate nationwide. Papers with political ideologies are mainly funded by their respective owners to specific agenda. See the response below for elaboration. In response to the question of whether private newspapers are reliant on advertising, the respondent commented:

I don't think so because they rarely get adverts. A few papers get but there are some papers that can go for weeks, months without any advert and you ask yourself: How do they survive with that? And then selling too, they don't buy a lot that is why most of the papers have twelve-pages, fifteen-pages, and eighteen-pages. They are there for a political agenda so people are ready to put in money to sponsor them. Advertisements are hard to get and only [appear in] the state media, especially [*Daily*] *Graphic*. They have wide coverage so advertisers prefer to advertise in the state media but as for the private media, except the *Daily Guide*. After *Daily Graphic*, they are second in circulation. Apart from them, adverts are hard to come by. The papers that actually get adverts are *Business & Financial Times*, *Business Week* among others. As for the political papers, they don't really depend on adverts but on their owners and sponsors who finance them. (Participant 9)

Overall, on the question of how Ghanaian newspapers are funded beyond advertising and circulation sales streams, a respondent explained that private owners finance their papers to spearhead the agenda of the owners, and community-based ones get sponsorship:

Of course they survive from political patronage. Those who have sports papers, they also survive on sports patronage. We have sports organisations and institutions and most of them depend on their paymasters. That is why we have papers like *Kotoko Sponsor*, *Hearts of Oak*, *Sports Wonders* and various newspapers that champion [the] football cause. [The] majority of the newspapers don't have a salary structure in place so how much more do you pay your staff well. Their conditions of service is [are] poor. (Participant 13)

### 7.1.2 Diversification

Having established that in the Ghanaian newspaper market, advertising is concentrated in some selected papers while the majority of the papers in the same industry publish with few or no advertising, and that circulation sales are meagre due to unaffordability, this subject of diversification explored the extent to which newspapers have ventured into other revenue-

generation streams to avoid or reduce over-reliance on advertising revenue. They study revealed the following responses:

I see very few operating establishments diversifying their models. A couple of newspapers in Accra or in Ghana, numbering probably about six, have been able to diversify their operations in event organisation, public relations and advertisements and showbiz and have used their vehicle to promote show business. Just a few do that but the bulk of the operators are just doing pure prints „mortar and brick“ business. No, we do not have anything that is outside the main media industry. A lot of them haven't seen the value to be derived from going into, for example, research and consultancy for big companies because probably we do not have the resources to go into such area so we cannot get there. We tend to limit ourselves to our comfort zones which are the media and public relations (PR) etc., but I think that it would help greatly if media houses can get big contracts from research companies. (Participant 3)

The respondent above explains that media diversification is an essential move for the newspapers in Ghana; however, most outlets have not embraced this strategy of modifying their business models for purposes of revenue generation. The majority of them have not recognised the necessity to venture into other business areas. These papers have stuck to their traditional business of the printed publication of daily news because they lack the required capital to venture into new business avenues. In a similar argument, another participant remarked:

I think I will like to make this position very clear because when you talk about „diversification“ then you are talking about *innovation* and *business initiatives* but unfortunately for us in Ghana, we have print media owners who are not business-minded of the word. You see, let me say that most of them are crusaders who actually fought for Constitutional rule like our pre-independence or colonial era where those who fought for independence were not businessmen but they were operating newspapers: two-page, four-page, and leaflets which actually accelerated our independen[ce] struggle. The same can be said of today's type of newspaper publishers and media owners. So the majority of them are not businessmen but for those who are businessmen, I can say they belong to the

electronic media, like the owners of the radio and TV stations. They are businessmen who decided to invest into television and radio stations. But when it comes to the print media, believe me, about 98% of our members are journalists who decided to create a job for themselves. So the majority of them are not business men and women. No! Not all. (Participant 13)

The above participant identified two major reasons that explain why most Ghanaian newspapers have not diversified the models of their firms. Firstly, the historical objective of the creation of most newspapers outlets was more political than economic. The descriptions given to the volume of publication of these papers suggest that most of them are very „small outlets“ and financially feeble. This to some extent explains why it has been previously discussed above that most of them neither get funding from advertising nor circulation sales (see chapters five and six). Thus, it is not a coincidence that they tend to be financed by their political players. Secondly, it follows that the desires of these owners are distanced utterly from business motives. These developments can hardly make many of the Ghanaian papers independent in their reportage because there is the likelihood that they speak the mind of their funders instead of the mind of the public, at whose service the fourth estate functions. By this, the buzzword „diversification“ is absent in the operational equation of most papers in Ghana. Furthermore, two participants argued:

Media ownership does not give you the opportunity to diversify. The man who is investing in that media wants you to carry a certain political story in the front page and that is it. He is not thinking about allowing the institution to grow such that it will diversify into other areas and make more money there and then continue to provide the services you want to provide the public. In my institution for instance, we used to have Commercial Printing Department but it is closed down. The only newspaper institution that I can talk about has diversified today is *Daily Graphic* because they have a packaging unit, and also advertises that they sell a bond paper, and they do other things like courier services – so they may be diversified; but [but] not majority of newspapers in Ghana. They are not doing anything as far as I am concerned. (Participant 7)

I think it is the *Daily Graphic* that has successfully diversified into other businesses. They have a packaging business that is many decades old which gives them a lot of money. A lot of wrappers on many products – they produce them. They now have also entered into the courier service and about a few months ago they launched it. So, they are the only business I can say have diversified elsewhere into other areas for incomes outside the strictly newspaper business. The rest, I don't see that. Even the *Ghanaian Times*, I don't see that they have any such business. (Participant 11)

Like Participant 13, both the above participants buttressed the stance that most newspapers in Ghana only print news and have not entered into other revenue generation ventures. According to them, only the state-owned *Daily Graphic* operates other production lines that give it extra money. Participant 7 noted that most of the papers have not diversified because persons or organisations (owners) who gave birth to them do not endorse such a move. Thus, the priority of owners is to channel the newspapers' political story to the populace to project its image. Such a custom in the running of newspapers has a high tendency to make them utterly financially dependent on their owners, especially in situations where most of them have no Boards. Owners single-handedly determine „what is news“. Lastly, a respondent explained:

It is to a little extent because a few have started to diversify to generate funds to support the paper itself, such as buying a printing press. *Daily Guide* has their own printing press so they do printing for some other papers and other clients to get money. *The Enquirer*, I know also ha[s] a printing press to do other business to support their main newspaper business, which they don't get a lot of money from. They don't even make [a] profit nor break even from the sale of the newspapers and they also don't get adverts. Recently, *Insight Newspaper* also got a printing press and they are printing commercially to augment the finances of the business. That is why in [our newspaper] we are also looking forward to enter into it [printing], but we are a „not for profit-making organisation“. It is a partnership limited by guarantee so we are entitled in a way to apply for funds from the „Skills Development Fund“ and we are aiming to get some papers that are neutral, not politically aligned, so that we come together and also acquire a printing press to support us. (Participant 9)

Apart from *Daily Graphic* which has diversified into other ventures beyond printing (courier service), the above participant observed that the few others who have followed suit are all in the „printing press“ business. With this, it is expected that they are able to print their own daily newspapers easily at a lesser cost and also accept other jobs to sustain the outlet. For a non-profit outlet to seek partnership with non-political and objective paper suggests that papers with such orientations are pervasive in Ghana.

## **7.2 Discussion**

This chapter delved into the extent to which Ghanaian newspapers have diversified their operations and whether they have over-relied on advertising as a source of revenue which tends to cripple their reporting autonomy. Overall, the work revealed that generally in Ghana, both public and private newspapers over-rely on advertising for funding and will struggle to survive if revenue does not trickle down to them from it. In this regard, the study showed that newspapers“ over-reliance on advertising does not augur well for their autonomy, especially in the Ghanaian landscape where government also gives lots of advertising. This finding is reflected in the following assertion: “Media organisations are cautious and inhibited not to upset the revenue sources that fund them, especially big private business organisations; not overlooking the fact that governments also often tend to be the single largest advertising source” (McQuail, 1992:135). There is a „concentration of advertising“ phenomenon in the Ghanaian newspaper market that places advertising in few papers such as the *Daily Graphic*, *Business & Financial Times*, *Ghanaian Times*, *Business Week* and the *Daily Guide*, and this leaves many of the small private papers to go without advertisements. By this, the principle of „circulation spiral“ is evident in Ghana. This is the situation where leading financially and economically stable newspapers, due to their widest circulation reach in the market, pull the existing audience (customers) of weak papers as well as their incomes from advertising regardless of how close their circulation are (Picard, 2004:111). This is evident in the Ghanaian newspaper market.

A large section of the newspaper industry target *circulation sales* as the expected revenue source to fund their papers beyond advertising but actual sales are insignificant to sustain operations. Those papers that neither get advertising nor circulation sales see both streams as

unreliable. Apart from these two sources above, newspapers in Ghana also sources revenue from public relations, show business (show-biz), sponsorships and owner-funded sources who may be politicians, private investors or non-governmental organisations. This is consistent with a study in Kenya that showed that the Kenyan media sources its revenue from several spheres including sales from paper, sponsorship programmes, printing commercially and advertising (IREX, 2010:207). Despite these sources, two major reasons account for why newspapers in Ghana still over-rely on advertising. Firstly, newspaper consumers are unprepared and/or unable to pay for increases in the price of the paper. This suffocates newspaper outlets because increases in the production cost of the paper are not commensurate with increases in the price of the product (newspaper). Consequently, the former makes sales from these papers generally very low. This over-reliance on advertising is exemplified by the fact that most of the state-owned papers run a 55-60 percent and 40-45 percent content-mix where the former is advertising and the latter represents public interest stories which in itself is a revelation that indicates that Ghana's print media has become commercialised. This practice contrasts sharply with global convention as IREX (2010:207) recorded: "In terms of the balance between news and advertising, editors face pressure to give more space to advertising than stories, thereby violating common international standards of 60 to 40 percent for news and advertisements respectively".

It is essential for newspapers in Ghana to diversify their operations as a revenue generation measure, but the study showed that few have undertaken that move in the market. Those that have successfully managed such diversification include *Daily Graphic*, *Daily Guide*, *The Enquirer* and *Insight Newspaper*. However, it is striking to note that all these outlets have diversified within the traditional media with extensions into commercial printing. The only exception is the *Daily Graphic* which has ventured into other business avenues beyond the media sector into packaging and a courier service. Even the in-house commercial printing press operated by the government-owned *Ghanaian Times* newspaper collapsed. Furthermore, the study showed that extra revenue streams may help reduce reliance on advertising in Ghana, but the reality is that diversification into business ventures that still require „contract favours“ from big corporate entities will continue to put media's independence in doubt. For instance, a study in Kenya showed that though advertising provides a chunk of their revenue, the other revenue sources, especially from huge corporate entities, equally influenced media (IREX, 2010:207).

Through diversification, media could achieve their objective of being less reliant on government and corporate advertising to strengthen their autonomy if they remain very *competitive* in their new job areas. The attainment of such a standard will label their new specialised business areas as „attractors of contracts“ instead of „beggars of contracts“ which has favouritism strings attached. Three major factors answer why most outlets have not diversified. These are, firstly, the inability to raise the required capital to venture into new business areas; secondly, the historical motive for the establishment of newspapers in Ghana was originally political-focused and the landscape has not changed much; and finally, owners are not business-minded and do not encourage diversification thus making some of these papers behave as representatives of their funders instead of representing the masses. Edith Darkwa, editor of the *Business and Financial Times* (B&FT) based in Accra explained, that the paper has diversified globally and operates in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. This to ensure that diversification enables them (the firm) to accrue revenue from both internal and external domains (Lang and Stulz, 1994 cited in Jung and Chan-Olmsted, 2005:184).

### **7.3 Conclusion**

It is through a boom in the advertising market, particularly from corporate entities through which media emerged as a strong force with respect to its autonomy (Asquith, 1975:721; Curran, 2002:79). The extent of reliance as a lone income by newspapers in Ghana is deemed as over-reliance and this threatens their very independence. This is because it is notable that firstly, *all* papers yearn to publish advertising to raise income to cover production cost, but the reality is that most of them do not get it as it is concentrated in few papers. These latter newspapers have become commoditised so much so that they give more content space to „sell products“ compared to that for „public-concerned stories“. Revenue from circulation sales, the next option for these papers is insignificant. Newspapers in Ghana have the option to diversify their operations for revenue generation purpose so as to escape the conditions that comes with advertising contract favours but most of these papers have remained small outlets, publish few pages with limited circulation and their ideologies have been political. They have not diversified their business models because either they cannot raise needed capital or ownership does not subscribe to the diversification strategy. Thus, in terms of the influence funding has on the independence of media houses in Ghana, diversification has not done much in reversing this state of affairs.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### ACHIEVING MEDIA INDEPENDENCE THROUGH LEGAL AND REGULATORY MEASURES: A FORMALITY OR REALITY?

#### 8.0 Introduction

Ghana's media history dates back to 1822 under the British colonial authority but her struggles to achieve independence have been intercepted by legal and regulatory frameworks (Anokwa, 1997:9) and these, till the present time, seem to linger on in a disguised order. Between the periods spanning 1957-1981, Ghana had three civilian Heads of States interspersed with many military rulers (Rockson, 1990:39; Afrimap, 2007:18) but embraced democratic rule fully from 1992 with a constitution that provides for independence of the media and of expression. The question is: are these provisions enforced and has the media felt their positive impact? For instance, in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region only one country does not have constitutional guarantee for media freedom; but in each country, the degree to these freedoms depends on whether its constitution expressly provides for the freedom, the right to information access, and whether restrictions are placed on the degree to which media freedom may be limited or derogated on „national security“ grounds (Kanyongolo, 1996:2). In America for instance, the term *national interest* has been employed as a mechanism to regulate and stifle smooth information flow in the name of protecting the security of the state (Wasserman and de Beer, 2005:45) despite the constitutional provisions in that country that guarantee media freedom. By this, most constitutions or regulations pay lip service to the principle of media freedom and of expression because their practices usually are utterly different (Nixon, 1960:17). Thus, provisions on media freedom do not reflect what transpires in the media landscape (Ogbondah, 2002; Maina, 2011; Senghore, 2011; Duncan, 2011). This chapter investigates the extent to which laws and regulations impact on the freedom of the Ghanaian print media (newspapers) under its current fourth republic and examines whether the constitution has lived up to its provisions.

## 8.1 Results

The study identified five major legal spheres in relation to print media independence, and these are presented under the following identified themes: Constitutional enforcement; information law; deterring media laws; court adjudication; and the autonomy of National Media Commission (NMC).

### *8.1.0 Constitutional enforcement*

This theme seeks to find out whether the media has enjoyed freedom beyond the constitutional provisions. Overall, participants responded that the Ghanaian print media has felt the positive impact of the provisions on media independence spelt in the 1992 constitution on the basis that hitherto, no constitution (First, Second and Third Republics) guaranteed the media's freedom as categorically as it is depicted under the Fourth Republic. These are reflected in the following responses:

We have a very liberal constitution that provides for a wide range of freedoms and guarantees media freedom specifically. This is the first time in our legal history that a constitution makes reference to media freedom, otherwise in the previous ones it was about *basic freedoms* that is why we cannot ignore the provisions in this constitution. But beyond these provisions, I think the Ghanaian media has lived the constitution's provisions because you have divergent views and contrary positions and there are very vibrant debates in the media. Even in the state-owned media, which before 1992 people used to describe them as the mouthpieces of the government, today, one can see the open criticism of government policy and direct avenues of people expressing their disagreement with what government is doing or somebody taking on government in a very open way. (Participant 1)

The above highlights that freedom of expression is not limited to the media alone, but to the entire citizenry. This has widened discourse in the public sphere in a manner without fear of intimidation. With media freedoms being clearly stipulated in the constitution, media

practitioners and society have legal basis to protect their freedom of expression using the very legal document to back their actions at the law court. Furthermore, other respondents explained:

The law is so explicit and categorical so it makes it difficult for any government to have control over the media in terms of content. If you look at the state media, the NMC has been saddled with that responsibility of making appointments of [Chief Executive Officers] CEOs. So they have taken the control completely from the arms of the government. So clearly, looking at the content, nobody is under duress to do publication or air the news. I think by and large, the constitutional provision is strictly adhered to. (Participant 4)

Relatively, the press since the Fourth Republic has been given quite some freedom or leeway to operate. Since the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law, it gave the press a lot of impetus to conduct itself as enshrined in its ethics and as evidence of this, we in the print media saw the boom and the influx of several media houses because apparently they want to tap from this newfound freedom they have acquired. (Participant 3)

Again, the above responses indicate that the guaranteed media independence in the constitution has impacted positively on the media landscape. With the creation of the NMC by the constitution as a regulator, the Commission has the legal right to appoint CEOs of state-owned media and it has remained so, thus obscuring government's role. However, when the constitution was promulgated in 1992, the Criminal Libel Law was still on the statute books. This presupposes (see participant 3) that the media remained suppressed for nine years until the abolishment of the latter by parliament in 2001. This position holds on grounds that the constitution was promulgated during the administration of a military government that then gave way for democratic ideals.

Furthermore, the study showed that there were no strict legal impediments to establishing a print medium. The law only prescribed the processes through which to register the media firms. This, some participants admitted that the legal flexibility to run an outlet is evidenced by the government-private media ownership mix. See responses below:

It is pretty much easier in Ghana than elsewhere in Africa. Any Ghanaian can establish [a] print media outlet. The requirement is to register the company at the Registrar-General Department and state the business area (media) and receive endorsement from the NMC. Finally, a certificate is issued to that effect to start operation to publish either a two, four-page to 100-page newspapers and more. (Participant 3)

The above position demonstrates that the law is very flexible in terms of the creation of a print medium, so much so that it is no coincidence that when compared to elsewhere in Africa, it is easier in Ghana than other countries to start a newspaper outlet. Moreover, the legal flexibility involved in starting a print media organisation also allows foreign non-Ghanaian citizens to register, own and run newspapers in the Ghanaian print market (see participant 15 below). This shows that ownership in the print media landscape is dominated by individual operators.

The NMC is the institution mandated to register the print media and it does not put restrictions in the way of anyone who wants to run a newspaper business in Ghana. There are a lot of Nigerians who are running newspaper in Ghana. The law does not restrict to citizens of Ghana therefore anybody can register a paper. (Participant 15)

#### *8.1.1 Autonomy and application of NMC regulation(s)*

The constitution created a National Media Commission (NMC) as a regulatory body to insulate the state-owned media from government influences. The purpose of this theme is to find out the extent to which the NMC is able to execute its functions freely without external influences as provided for in the constitution. The majority of the participants recorded that the NMC is autonomous while a few noted that government can influence it through its representatives on the Commission's Board. However, they explained that as to whether their independence reflects in their ability to effectively regulate the media landscape is another question. The following responses are evident:

The NMC is the most independent regulatory body we have in this country. We have four governance institutions under the fourth republican constitution made up of the NMC, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, National Commission for Civic

Education and the Electoral Commission. Among the four, the other three Commissioners are appointed by the president. It is only NMC that is independent in the true sense of the word simply because we have representatives who constitute an 18-member Commission so that is the most independent commission. You just cannot actually manipulate the membership of the NMC and with my experience, none of the Commissioners could actually be dictated to. They are the freest body that we have now in the country. (Participant 13)

From the above response, the autonomous stature of the Commission is attributed solely to its mode of composition by different sections of civil society as provided for by the constitution. By this, it makes the Commissioner accountable to board of the Commission instead of the ruling government. However, some participants pointed out that the president has representation on the board through which he can influence the Commission's decision(s), although, others hold the view that government does not have the majority to overturn the board's rulings.

The 1992 constitution provides for the NMC and its composition, functions and mandate. There is also an Act [NMC Act] that operationalises the Media Commission. But talking about it functions, I think it plays its functions very well and has freedom to operate. The problem is that government appoints three people into the Commission so these members go there to champion the cause of the president, government and party in power. Those other people who are professionals on the Commission will also like to uphold the independence of the media so there are always challenges. (Participant 9)

The NMC is financed exclusively by the ruling government. This suggests that their operational efficacy is glued firmly to a financial resource which firstly, is inadequate and secondly, not released on time. The constitution *legally* safeguards the independent of the NMC alright but *economically* they remain dependent and can be influenced remotely to some extent. For instance, the NMC does not even own a website as at the time of this study in 2014. With their hands tied financially, the question of how they could take decisions against the very hand that feeds them is a major concern, thus compromising the NMC's autonomy. This, to some degree,

is reminiscent of the constitution's guarantees on media independence vis-à-vis the lack of Freedom of Information Law to make it functional. See the response below:

[The] NMC is supposed to be an autonomous body and also expected to practice in a way deemed fit because their cardinal mandate is to ensure high journalistic standards in the country. They are supposed to do these things but are limited by funding because the government has to provide them with the funds to operate effectively. According to sources, the funds do not come as they may have wished it [should] come and therefore it inhibits them in their work. In fact this year [2014], up to about the first quarter, they had not received their subvention and I don't know the status now but I think that they are facing few challenges in terms of funds to operate. Regarding independence, I think they have it absolutely because they are made up of certain bodies that come together to form the Commission. (Participant 7)

Furthermore, beyond the NMC's financial dependence on the executive, the constitution leaves the Commission powerless to execute its mandate. Thus, it lacks power to hand down punitive rulings on media outlets / journalists who flout the Commission's regulations. Its role assigned by the constitution was merely *advisory* rather than *disciplinary*. These best explains why the some media practitioners flout orders of their own parent regulatory body. It appears the impression that the media fraternity themselves do not regard the NMC, aggrieved persons/bodies defamed have also lost confidence in its mediation and prefers the courts instead. See response below:

The challenge is that the NMC Act does not actually empower it to give sanctions to violators of media ethics and professional codes so it is just a matter of *moral persuasion*. If I defame somebody, what happens is that the person will lay a complaint before the Commission and they will invite me so that they try to settle it. At the end of the day, they will ask you to retract it and sometimes apologise as well. What happens usually is that some of these journalists, I don't want to describe as unprofessional. They don't respect the Commission. Somebody lays a complaint and you invite them and they will not go and the Commission does not have the legal or coercive power to compel them

like subpoena them as a court will do. At the end of the day, people don't like to send their cases to them. Some will just resign or appeal to the editors or friends who know the editor to retract or apologise. Those who actually want to clear their names will go to the law courts. (Participant 9)

From the above, it is to some extent arguable that the constitution has done its part to create the NMC but the media fraternity have not contributed their quota by giving due recognition to the Commission. The disrespect media accords the NMC explain the height of unprofessionalism in the print media landscape.

### *8.1.2 Information law*

This theme explored the reason why Ghana has no Right to Information Law (RTIL). All respondents noted that free information access by civil society, especially the media, would enhance the work of media through accurate reportage. However currently, Ghana has no law that permits free information access. The sub-themes that emerged in this regard are *political will* and *stalemate over content of Bill*. To shed lights on the state of information access in the print media landscape, the following is evident:

Currently, access to information is limited in Ghana: Generally, the Communication Ministry (formerly Ministry of Information and Media Relations) is very inefficient in providing adequate, relevant information to the media and the population. This is highly due to organisational challenges within the Ministry and especially [has] been a problem under the [present] government. Currently the provision of information has some authoritarian characteristics, where information and party propaganda are mixed. Information is not objective but frames the NDC in the best way possible. Furthermore, the government tries to silent critical voices. (Participant 12)

### 8.1.2.1 Political will

All the participants indicated that the passage of the *Freedom of Information Bill* into law has been delayed because the Ghanaian political authorities are unprepared to live with a Right to Information Law (RTIL). The following responses point to that fact:

Ghana has actually drafted the Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB) and it has been on the drawing board for several years, probably up to a decade now. It is now awaiting parliamentary and cabinet accents. The reason that I anticipate [the parliament] to have delayed the enactment of this law is that the executive arm of government is reluctant in giving the press the „last mile of freedom“ or the last mile of having constitutionally endorsed access to information. Otherwise, the deal is still on paper and as at now, we don“t have an enforced freedom of information law in operation. (Participant 3)

The above suggests that without a RTIL, the independent operation of the media is incomplete. Thus, to be truly independent means the media’s ability to request information and receive it without question or hassle, in order to effectively educate and inform. It signals to the political class that its co-operation to pass the Bill means signing its own „death warrant“ because it will compel them to give information to the media. As defined by the constitution as the fourth estate, the Ghanaian media would stand very independently when they receive the „final baton“ (the RTIL) and this is what government is not comfortable with. Other responses notes:

The Bill has been pending only God knows for “Kojo O...O” [Ghanaian jargon: connoting a very, very long time] to this period. Every government *tries to proclaim* they are for press freedom but when it comes to pushing through the FOIB, it’s been delayed. The last governments tried even from the NPP [National Patriotic Party] to Prof. Mills. Before the last parliament was dissolved, the Majority Leader said it was his priority. This government came (2012), it is almost two years and they said they are going to pass it but we haven’t seen much. (Participant 4)

Governments since the Second Republic have been dilly-dallying. No government has shown real commitment to it. The Bill is in parliament now and as far as some of us are concerned, the Bill is not a good Bill, the provisions are not very enabling of citizens RTI being held by government or public institutions and agencies. So, one can say that the politicians have no real commitment to enhancing citizen's access to information. I think that is the explanation one can give to, that is, our political class particularly in their political parties and in government have not shown any commitment to people's freedom to access information. (Participant 11)

The above responses suggest that unwillingness on the part of executive transcends over successive governments (NPP and NDC) who have ruled Ghana from the Fourth Republic. These parties have capitalised on the desire to pass the Bill merely as a propaganda subject but without any real intentions. The political unwillingness to pass the Bill becomes more pronounced when tracked historically. Ghana under the governments of Dr. Busia and Dr. Limann in the Second and Third Republics respectively suffered the same fate. Also, politicians perceive the Ghanaian media is free enough to function effectively so that they do not require right to information legislation. See response below:

It is our political leaders who are afraid of the RTI. I have come across politicians who have said: Ah! But you people, look at all the troubles you are causing us, you want to add freedom of information law too? Already ha-ha-ha [laughed] ... we could not take the heat and you want us to add more. But, that is the only means to get authentic information out so that electorates can also make informed choices. (Participant 14)

#### *8.1.2.2. Stalemate over content of Bill*

Secondly, participants indicated that the Bill has been delayed because it does not favour civil society. They noted that the Bill if passed now will not enhance access to information avenues and will still enable government and other institutions to hold information. Some of

these concerns include the duration to obtain information requested and information from some sectors are restricted etc.

Clearly, they [the government] want to have certain contents in the law while the civil society groups, especially the Coalition for FOI, are against them – so clearly there is some kind of bone of contention. There are certain areas they think [in which] it needs to be refined because it gives the government the chance to still possess some amount of information without releasing it. There is also a monetary value that one has to pay. All these are creating the bone of contention which is also stalling the passage of the Bill. (Participant 4)

The above posture of the ruling class suggests that they have something to conceal from the ruled (civil society) and thus are unprepared to endorse a law that will back the media's demands for information to be disclosed, should they refuse disclosure. Moreover, the government is very aware of the poor financial position of media so the payment of money as a condition to secure information will be a major hindrance for them. This will enable government to withhold information. Another respondent pointed to the stalemate as follows:

Part of the problem is the inability of civil or public servants to effectively package and manage information, so it appears they are hiding under the cloak of the Official Secret Act. But that law should be passed because part of the guarantee of people's access to information requires the passage of the law to give meaning to the realisation of that right. Secondly, the law is not passed because there is a strong lobby. The Coalition on the FOI is fighting and their problem is that there are so many *don'ts* in the draft. Their argument is that if the law is supposed to facilitate, then it should not be clogging so they want as many of the "You cannot!!... You cannot!!" to be removed so that it is replaced with "You can!! ... You can!!"... Also, the processes take too long because information can lose its effectiveness with time. Timelines are critical in terms of information use so „14 working days“ is a delay. People suggest it could be done within a shorter time period. These have combined to delay the process. (Participant 1)

From the above, the Bill would have been passed if government had been given a free hand to determine its content. The government is prepared to hasten the passage of a Bill that will exist in theory to beautify Ghana as upholding democratic ideals but would be unworkable. The resistance of civil society is reminiscent of the adage: „one man’s meat is another man’s poison“. While the Bill as it stands now benefits the government, it is injurious to media and the reverse holds. For instance, the waiting period of fourteen working days that must elapse before information can be released is too long to condense the substance of the story to be conveyed to the public. Furthermore, other participants“ state:

Some society actors agree that it is better if the Bill is not passed, because the Bill rather limits the access to information instead of increasing it. The Bill does not provide for an Independent Information Commission and has many public and government entities exempted from supplying information under the current draft. (Participant 12)

There are countries like Zimbabwe with FOIL but it’s a useless one. That is not the kind of FOIL we want. If we want to have FOIL, it should be one that will lift FOI up further and not to bring it down, then it becomes just „window dressing“. (Participant 14)

The above responses indicate that the Bill is so bad that it defeats the „half a loaf is better than none“ principle. Civil society expects the Ghanaian media to progress on the press freedom ladder and not retrogress, so any attempts to make them worse off was fiercely resisted. Moreover, to ensure transparency, an autonomous secretariat is required to man data, so to ignore its creation creates suspicion. It is worth mentioning that an information Bill which bars certain state departments from divulging information is dead at birth. From the stance of Participant 14 above, it would appear that the political class want to take a cue from other nations who have passed RTIL just to brand them as having adhered to good democratic ideals, but this is impracticable. According to the informant below, the benefit of RTIL is to expose corrupt acts.

All this *corruption* we are complaining about, the solution is to have a FOIL because what it does is [ensure] that you won't be kept in the dark. I am not going to struggle for two, three months before I get information. For instance, if we had FOIL, SADA [the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority] and GYEEDA [Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency] monies that had gone down the drain, we would have arrested the situation before it got out of hand. When you have a FOIL, it also serves as a deterrent on people in authority that ... hmmm! If I do something wrong, somebody will ask me to disclose so people in authority become more cautious. They are certain that whatever they do will be made public one day. That is its importance and it's something that Ghana and Africa...need badly because it will serve as a deterrent to people in authority. (Participant 14)

### *8.1.3 Deterring media laws*

This theme aims at exploring the ways in and extent to which media laws in the constitution have impacted media independence that the very constitution provides. Overall, participants indicated that some unfriendly media laws exist in the constitution and though some have good intentions, their interpretation and application on media is questionable. See responses below:

We are bound by the Criminal Code and the law of Civil Libel. These are the laws that we operate on so when you defame anybody, the fellow will sue you. They protect the privacy of individuals. When you violate the privacy of an individual, you can be sued. These are some of the legal deterrents to freedom of expression and of the media. (Participant 9)

The above shows that laws exist in the constitution to insulate citizens within the public sphere from media reportage. Whiles the media has the right to publish, the law subject it to self-verification of its facts before publishing about persons to avoid tarnishing their reputation. Failure to observe these have led to civil cases brought against the media by individuals. Frequently this leads to self-censorship. In a related argument, another participant sheds more light:

To me, I don't see them [the law] as fighting the right to free expression but rather regulating and ensuring sanity in the system. There is also „Contempt of Court“ clause which when you publish things that tries [sic] to interfere with the administration of justice you can also be dealt with. So we have: „Civil aspect of Defamation Law“, „Laws of Obscenity“ and „Contempt of Court“. These are three laws. Other than that, I do not know of any law which fights freedom of expression. To me, it rather ensures sanity: the way the media and the entire society should operate. (Participant 10)

On the contrary, other respondents share mixed views as expressed below:

The Criminal Code (1960) is a provision that talks about „publishing false information to create panic and alarm“. Attempts have been made by the Former President Rawlings to invoke that law and use it in court. It is still on the books and it can be used. The law itself it not necessarily negative. It is not just about the media but it covers media and some of their actions. Basically, the law says that you shouldn't create false alarm in a situation where it can create panic and therefore could be dangerous for people's life, health among others. Essentially it is not a bad law but needs to be reviewed so that the qualifications are clear and the media are certain as to what would actually define and create that kind of situation the law wants to prevent. But it could be invoked by anybody so that is not a very healthy situation. (Participant 11)

Having acknowledged that it is not in society's best interest to live in fear, and thus any attempt by media to publish in this regard is unacceptable, there are unanswered questions regarding this very law that forbids this media action. First, the law is undefined and not explicit on what constitutes the precautions journalists need to take in order to know their expected boundary. The law seems to trap journalists into staying mute on certain subjects if they are unsure whether it contravenes that law. This scenario stifles the media's vibrancy and it is public sphere discourse that suffers. The law has been applied previously by government, so there is no reason why it would not be applied again. Similarly, another participant remarked:

There are other [pieces of] legislation like the Official Secrets Act which should also be reviewed because again in a situation where we don't have a Right to Information Law, what constitutes „official secrets“ could be arbitrarily defined by officials. So, old

legislations also need some improvement. There is other legislation in the books which, if invoked, could be injurious to press freedom but it could be used anytime because government change, individual politician change from one regime to another so something must be done. (Participant 6)

There are laws traced to the colonial era in the constitution and one of these is the „Official Secrets Acts“. Its continued stay in the constitution, have benefited the ruling class because it puts civil society (especially the media) at a disadvantage. For instance, in the absence of the Right to Information Law, the woes of the media have further been worsened by most civil and public servants who use this law as a pretext to deny information access from official sources. These concerns inform why a participant stated:

There are so many of such laws on the statutes. A lawyer, Mr. Akoto Ampaw, was commissioned to rake out all those laws because they are not in conformity with the current Ghanaian constitution. It is something we have recognised [is necessary] to do, but I am sure people have relaxed because the constitution is the supreme law of the land. At the end of the day if you take somebody to court and use the wrong charge, any good judge will tell you that our constitution does not allow it. But I think the best way is to look for those statutes and clean them out and make sure that all the laws there are in direct line with the constitution. (Participant 14)

Based on the stance of immediate quote above (Participant 6), it is arguable that governments and governance systems change over time so complete eradication of any laws whose dictates contravene the constitution should be expunged because they could be (mis)applied to the media (and other spheres) either now or in the future. Overall, though there are laws with good intentions, ones detrimental to media also exist in the same constitution.

#### *8.1.4 Court adjudication*

Ghana's courts adjudicate several cases and a section of these concern summons against media. This theme explored verdicts served on media by the Ghanaian courts. Participants expressed mixed views about how they perceive such judgments. Whereas some find judgments

by the judiciary as fair because media practitioners flout the law by publishing matter that defames individuals, others complained of partiality considering the level of fines against media. Overall, all participants indicated that the fines the courts give media are too huge. The following responses were evident:

Sometimes, some media people are not very careful in what they do and so they find themselves at the wrong side of the law. If they would exercise some level of care in cross-checking and rechecking their facts and not making assumptions, [this would not happen]. I think that one problem for the media is that sometimes they have so much confidence in sources particularly if the sources are official. There is a certain assumption that officials don't lie and so when you receive information from people in public office, particularly ministers of state and the like, the media are too ready to go out with such information without trying to find out from the parties involved. This is one of the critical tests that the media have to look into otherwise it reduces the substance of the cause in fighting against our freedom. For as long as the media do not do the minimal checks on information they receive, and they go out to publish it, they may have unfavourable rulings [against them]. So it is not that the courts are partial. (Participant 1)

From the view of the above, media practitioners themselves have continually dug their own grave because the chances of being sued or not is left solely to individual media houses and their journalists to determine. This is based on the fact that different sources of information inform the content of daily media publications and as such, journalists should be cautious and come to terms that information gathered is not necessarily credible unless it has been subjected to verification and proved so. Moreover, failure to seek clarifications from concerned persons in an issue causes journalists to defeat one of their basic principles of ensuring balance. By this, the woes of media with regard to court cases against them can single-handedly be reversed by them if they publish only after thorough scrutiny of sourced information to avoid civil defamation. The participant seems to suggest that self-regulation is the key to make media struggle for independence feasible. However, others labelled the judicial system differently. See response below:

That is the paradox of the Fourth Republic. The republic is supposed to have created the opportunity for the media to practice freely. In fact, it was during the Fourth Republic that the Criminal Libel Law was expunged from the statutes books and that signals to the whole country that the media is indeed free to practice, but the courts are the ones who are slapping very heavy fines against the media in the last few years. This defeats the very purpose of the freedom of the press because if the press should practice freely and at the same time [courts are] slapping heavy fines, it means that even though nobody has been attacked physically, their financial peace is being attacked and that is also a great danger to the press. (Participant 7)

The above paints a picture that there is a conflict of interest considering the provisions on media independence in relation to existing media laws in the constitution. By this, the participant highlights that freedom of the media goes beyond protection from physical assault because the Ghanaian legal system, through the courts, has inflicted a financial burden on the media through heavy fines which threatens their independence to operate confidently. In a related argument, a participant remarked:

Relatively, we have had recent experiences where the courts have been a bit hard handed on the press. *Daily Guide*, for instance was fined for publishing information on a politician who allegedly used public funds to finance the acquisition of private properties, was slapped with several hundreds of thousands of Ghana Cedis in damages. Apparently, the judge who ruled on the case has a brother who was a former minister and a staunch member of the current NDC party. Therefore, this is an example of how judges who have some discretionary powers rule cases involving the press. (Participant 3)

The above shows that though the judiciary is expected to be independent in the execution of their functions; the political alignment of judges is linked to how they give their rulings. Thus, the weight of sanctions pronounced on a media outlet by the courts is dictated by political orientation. With this, the courts were branded as biased in the adjudication of cases concerning the media as expressed by another participant below:

Because of defamation we were slapped with damages to be paid over a story we published and we are contesting because we think the judge was biased. But that is not to say, it cut across because there have been several instances that we have won cases and if you are into the media, the business of publishing news or selling news, obviously you will always step on sensitive toes. People might not like you and even when they know the story is true, they will always like to go to court as a means of gagging you. They want to use the court system to gag you – but we are not obstructed, we continue to do our story as it is. But hey! We are all human, we have feelings and sometimes you may not get it all right. Sometimes when it comes, you take it like that and strive. (Participant 4)

Having acknowledged their story defamed a person, the newspaper contended that the offence should not have attracted as high a level of fine as given in the verdict, and thus argued for an element of partiality in the entire process. However, it is worth noting that judges do not always find media guilty and impose huge fines, but on some occasions, media also win their cases. This seems to suggest that the courts go by the facts and evidence available to them so each case is dealt with on its own merit(s). In the public sphere, there is a high chance that a publication may offend someone and they constantly seek redress from the courts. As a human institution, the media undoubtedly are likely to make oversights that is why participant 1 (above) expressed the sentiment that journalists must scrutinise their facts and cross-check them before publication in order to avoid defamatory lawsuits.

In a more mixed positions, the respondents below agree that it is appropriate to hand down punitive actions on offending media outlets that go against the Civil Laws [Defamatory and Obscenity], however, the fines are cutthroat.

If you talk about penalties, *yes*, sometimes we think the penalties are too huge but then if you would blame them without justification by damaging the integrity of another person, no amount of money can pay for that so the media have to exercise a lot of caution in their performance. (Participant 1)

In my mind, I think that the judgment has been fair, it is the sanctions that some are too big that it (sic) will even kill the media house – so that is the problem I have with it. (Participant 9)

Notwithstanding the fact that a damaged reputation is difficult to regain, the question that comes up is: should the damages be so huge that it can cripple a media house? This can be seen as a calculated attempt to bring silence to the public sphere because most of the print outlets are already ailing financially.

## **8.2 Discussion**

This study investigated how the print media in Ghana fares beyond constitutional provisions. Firstly, the constitution has impacted positively on the media and is evident in the media landscape because: (i) it improved freedom of expression for both media and citizens; and (ii) it represented an assurance for the legal basis to defend this freedom. Consistent with other studies, the sort of authoritarian governance that existed in Africa prior to the present democratic transition reserved no or little space for the media to express its views independently (Ogbonnah, 2002:55) and this is typical of Ghana's autocratic regime prior to 1992 and even afterwards. In a study about media violations in nations in the Western Africa, Ghana pulled the highest incidents [8], Nigeria [4], Cote d'Ivoire [3] and Sierra Leone, Liberia, Togo, Gambia and Niger polled two [2] violations each (MFWA, 2014:3). Registration flexibility in Ghana is consistent with a study of seventeen countries in Africa that showed that fourteen of them did not require compulsory registration for journalists (AMDI, 2006:39). Overall, compulsory registration of journalists has had negligible effect after the 1991 era (Berger, 2011:23) on media freedom.

Secondly, RTI would enhance the public sphere in Ghana, but the Constitution provides for media independence without it. This is consistent with other studies that have revealed that the introduction of the RTI Laws in the US led to a reduction in official corruption (Cordis and Warren, 2014; Costa, 2013) but in the long term, there was no significant decrease (Costa, 2013). Furthermore, successive governments in Ghana have ignored the Bill's reviews and

recommendations by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and Ghana's Right to Information Coalition (RTIC). They further argued that the government's refusal to incorporate its recommendations signifies its unpreparedness to embrace transparent governance (Daruwala, Choudhary, Nayak and Paul, 2013:2). Similarly, though Constitutions of countries in the SADC region provide for media freedom, this has not guaranteed that information has been accessed freely or not (Kanyongolo, 1996:2; Balule, 2008). The Ghanaian media is caged in the FOI dilemma because of hindrances in the access to information. Reacting to Ghana's Minister of Youth & Sports, Mahama Ayariga's statement that he is not accountable to the media and thus not obliged to furnish them with information, Agyemang Asante (2015) wrote on *citifmonline*: "It is absurd to ask the media to inform and educate, but then refuse to provide information needed". This suggests the fight against official corruption requires an independent media with access to information because often RTILs are lacking and should be implemented (Hunt, 2011:55-56). In Africa, eighteen countries somewhat guarantee information freedom but only seven (Nigeria, Angola, Ethiopia, South Africa, Liberia, Zimbabwe and Uganda) have at least actually implemented nominal information freedom laws. The Zimbabwean and Angolan laws emphasise exceptions rather than access (Maina, 2011:66-67).

Thirdly, the Ghanaian constitution still hold laws that inhibit media freedom. Consistent with other studies, the constitutions of democratic Nigeria and Uganda still hold sedition, libel and license requirements laws (Schiffirin, 2010:6). The US constitution capitalises on „national interest“ clauses to regulate and suppress the free flow of information in the name of safeguarding state security (Wasserman and de Beer, 2005:45). The constitutions of the democratic SADC region still hold archaic laws like the „insult law“ that makes it an offence to criticise government officials (Balule, 2008). Most of these laws lack clear-cut definition and gives governments space to manipulate them to their advantage (Berger, 2011:22; Senghore, 2011:69). This informs Ogbondah's (2002) position that "the tendency for constitutional paragraphs to remain contradictory and ambiguous allows the political leadership to find justification for interferences aimed at limiting the freedom of the media".

Fourthly, Ghana's judicial system weighs media freedom down through its huge fines. In Ecuador, the president sued *EL Universo* newspaper for an alleged libellous editorial that

criticised the president's management of police unrest that turned fatal and labelled him a „dictator“. The owners and opinion editor were fined \$40 million, a penalty huge enough to collapse the media outlet, and also suffered a three-year prison term (Kellam and Stein, 2014:1). Furthermore, in Ghana, the ruling class hides behind the judicial system to suffocate the media because the huge financial penalties their judgment hands down to the print media in favour of politicians is an indirect attempt to stifle media independence (Karikari, 2014). Media freedom is so central that the key obligation of the courts is to defend and abrogate laws and administrative tendencies which obstruct its observance to the mandate of the constitution (Singh and Kumar, 2014), rather than suffocate it. Recently, two Ghanaian private newspapers: *The Informer* and *Daily Guide* were fined US\$120,000 and US\$98,000 respectively on charges of defamation by the courts. Taking the operational size of these papers and the overall financial standing of the print media industry in Ghana, these damages were cutthroat (MFWA, 2014:5-6; Karikari, 2014).

Finally, the National Media Commission is powerless because it has no disciplinary powers to execute some of the very mandate that the constitution created it for, and this has created a situation where it appears to lack respect from its members (media) who treat it with contempt. This shows that the NMC is unable to handle to satisfaction complaint cases that are laid before it against the media and explains why most aggrieved persons prefer the court system instead, in order to seek justice. This is attributed to weaknesses in the Complaint Settlement Committee that warrants the need to review current structures. However, NMC's legal status contrasts sharply with that of Ivorian Media Regulatory Body (Conseil National De La Press) whose adjudication powers enabled it to fine the newspapers, *Notre Voie*, *Le Jour Plus*, and *Le Nouveau Courrie*, US\$1000.00, US\$2000.00 and US\$6000.00 respectively for offences the body claimed to be false publication of stories (MFWA, 2014:5).

### **8.3 Conclusion**

Generally, the Fourth Republican Constitution of Ghana has had an impact on media independence and freedom of expression by assigning a chapter to it and this has been felt in the print media landscape. This position is anchored on the premise that compared to the First, Second and Third Republics and how the media fared under each, those constitutions provided

for just basic freedoms. The constitution made the process of print media ownership flexible requiring just a registration and token fee to run a newspaper within the public sphere. Also, the mandate assigned to the NMC by the constitution is evident with respect to its composition and appointment of board members of the state-owned media. However, beyond these, the constitution *paid lip service* on some major issues regarding media independence.

The constitution that preaches independence of the Ghanaian media was promulgated with the Criminal Libel Law still in the same document for nine years (1992-2001) before it was abrogated after fierce agitation. It was only after this period that newspapers flooded Ghana despite the flexible registration. Currently, the constitution's provision on media independence is meaningless because it does not provide for RTI law to enable media to access information. The passage of RTI law in Ghana is the best way to expose official corruption but it has been delayed due to political unwillingness on one hand and a stalemate over the content of the Bill which favours government on the other. The Bill, if passed in its current state, would make media worse off and the political class is dragging its feet because they are unprepared for the transparency that the RTI will bring.

At present, the constitution still holds the Emergency Powers Act 472, Contempt of Court, Criminal Code of 1960 - Civil aspect of Defamation and Obscenity Law which, though it protects the reputation of citizens against wrongful reportage by the media within the public sphere, the courts capitalise on such cases normally brought against the media by politicians and impose huge fines on the media. Whereas fines check media against unethical reporting, judges were seen to have political inclinations which dictate their verdicts. The Ghanaian media opposes these fines which could shut down an outlet. Some archaic laws lack precise definitions and leaves room for the government to misapply them against journalists. For instance, civil and public servants hide behind the Official Secrets Act to deny access to information.

The constitution's failure to accord the NMC sanctioning power makes it ineffective to regulate the landscape, and as such cases are referred to the courts instead. Moreover, the NMC is fully dependent financially on the very executive arm it has been mandated to insulate the state-owned media from, though legally it is independent. The above shortfalls are summed up in

the notion that: “The media must not simply trust government’s promises that they will maintain media freedom; they must ensure that policies and structures are put in place to guarantee media freedom going into the future” (Duncan, 2011:57). This is consistent with the study’s finding that in Ghana, successive governments claim to be in favour of media independence, but they are very resistant when it comes to the implementation of this.

## CHAPTER NINE

### PRINT MEDIA STANDARDISATION AND PROFESSIONALISM: A DETERMINANT OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE MEDIA IN GHANA

#### 9.0 Introduction

The transition of the Ghanaian presidency baton in 2001 from the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to the National Patriotic Party (NPP) ushered in a new phase in government-media relations. This transition also shifted focus onto the appalling media performance that came with it. According to reports published at the time, most Ghanaians saw the media's output as a violation of the country's culture, considering the persistent use of foul language in the media space, coupled with numerous unsupported allegations published (Sarpong and Safo, 2002). For example, the Ghanaian media was accused by observers of creating a polarisation designed along ethnic paths, and of spreading rumours using defamatory and provocative language as late as the 2008 elections, with this leading to a potential risk to the country's security (Olorunnisola, 2009 cited in Mukhongo, 2010:347). This situation required close attention by the entire Ghanaian society including media users, owners and politicians as well as media workers and quasi-media institutions to help develop a sense of professionalism that will enable them play their democratic roles as expected (Mahama, 2012:110). Ben Ephson, the Managing Editor of a privately owned newspaper in Ghana, expressed the opinion that media institutions can make and unmake a country as well as individuals, institutions and governments (Sawant, 2003:17). This is because ethical contradictions have the tendency to jeopardise peace (Mfumbusa, 2008:152).

These concerns suggest that in as much as the independence of the media needs to be accorded all the necessary guarantees, it comes with a sense of responsibility which became so indispensable that it was embodied in the American 1947 Hutchins Commission („Concept of social responsibility“). For the media to hold onto their reputation and independence, they need an in-depth understanding and awareness of their key responsibility to deliver a good public service (Bertrand, 2002:4). The need to adhere to ethical practices in media is contained in a statement that observance of professional and ethical reporting is the best means for the media to

regain public trust and respect, and to contribute profoundly to the process of democratisation (Nyamnjoh, 2005:99). Ethics in journalism means “behaving in a professional manner” and it is applicable to all media workers, whether in print or broadcasting. For instance, a practicing code must ensure that practitioners knowingly will not misreport; will not quote out of context; will not suppress relevant facts; and will not slant a story to reflect their own or their editor's prejudices (Ross, 1999:23). Furthermore, „media ethics“ entails a “body of principles and rules, fashioned by the profession, preferably in cooperation with media users, in order that media can better serve most, if not all groups within the population” (Bertrand, 2002:4). This explains that a code could only prove successful if it has been agreed upon by the media fraternity itself instead of being imposed by an external authority like government or the judiciary (Ross, 1999:25; Kasoma, 1994:40).

The question is: why do practitioners flout their own collective codified standards and ethics? As part of the „government-media relations“ debate in Ghana over the years, accusing fingers have been pointed at the ruling class extensively for the woes of the media (Kasoma, 1995; Asante, 1996; Gadzekpo, 1997; Whitten-Woodring, 2009; Kellam and Stein, 2014). However, it appears that the independence of the media lies in their own hands and that disregard to collective instituted codes seem to serve as an affront to their freedom. For instance, Mupfurutsa (1999:1) has argued: “the media has become the object of public and government outrage [...] Journalism has been equated with uncivilized political propaganda and criticised for its bias, irresponsible and unethical behaviour”.

The aim of this chapter is to identify the factors that fuel unethical practices in the print media industry and to explore the degree to which these determine the independence of the Ghanaian media under the Fourth Republic.

## **9.1 Results**

The study showed that, generally, journalistic standards were low in sections of the print media, and they publish stories that fall short of the ethical codes of the profession, coupled with the fact that the GJA and NMC are under-resourced and some members of the media fraternity disregard their influence. To some extent, unprofessionalism in the landscape was attributed to the private media, laymen in the sector and low remuneration. These findings are presented for

analysis under the following subjects: educational levels of media practitioners; membership association; regulatory body effectiveness; and „money matters“ in relation to media standards and professionalism in Ghana.

#### *9.1.0. Educational levels of media practitioners*

This theme seeks to explore acquisition of official training of would-be media practitioners with the required journalistic skills in order to maintain standards of professionalism in their reporting. Overall, participants explained that some unqualified persons practice journalism in Ghana and it is attributed mainly to the desire to hire cheap labour. See the response that follows:

We shouldn't forget that journalists are human, especially the up-and-coming ones. There are also those who lack the basic knowledge in journalism in the system. We shouldn't also confuse this issue of anybody who finds himself in the media work as being a professional journalist like some of the panellists at various radio platforms; most of them are not professional journalists so their work leaves much to be desired when compared to those of us who are trained professional journalists. Some people say that journalism is not a profession which some of us disagree with that definition. (Participant 13)

From the above quote, the participant established that two groups of people work in the Ghanaian media environment. Those who have undergone journalism training and others who lack the required training. From the informant's view, trained journalists exhibit high professionalism in their work and unethical media practices is a quality associated with untrained individuals in the media market. Furthermore, the participant debunked the notion that journalism is a layman's job that anybody can practice. Another participant stated that some journalists behave unethically as shown below:

Yes, freedom is abused sometimes. They even describe it as some kind of the „tyranny of the media“. Some of my colleagues think that they have got the power to write so they go about writing all sorts of things about individuals, not thinking of their reputation. Reputation is very difficult to build so if you destroy your reputation, you will use many

years to build [it]. You see people fabricating stories about others. You don't get it why they do that. Only God knows. (Participant 4)

From the above, the media in Ghana sporadically go beyond their boundaries. Without distinguishing between trained and untrained personnel in the media landscape, this informant noted that some journalists publish stories to tarnish the image of other people. Moreover, the participant explained that such journalists pride themselves as having a sense of *power* in society. Ethical standards in Ghana's print media are not strictly adhered to and in some situations, some journalists design fictitious stories.

Commenting further on acquiring media qualification vis-à-vis remuneration and its relationship to ensuring high ethical standards, the following was evident:

Sometimes it all borders on *funds* because if you have to get good writers, you must recruit those with higher qualifications through higher education and that means that you have to pay them very well. If you don't have funds to attract them, then you have to do with what you have and that will result in low quality etc. So, it's a sort of mixed. We have papers of high quality, well written stories in terms of content, the way the paper is packaged and you will find value, whereas there are others too who are not doing so well. (Participant 10)

According to the above participant, high journalistic standards depend on the calibre of journalists that a media outlet hires. There are highly qualified media practitioners in the media environment but only satisfactory remuneration will attract their services. The type of personnel a media firm can afford, often determines its professional standards. There are two groups of newspaper outlets: those who employ skilled journalists who have high professional standards; and others who do not meet the standard. Similarly, another respondent noted:

Regarding standards, a lot is left to be desired. We still have a long way to go because we have qualified people who don't come to the mainstream media when they qualify from the college or university. I...could tell you that [among] my colleagues [who] finished from the School of Communication Studies [Masters], I am the only one in the

mainstream media or maybe in the private media. Those who are also in media are in media-related fields like advertising, PR [public relations] and others because they see it [mainstream media] as not too lucrative. Standard wise, it is not too good because sometimes we don't have qualified people going into mainstream media. They say it is not lucrative. (Participant 4)

From the perspective of Participant 4 above, people have attained higher media degrees in Ghana, however, the standard of journalism is still not the best because, as the quotation shows, many qualified graduates are unwilling to practice the profession since the salary is not enticing. Alternatively, media graduates prefer to work for well-paid media-related sectors rather than going into the conventional media terrain. This situation means that the Ghanaian media is far from attaining the desired professional standards. Playing a blame-game for lapses of standards in the Ghanaian media market, a respondent explained:

Problems with unprofessionalism are more [often] associated with the private [rather] than the state media. By virtue of the fact that they wouldn't want to pay properly, they tend not to employ the right calibre of people to do the work. They often pick anybody because the person can put some sentences together, and so ethics and professionalism is at times overlooked. That is why the private media are often dragged to court over cases of libel and defamation. (Participant 6)

The above participant distinguished between the operations of the private and state media with respect to professional standards and established that unprofessionalism is a feature of the private media sector, because they are unwilling to hire the services of qualified journalists. They recruit inexperienced hands to do the job, and these people occasionally flout ethical standards. This, the respondent noted, explains high frequency of court cases brought against them.

#### *9.1.1. Professional membership association*

This theme assessed the impact membership associations have made on professionalism and ethics in the print media. There are a number of professional media associations in Ghana, but this work focused on the Ghana Journalist Association (GJA), which functions as an umbrella professional body. It describes this code of ethics saying: “[t]he GJA Code of Ethics

was drawn as a ready reference guide and is applicable to members in the state-owned media, private media and the local freelance journalists” (GJA Brochure, 2011:76). Generally, participants observed that GJA has a code of ethics in place, but that members often ignore the code. The following responses attest to this:

Oh yes! Abuse exists without doubt. Some of us have abused if not over-abused the freedom now that there is no Criminal Libel [law]. People in the print media even publish insults, obscene materials and libellous contents without any regard [for it]. The GJA as a professional body is doing its work to stop [the] abuse of media freedom. They have their code of ethics but the problem is that not all journalists are members of the Association and even those who are members, what sanctions can be taken against them when they abuse the freedom of the press? So it becomes „a freedom for all“. (Participant 9)

From the view of Participant 9, sections of the print media have overstepped the privileges that come with the repeal of the Criminal Libel due to the foul content they sometimes publish. The GJA has no authority when members violate its ethics and moreover, the problem is compounded by the fact that some practicing Ghanaian journalists are not members of the association.

Similarly, Participant 2 noted that the media landscape in Ghana has witnessed an influx of media firms who should be cautious of their responsibilities. Moreover, the respondents emphasised that in certain parts of the media community, media freedom has been abused unabatedly. Though the GJA is the umbrella body, there are other professional bodies like the Private Newspaper Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG), which is an association for private media, and this draws a clear-cut line between them and the rest of the media fraternity, which seems to question the allegiance of members to the parent body GJA. This shows that there is a category of journalists who do not see the GJA code of ethics as their *own*, and thus do not observe them. This is confirmed by the voice below:

Now there is multiplicity of media outlets but freedom of the media goes with responsibility. Well, freedom has been abused and it will continue to be abused in certain sections of the society where even some of the private media houses do not belong to the

members of the Ghana Journalist Association and therefore do not follow the ethics of the GJA. (Participant 2)

The GJA has developed a 17-item code of ethics. However, the association is not adequately able to control members who largely continue to disregard its own code of ethics with impunity. Another problem is that many journalists are not familiar with this code of ethics, which makes its existence unimportant. (Participant 12)

According to Participant 12 above, though the GJA has documented its own ethical codes, two major issues explain why it does not have the intended impact. Firstly, the association lacks any formidable control mechanism to check operation of its members; secondly, many members are not conversant with the code. Thus, though the code is in place, it is not beneficial.

Despite the above concerns regarding ethical standards in the media environment, another respondent argued that the media have not in fact taken undue advantage of its independence and even deserves additional privileges. The participant further explained that the current system empowers Ghana's media regulator to ensure high professional standards and is preferred to dictatorial directives that stifle freedom to publish. According to the respondent, the current media atmosphere is ideal. See the comment below:

I won't say on any day that the media has abused it[s] freedom. I think that the freedom we are enjoying could even be more. The truth is that this is far, far better than dictatorship. Can you imagine, the National Media Commission (NMC) being given power to censor newspapers? And then you have a dictator who comes to be NMC chairman and try to gag every media house and say that: "You! I don't like your nose", "You! Don't publish", can you imagine what would happen? So, I think this climate is better than anything you can ever get. (Participant 7)

Considering the fact that some journalists in Ghana are not conversant with the code of ethics (see Participant 12 above), Participant 14 explained that GJA has made strides but more is expected of them and sees unethical practices in the media landscape as inevitable in the environment. Some interventions to ensure high standards include organising training courses and boosting morale and appreciating professionalism in journalism through an annual awards

scheme. However, in all these, funding tends to limit the operations of the GJA as the response below indicates:

GJA has done so many things but I am the first to admit that it is not enough. You will get irresponsible journalists but you don't cut their heads off but through education, education, education give them exposure. [...] How do you ensure this? It is through intensive training and workshops and its organisation is not easy because you need to [make it practical] and that costs money. Also, the GJA awards journalists who have excelled. (Participant 14)

Furthermore, another respondent (Participant 2) established that professional journalism could be ensured if firstly, all members of the media fraternity collectively observe the laid down ethical codes; and secondly, if they become active members of the GJA. Thirdly, the media should be responsible in its reportage because now unethical practices have resulted in huge fines for libellous offences. Lastly, publishers should verify information obtained before publication. The response below affirms this:

I believe strongly that once we continue to be regulated and then we submit ourselves to the ethics and all of us also join the professional body, there will be discipline. Currently, the abuses are too much. People publish anything at all and when they are sent to court for libel and defamation and fined, they find it difficult to pay. Also, some of them are folding up as a result of these practices and I think we need to be very responsible because the media is very powerful; therefore, what you [as] the editor do not want to be done to you, you should not do it to your neighbour...One needs to cross check and not just go out there to publish to mar the image of individuals or organisations. (Participant 2)

### *9.1.2. Regulatory body effectiveness*

This theme examined the role of media regulatory body, which in the case of Ghana is the National Media Commission (NMC), in issues of media standardisation and professionalism. The National Communications Authority (NCA), a body that deals specifically with broadcast media, was not considered in this paper because the focus of this work is on the print media.

Participants generally indicated that there is a regulator for the Ghanaian media, however, the performance of the regulator was assessed differently. The responses below explain:

The NMC organises workshops and has developed a number of guidelines on broadcasting, print, publication of rejoinders, political and election reporting standards. These guidelines have helped to open up people's understanding of most of the issues so people are more empowered and predisposed to appreciate and understand the nuances of the things they publish, and it has helped very much. For instance, *Daily Graphic* has published its own standards to guide [for] each of their journalists in terms of professionalism, comportment, relating to the public, openness and plurality and diversity of opinions that they publish. (Participant 1)

The above participant established that the regulator has laid a foundation upon which good ethical standards and professionalism thrives. Thus, journalists in general have access to reference documents on the do's and don'ts of practicing journalism in print media in Ghana. This serves as an education manual to help journalists operate within the confines of ethical journalism. Beyond NMC's ethical guidelines and training seminars, some print outlets like *Daily Graphic* have published internal standardisation structures to guide their writers.

However, other respondents identified other factors that they believe the NMC has neglected, beyond the publication of guideline documents by the NMC. These are affirmed in the following responses:

I think the NMC has done very little in instilling or improving the standard of media in Ghana. Their usual excuse is that they do not have enough resources to undertake all the things they will need to do. They have done little. Actually, the self-upgrade, self-improvement is purely private or individual media houses tend to help their own journalists to improve their standards. It has nothing to do with the NMC. (Participant 3)

This respondent noted that the Commission has not done enough to ensure high media standards on the pretext that they do not have all the needed resources to execute their functions. Improvement of professional standards is solely the responsibility of media outlets, without any assistance from the regulator. Also, a participant remarked:

The NMC has good intentions but has not been efficient in enhancing media standards in Ghana. The NMC is highly under-resourced. An example hereof is the fact that the Commission does not even have a website. This is very unfortunate, taking the constitutional mandate of the Commission into consideration. For now, there is no effective self-regulatory body in the Ghanaian media system. Furthermore, many media houses do not have internal standards for reporting. This means that ethical and professional violations are not sanctioned. (Participant 12)

Participant 12 explained the NMC has not met the expectation of enhancing professionalism in Ghana, though this is the ultimate goal. This respondent underscored that the Commission lacks basic materials to function effectively and their under-resourced state becomes evident in a situation where the Commission has no web presence. Moreover, from the view of the respondent, the media environment in Ghana lacks a „working regulator“ coupled with the fact that several outlets do not own internal ethical guidelines. This allows flouters of ethical codes to go unpunished.

Participant 15 noted that the regulator irons out media disputes through its settlement committee to ensure that such cases do not enter the courts where severe sanctions are handed down to offenders. However, some aggrieved persons (defamed by said media outlet) bypass the Commission’s Complaint Settlement Committee and seek redress from the law courts. The *Enquirer* and *Daily Guide* newspapers were fined astronomically for defamation. The voice below sheds light in this regard:

The first call of media infractions should be the NMC. The NMC has a dispute resolution platform called the Complaint Settlement Committee who sits on complaints. However, there are some individuals who would go to the courts with their cases. The Complaint Settlement Committee was set up to help ease the pain journalists would suffer if they were taken to the law court. But where there are excesses and individuals whose reputation has been damaged do not come to the NMC and report at the court, it has never been easy for journalists. This is because there was an instance where *The Enquirer* had to suffer for damaging somebody’s reputation. Recently, the *Daily Guide* has also

suffered because they were taken to court and asked to pay huge sums of monies.  
(Participant 15)

Another participant observed some media practitioners and their outlets do not accord the NMC the respect it deserves as a regulator, let alone do they adhere to its directives. At the Commission's invitation following a complaint against some media outlets/journalists to resolve infractions, they do not go for such meetings. Furthermore, the participant sees the establishment of the Commission as an opportunity which the media fraternity should take advantage of although some journalists disregard it. Thus, many aggrieved parties resort to the courts to present allegedly slanderous or libellous cases. This is evident below:

Well, there is no way I can defend any newspaper or media organisation that is taken to court. I am saying this because we have a regulatory body, the NMC, that all of us are supposed to respect. We have a situation where some of our members refuse to report to the Complaint Committee of the NMC. Any individual, corporate body, or government for that matter, or its appointee has the right to take any media house or practicing journalist to court and whatever punishment that the court gives out, I am not in the mood to actually defend any of the media houses because luckily we have a regulatory body in place and it is our duty to respect it. (Participant 13)

### *9.1.3. Money matters*

This theme explored bribery and corruption in the media environment, particularly whether, and how, it compromises media independence. Generally, participants noted that money matters cannot be ruled out in most of the media's day-to-day dealings. The responses below attest to this fact:

There are some journalists who will just tease out if they have a negative story, maybe about a politician, so the person will come and pay them and they will drop the story. We also have instances of reporters coming with [an] explosive story against a public official or politician and their editors „will sit on the story“; that means they will not publish it. I know of one instance where a reporter did that and the editor refused to publish the story

but rather went to the subject of the story and collected some money. Now, this reporter went behind the editor and released it to a private media (sic) to publish it. The subject of the story went back to the editor and collected his money leading to some kind of confusion. It is not very common but it does happen. (Participant 9)

The above response shows that bribery/corruption is evident in the media system but it is rare. Some editors shelve stories to compensate for favours received in the form of cash. Furthermore, other participants presented similar but different perspectives of bribery and corrupt practices:

Yes! Bribery is real and it is rather common. Lately there have been some incidences where it came out that leading journalists had taken sides in public debates after having been paid. (Participant 12)

Also, Participant 12 explained that corrupt practices in the media sector are very visible where media practitioners accept money to suppress facts. Furthermore, Participant 5 pointed out that bribery occurs frequently within the landscape, but not all journalists indulge in that practice. He recounted a situation where a bribe to discontinue a story was personally turned down. The response below attest to this:

I believe very much this practice happens. There have been some instances [in which] I have been approached not to do a story and take some cash instead but [I] declined it. A lot of these things happen. I don't only read about them happening, but I know personally from experience. (Participant 5)

In Ghana, organisations that invite the media to their programmes normally give some form of appreciative gifts. Though these, in the respondents' view are not bribes, they contribute toward the final content published. However, in the event of a ground-breaking story, journalists do not trade-off their personal reputation to publish the story for the firm's gift. See the response below:

It is a little bit of a mixed-bag. In our environment there is something we call honorarium or if you like *solli* [solidarity] where media operators attend programmes and after the event, especially promotional programmes, they are given some form of transportation or

allowance. Probably, the company giving out such hand-outs is doing that in the hope of influencing the content but from my experience, such honorarium goes to influence the content that the journalist would eventually churn out. If the subject is a controversial one, the journalist will always give priority to selling news content [rather] than what the company might want to bury because if the news content is going to „hit“ and make the journalist „popular or boost his profile“, the journalist will go for that news content despite the fact that he is being greased in the palm. (Participant 3)

## **9.2 Discussion**

This chapter sought to explore the factors responsible for unprofessional media practices in the print media industry, and to consider the degree to which these determine their independence under the fourth republic. The current work showed that four major subjects underpin unethical and unprofessionalism in the print media in Ghana. These are the educational level of practitioners; a sense of belonging and recognition of professional association(s); a weak regulatory body; and money matters. In terms of education, this work's finding reflects the position of Karikari (1996:145), who observed:

The emergence of media pluralism and the entry into journalism by so many people lacking professional training, in several cases even of people with very low education, is one principal source of the generalised weak professional quality. The range of violations is wide, varying in form and content with many implications for media credibility, growth and expansion of media freedom, and for enhancement of the respectability of the profession.

Furthermore, this study revealed that in as much as there were laymen in the field of media, there were equally trained media practitioners who do not go into mainstream media because it is not lucrative. This situation is consistent with what occurs in Mozambique. Marcelina Alves (2001) noted that several models exist but each country is unique in the context of its socio-cultural and economic tendencies. According to Alves, the prevailing market is in itself a major obstacle confronting an ideal model for journalism training in Mozambique. She identified that media outlets have low employment vacancies coupled with unappealing, meagre

salaries which do not entice people to work there or train in this field. Reasonably trained journalists exist, but due to poor remuneration, many are not practicing journalism which means that the sector tends to be dominated by persons with no formal training. Thus, Alves deduced that a “closed circuit is created: on the one hand there are poorly trained journalists who can only produce bad journalism, but on the other hand, one cannot have good journalism without a development of the media companies and these can only develop if they have good professionals” (Alves, 2001 cited in Teer-Tomaselli, 2001). Furthermore, in Africa, poor journalism is attributed to the lack of professional training for most practicing journalists (Nyamnjoh, 2005:95). Similarly, the most important hindrance in India’s journalism is the total lack of training on ethical and professional practices which has impacted accuracy and privacy (Rao and Johal, 2006:298). In contrast, Belsey and Chadwick (1994:1) were of the opinion that “Journalism is an honourable profession, and many of those who should care for it, often including its own professionals, have dishonoured it”. David Newton, Director of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ), which trained the majority of the Ghanaian journalists concurs: “I am very much aware of the enormity of the problem. We need to be assisted to enable the institute to deliver to the best of its ability and turn out the calibre of journalists many governments have yearned for” (Sarpong and Safo, 2002). Thus, it is necessary to establish structures that ensure only trained media professionals practice journalism to forestall possible entry of laymen to the profession to enhance good standards and to reserve available jobs to the qualified practitioners. This has been made possible in Rwanda under a new promulgation that prevents media firms from hiring unqualified journalists (International Exchange Research Board [IREX], 2010).

The study further showed that the roles of professional associations and regulatory bodies were paramount to the extent to which standardisation and professionalism can be ensured. In Ghana, a sense of belonging to the GJA is not strong because not all journalists are members of the parent organisation, GJA, considering the fact that other media professional associations are registered officially, and thus splits memberships and split allegiances occur. Also, Ghana’s regulatory body has not done enough to regulate the media environment to ensure its Constitutional mandate of high journalistic standards because it lacks the needed resources. These are consistent with other studies that have pointed out: “In looking at ethics, it should be

noted that a code would not be effective if there is no enforcement machinery. So, it is not only important to have ethical codes in place, but also consideration should be given to mechanisms of ensuring that these are observed” (Nassanga, 2008:649-50). The implementation of ethical codes itself has been tiresome because there is no „exclusively identified group“ that journalists are associated with. In the majority of professions, other than media, the license issuing body usually is also responsible for ensuring compliance with professional conduct and tends to be a statutory body backed by law (Nassanga, 2008:651). This position contrasts sharply with the current standing of the GJA that does not issue licenses to its members, let alone has formidable legal backing, and with pockets of professional associations that has fragmented membership. Moreover, remuneration for journalists in Ghana is not the best so some outlets have high rate of staff turnover. Sarpong and Safo (2002) observed: “A high turnover rate within the profession has had the effect of pushing young, inexperienced hands into positions they are professionally unprepared for, as the experienced ones leave out of frustration because of poor remuneration”. It is rather more tedious for public officials to deal with a well-informed and trained media professional cadre who is aware of its role (Ross, 1999:23) and this helps to ensure independence of the media.

Both the GJA and NMC have implemented codes of ethics and made strides to deal with issues of ethical practices in the Ghanaian print media, but their shortfalls were summed up by Essilfie-Conduah (2014:9) in his article captioned “The NMC and this “Toothless Bulldog” Jibe! [1]”. The article was in relation to the case of the *Daily Guide*, a private newspaper that published the photo of the mortal remains of P. V. Obeng, a former minister of state, at the mortuary. He noted that “surprisingly the *Daily Guide* newspaper rejected being sanctioned and told the Commission, GJA and all to „shut up“ after both organisations came out to issue statements on the unprofessional publication”. Ethics Committee and Associations in Rwanda for instance have conducted trainings on ethical issues but implementation of the codes has proved unsuccessful (IREX, 2010). Lack of observance of ethical codes on a broad scale on the continent might have informed the position of Guy Berger when he wrote in the May 3, 2012 edition of the *Mail & Guardian* online “If we don't want unethical behaviour to infect African journalism, we should urge media houses to embrace the African Media Initiative (AMI) Principles” as a guideline framework.

Bribery and corruption in journalism has been recorded in most parts of the world and this study showed that the print media in Ghana is no exception. When money changes hands with regards to certain articles, this means: (i) trivialising the truth, (ii) magnifying the truth, (iii) misinforming the public, (iv) compromising the profession's integrity and lastly (v) compromising the media's own independence of working in an environment without fear. Whenever money is at the forefront of a media practitioner's mind, society should expect diluted content which invariably worsens unethical and unprofessional tendencies. Skjerdal (2010) records that although approved journalistic ethical codes of most countries in Africa (such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Ivory Coast, Liberia, South Africa, Benin, Zambia, Niger, Congo, Mali, Botswana, Uganda, Nigeria, Malawi, Kenya, Cameroon and Ghana) clearly forbid bribery, the practice is still on-going. Consistent with this, Sarpong and Safo (2002) cited an instance where a Ghanaian state-owned press dismissed its reporter after he entered into negotiations with an Indian entrepreneur to bury a „negative story“ allegedly surrounding maltreatment of a Ghanaian worker, for a fee of GHC500.00 (about US\$720.00); the entrepreneur recorded the deal secretly for a radio station to air. „Brown envelopes“ and „freebies“ are inducements known extensively in the media world today and they tend to impact negatively on editorial independence (Skjerdal, 2010:370; Lando, 2013:24). This view is consistent with this study that bribery in journalism is common because „brown envelopes“ and „freebies“ has their own specifically Ghanaian equivalent known as *solli* [solidarity]. The complexities that surround the definition of „money exchanging hands“ in the media circles as “gifts” from corporate event organisers, questions the ability of journalists to satisfy the principles of balance, fairness and objectivity to publish a critical story about them. This shows that sometimes censorship is self-inflicted by journalists themselves rather than by an external body. In India, journalists cited poor salaries as the major contributing factor that makes them behave unethically and this seems likely to stop if their conditions of service are improved (Rao and Johal, 2006:297). Similarly, the Rwandan media has an ethical code but most of the journalists do not respect it and they receive „gifts“ and request „bribes“ from clients to publish a positive story or shelve negative news. Also, media practitioners compromise their ethical codes because of poor salaries and even disrespect by journalists themselves for the profession (IREX, 2010). According to Belsey and Chadwick

(1994:1), media owners often employ this medium to acquire wealth and power for their own gains and “as for journalists, they do not even need to be bribed to behave unethically”.

### **9.3 Conclusion**

Presently, lapses in the observance of ethical codes and standards make unprofessionalism evident in the media landscape in Ghana. Sections of the Ghanaian print media have abused the privileges that the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law brought. Thus, some sections of the media in Ghana need to come to terms with the fact that, in as much as ethics can be used to boost building a resilient professional media, it can equally be used to repress press freedom and of expression if not adhered to (Nassanga, 2008:660). Furthermore, professional behaviour not only enhances the self-esteem of journalists but more importantly dictates how the public and the government regard them. It toughens and shields journalists against all forms of governmental interferences ranging from the imposition of state-composed press councils, and official registration among other media restraints (Ross, 1999:23).

Unprofessional practices in Ghana’s media environment are attributed to laymen and inexperienced people who practice journalism. Though, there are qualified media graduates with higher qualifications in Ghana, low remuneration does not entice them to enter mainstream media. Furthermore, the study showed that unethical practices in the media environment is attributed to lack of total allegiance to the professional association (GJA) due to split membership among pockets of associations, under-resourced regulatory body that also faces the challenge of its very members who dishonour their allegiance, along with incidences of bribery and corrupt practices. Professionalism will be instilled in the Ghanaian media environment if all journalists and media outlets subject themselves willingly to their own ethical codes which will also lead to a curtailing of the legal cases brought against them.

## CHAPTER TEN

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis set out to scrutinise the independence of the Ghanaian print media under the Fourth Republic in order to ascertain the current state of its freedom of ability to inform, educate and entertain, with the ultimate objective of serving the interest of the public. Defining the independence of the Ghanaian print media meant an examination of the economic, legal and political dimensions of society as well as the on-the-job behavioural postures of media practitioners themselves. The core of this work was rooted more in the economic sphere and it therefore investigated the impact that media funding, through advertising and ownership, have on editorial independence of the press, and whether the Ghanaian print media has diversified its revenue generation. Furthermore, the study explored the media laws of Ghana and the extent to which the Fourth Republican Constitution has impacted media independence. Throughout all of these domains of society, the impact of *politics* cannot be ignored.

In all spheres of life, funders generally wield power within economies and that allow them to reserve the sole right to determine who to give to, who to apportion what size and who to deny such funding. This is true of media funders within the Ghanaian media landscape where funding through advertising impinges on editorial autonomy. Of the total newspaper advertising market in Ghana, public papers (government owned) publish 87% of these adverts compared to only 13% in all privately-owned newspapers. In terms of differences in the size of corporate and government advertising, corporate entities place more advertising 412 (74%) in public papers compared to government advertising 148 (26%). In private papers, corporate advertising place more advertising, 54 (67%), compared to 27 (33%) of government sponsored adverts (See Table 5.0 and Fig. 5.0). This shows that the summation of advertising of the entire corporate community in Ghana makes it a larger contributor to media funding than the government, however, individually, government is still the single entity who holds the largest advertising budget in the country. Considering that the print media has over-relied on advertising revenue, which mainly comes from corporate bodies and government as shown in (Chapter Seven), shows the extent of influence which these two major society players have on the media because

advertising funding contributed by religious organisations and philanthropy that also form an integral part of the media economy were negligible. The effect of this over-dependence on advertising is a gradual move away from fulfilling a public interest objective to a more market-oriented, commercialised media focus. For instance, *Daily Graphic*, the publicly owned entity that is the leading newspaper in Ghana, currently devotes 60% of its content space to advertising, compared to 40% that is available for content to deliver its core mandate of informing, educating and entertaining society with public interest material. Apart from advertising, two other sources of funding are ownership and circulation sales.

The advertising market of the print media in Ghana is described as concentrated in a few papers, especially the government ones, with a few other politically aligned private sector papers. However, critics are of the opinion that the above view is limited by the very political economy of Ghana modelled on capitalist structures, governed by the principle of demand and supply. By this, the concentration of the advertising market in Ghana is rather a normal phenomenon based on the fact that as rational consumers, government and corporate entities consider both the print quality and circulation reach of the paper prior to advertising. Private papers lack both these qualities – they tend to be poorly technically produced and they have small circulations. Thus, the notion of *advertising allocation* has given way to *advertising attraction* in Ghana's newspaper landscape, purely based on competition among papers. Beyond this, outlets in the paper industry that have published advertisements and /or received information sources, reward these advertisers and informants by being less or non-critical in reporting. In the extreme scenario of avoiding negative publicity, a corporate entity did the following:

There was a story we did which went against the interest of a [*Telecom Company in Ghana*] and it was a front page story. That story was a big - big story but we did not hear any review on it. Our checks revealed that some group of people spearheaded by the firm went round and bought the newspapers in bulk so that paper did not see the light of day. Those broadcast media houses themselves who are advertising agencies and run a whole lot of adverts, if there are stories in newspapers which goes against sponsors of their programme(s), they will never review it to listeners (Participant 10).

Reflecting on these advertising funding patterns on agenda-setting and news framing lines, it was evident that funding does influence editorial autonomy in the newspaper landscape

in Ghana. The media tend to feature more political headlines and this buttresses the fact that most owners are affiliated to partisan interests, or are active politicians themselves. *Private papers* in the Ghanaian context publish fewer adverts with more political headlines and are more critical, especially on issues of corruption with political undertones, whilst the public papers publish more adverts with fewer political headlines and tend to present a neutral front in their reportage – but remain completely mute on issues of political corruption. Despite this, recent trends show that Ghanaian public papers have made strides in reporting on some sensitive issues which, in previous times, were the sole preserve of critical private papers in the political circles. The politics of giving advertising to some and withholding from others in the same media landscape of a country has two purposes: Firstly, it is a calculated attempt to tame the critical outlets and silence them with (implicit) promises of future advertising; and secondly, to make outlets already receiving funding act favourably to the funders, or at least, remain neutral in their reportage. Thus, private papers in Ghana publish fewer corporate adverts but are *less critical* of their activities whereas public papers publish a significant portion of corporate adverts but are silent on their operations. Overall, all papers, whether public or private, allocate appreciable space to corporate public relation stories. Public media set a more stringent environmental agenda than the private sector, but both frame their stories neutrally. It follows that ownership of the public media permits more content diversity on the economy of Ghana, whereas private media tends to restrict diversity. These positions are argued on the basis of the ownership proximity levels of these two major media divisions in Ghana. In the private media environments, owners are directly at the core of operations in the newsroom ensuring that what enters the public sphere has been modified to match their interests (which may be personal), business or political. The private media tend to publish owners’ interests as though they were public interest material. On the other hand, Ghana’s Constitutional and legal structures distances the owner (government) of the public media and makes the National Media Commission act as some sort of a bridge. Thus, the government cannot influence the public media *directly*, but may do so *indirectly*. Nevertheless, the government has access to the state media at all times -- but the volume and size remain undefined.

Beyond the influences from funding, proprietors’ ownership powers (especially those in the private sector) extend firmly into the newsroom and dictate which political or corporate stories should be pursued or shelved. In the present situation, most private media do not have

Boards and the few with this layer of corporate governance often disregard their input for the adage “He who pays the piper calls the tune” which becomes the ruling organisational phenomenon. Though different arms of government exist, in Ghana the executive (represented by the sitting administration at any one time) normally exerts the majority of political power. Within Ghanaian jargon, this has come to be known as the “winner takes it all ruling”, where after winning an election, all interests, other than those that match the government’s ideology, are side-lined. Moreover, within the sphere of government lies the power to allocate business, as shown above. The government machinery single-handedly holds the biggest advertising budget and other monetary budgets. For this reason and many more, most corporate bodies in the Ghanaian economy strive to maintain some sort of connection with the ruling authority so as to secure contracts.

Thus, it was no coincidence that beyond the circumstances in which private outlets publish fewer advertisements in the media market than the government the government nonetheless has been able to convince the corporate community not to sell their products through some private media entities, so as to benefit their own papers. This further reaffirms the fact that the political economy structures within Ghana is such that having procured a government contract, it follows that the government is able to influence where corporations’ adverts are published. Alternatively, corporate bodies refuse to publish adverts in private papers critical of government in order to keep their *friendly connections* intact. Thus, the newspaper advertising market is governed by politics, and a media house’s ideology and affiliation determines the quantum of advertisements received. These bottlenecks go a long way to dictate the reporting tone of newspapers, and affect their autonomy. Until the media finds its own way of raising revenue, the manipulative hands of funders will always knock at their doors and dictate the setting of agendas and framing of news.

However, the present political structure of Ghana’s print media environment seems to highlight that the future of media diversification strategies that seek to avoid over-reliance on advertising as the sole income, and the concomitant threat it brings to editorial independence, is bleak because most of the alternative revenue streams require some sort of connections with the political class. Though the present government proposed the creation of the Media Development Fund to aid media, it has not yielded any significant impact (See Chapter 1, p. 18).

The Ghanaian constitution fully recognises the independence of the media and of freedom of expression, and devoted a full chapter of provisions that aims to effect the liberalisation of the Ghanaian media. However, the law still does not allow free access to information from official sources therefor the media has received constitutional endorsement to work independently, but without *information* which is their key resource. Society will forever remain in perpetual darkness if media is not able to relay information to them, so to deny media access to information is a constraint on their operations and is tantamount to a *media-poor* society. This is further buttressed by the analysis of the content of selected Ghanaian newspapers which showed that generally political and legal structures make it extremely difficult to access information. Moreover, the government tends to furnish the public media with more information than it gives to the private media because they *trust* the way in which public media will use the information within the public sphere. Even in instances where a government ministry has asked a private media company to submit a questionnaire for information, the information may never come but might rather be given to a public media entity to publish the story. Thus it can be seen that when the law stifles access to information, it creates a system that allows the sources of information to influence agenda setting and the framing of news. Two major issues explain the decade delay in the passage of the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL): lack of political will by successive governments, and controversies surrounding the Information Bill's content that is skewed to favour government. This paints a picture that the legal environment which gave birth to Ghana's thriving democracy still falls short of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that all persons should be able to access information freely. Limiting free access to information for media practitioners and the entire civil society means that information is gleaned from other sources, but this brings with it chances of inaccuracies which are eventually disseminated in the public sphere. Thus, legal hindrances serve as an affront to instilling ethical discipline and subsequently professionalism in the media environment. For instance, information accessed unofficially, brews unethical tendencies in the media landscape which in turn further stifle the media's independence – either money changes hands or a media outlet becomes less or non-critical in their reportage to compensate for the information received.

With the political economy climate of Ghana deeply rooted in democracy and subsequently a capitalist one, ownership tendencies are drawn on the „free entry and free exit“ principle, allowing people with the means of production to be able to legally start any business –

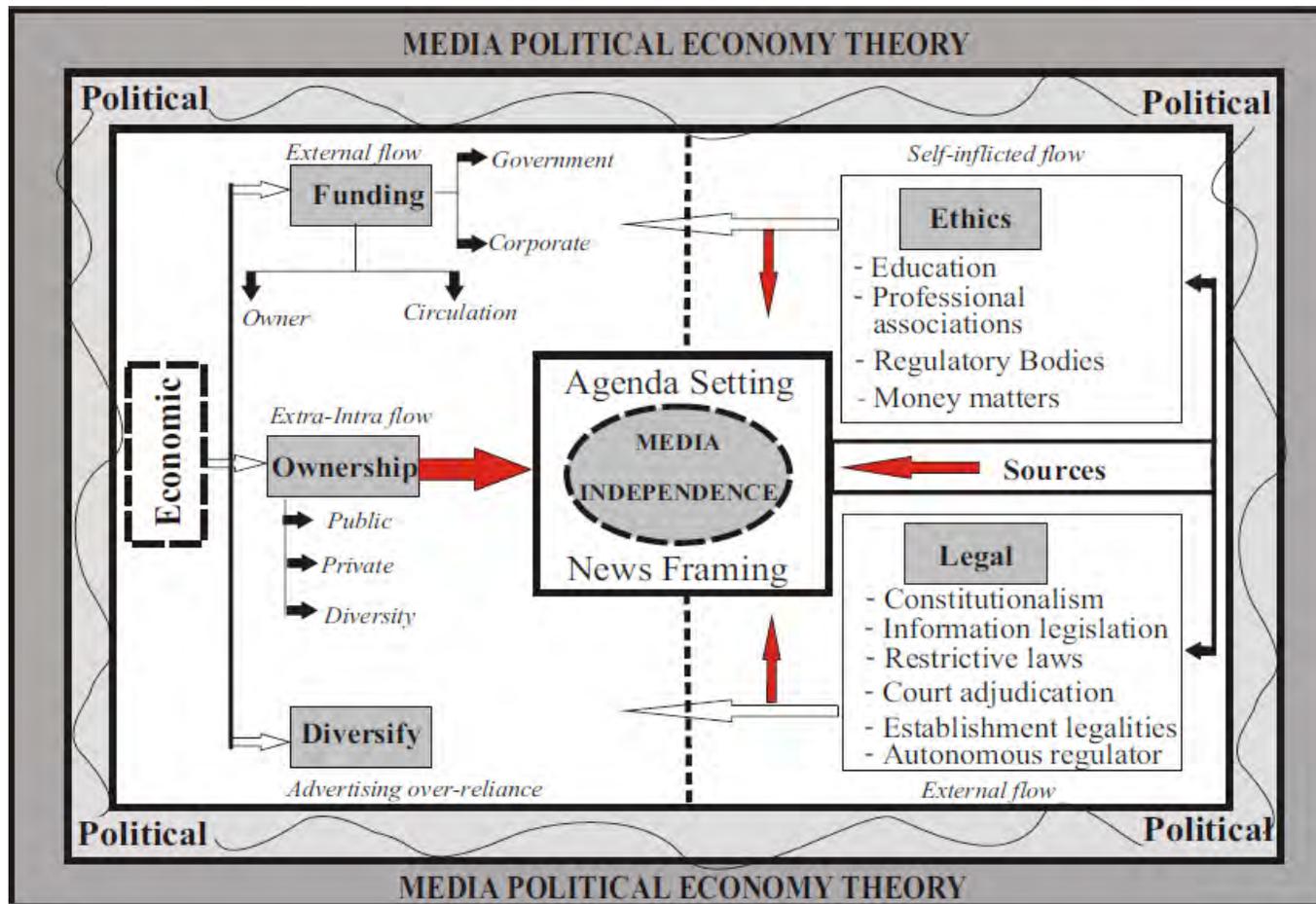
and the media is not an exception. By this, the legal setting makes it easy for nationals and non-nationals to run media outlets, thus the Ghanaian landscape is dominated by several private media but their fragile financial situation make them publish few pages and do not circulate widely. Ownership objectives are three-pronged – namely *political, humanitarian and business*. However, some of these media entities have already diversified their operations for revenue purposes while others are yet to make strides in this direction. These businesses include printing presses, importation and selling of newsprint, and copy-print sheets paper (A4), packaging businesses and courier services. Though newspapers’ daily agenda are guided by the overall agenda that set them up, according to interviews with editors and practising journalists discussed in chapter five, commercial imperatives have swayed their focus from their role as the fourth estate, and their watchdog and societal vigilance duties have waned to some extent.

Ghana’s political economy has generated a system of a *press war* where politically-aligned papers attack and counter-attack each other from different sections of the political divide. The spill-over effect of this war within the public sphere is that the incumbent government is more likely to see the active political owner behind the stories from the outlet than the outlet itself. Thus, a withdrawal or denial of advertisements for a media firm is a direct sanction on ownership which indirectly affects the media firm. Government funding in the form of advertising revenue becomes a means of supporting those media outlets that are loyal, and a starving of those that are critical. In this way, de-politicisation of media ownership is one of the surest ways of achieving independence. Under the Fourth Republic, media houses and their journalists alike have suffered information denial, boycotts by political parties, huge court fines of cases normally advanced by public officials, and calculated measures to deny anti-government papers advertising revenue.

Added to this mix is a regulator who economically relies on the very executive arm (government) from which the NMC aims to protect the state media; it also does not have the legal powers to sanction members who flout its codes. Thus, while legally and by constitutional provisions, the National Media Commission is a formidable body, economically (financially) it is constrained to such an extent that it has no official website at the time of this research, in 2014. Furthermore, the Constitution still harbours archaic laws of colonial origin which negate the very purpose of the provisions of media independence and of expression to some extent. All these factors have combined to stifle the Ghanaian media. Amidst all this, the approach of media

practitioners themselves towards their jobs is calculated to threaten their very independence and expression. Unethical behaviour is frequently evident in the print media landscape and it is traced to four major issues: that laymen practice journalism; the disregard of ethical codes by professional associations; regulatory bodies lack strong financial and legal backing to execute their functions; and lastly bribery corruption blamed on poor incentives and salaries. Whenever bribery mediates the work of a media practitioner, it connotes the following: (a) trivialising the truth; (b) magnifying the truth; (c) misinforming public; (d) compromising the profession's integrity; and lastly (e) compromising the media's own independence of working in an environment without fear.

Figure 10.0: Extracted framework



**Figure 10.0** above depicts a framework of media economy with respect to independence as it pertains to Ghana. It shows that within the political economy of Ghana's media setting are different facets of economic (funding, ownership, diversification), legal, information sources and ethical issues which to some extent impinge on agenda-setting and news framing in the print media landscape. However, the economic sphere (denoted by dotted lines) has a greater influence on media compared to the others (legal and ethical concerns) in the environment. This framework further shows that by categorisation, three main influential streams on the agenda-setting function of the media exist. These are (i) external flows, (ii) extra-intra flows and (iii) self-inflicted flows. Fusing these into the major spheres of this study, funding through advertising, information sources and legal domains are *remote* influences on the operations of the media. Specifically, sources of media funding are government, corporate, owners and circulation. Ownership influences in the Ghanaian context emanate from both *external* and *internal* streams because media outlets are publicly (government) and privately owned and differences in proximities to the overall management differs and determines the level of diversity in each case. The level of observance of ethics, standards and professionalism determines the extent to which self-regulation could guide the operations of a contemporary media but due to some lapses in the behaviour of media practitioners as it pertains in sections of the Ghanaian media, it has become a *self-inflicted* influence on the independence of the media.

Major inter-connections such as funding sustainability, ownership philosophy and legal structures within an economy dictate whether professionalism in media is achievable or not. For instance, the study confirmed the following: from the financial perspective, due to poor remuneration, some journalists accept bribes, outlets hire unqualified personnel which affect quality of content and also reflect in the printing quality of some papers; secondly, some owners by virtue of reserving the sole right to determine „what is news“, are themselves the first to break ethical rules; and finally, the legal system that does not allow freedom of information which drives journalists to source information unofficially which may lead to publication of stories filled with inaccuracies or unsubstantiated allegations. Due to advertising concentrated in fewer papers, meagre sales from circulation / subscription, and to avoid dangers that come with reliance on a sole income, most journalists view diversification as a good strategy to adopt to generate revenue to sustain them. However, they are confronted with two major challenges. First, is the lack of initial capital to enter new business areas and secondly, some owners do not allow

diversification. A striking observation is that politics permeates and intermingles with all aspects of media operations. This is denoted by the „curved lines“ that links “political” at the four corners of the above framework. In a conclusion, this framework suggests that, in as much as different factors jointly affect the operations of media, future issues of independence of the media should be tackled more from an economic point of view because the fragile funding base of most media entities is the doorway for politics to infiltrate into its functions. Moreover, this framework introduces standards and professionalism (ethics) into the political economy setup of media as a self-inflicted influence on media, triggered by economic and legal structures.

### **10.1 Implications for Policy Interventions**

Presently, Ghana has a media policy in place documented by the National Media Commission (NMC), but the country also tends to lean on ethical codes designed by professional associations, regulatory bodies, international media protocols and most importantly constitutional provisions of the Fourth Republic to give direction as to how the media could function effectively. However, beyond these codified documents are some lapses that hinder the development of the media with respect to factors that impinge on its independence. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested to inform policy implementation in the media sector:

- (1) Development milestones should be set for the Ghanaian print media to be able to answer, for instance, the question of where it expects to be in two years with respect to improvements in ethics, constitutional amendments such as the passing of the *Freedom of Information Bill*, the empowerment of NMC, and a gradual drift from a politically centred focus to an environmental / developmental journalism focus, among others.
- (2) A local non-partisan panel should be established in co-operation with an institution such as the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) based in Accra to conduct home-grown annual analyses of the state of the Ghanaian print media. This will lessen the over-reliance on global media monitoring ratings by organisations such as „IREX“ and „World Without Borders“ who may lack in-depth information of the situation on the ground. As Anas Aremeyaw Anas, a Ghanaian investigative journalist in a television

interview with Jefferson Sackey, an international correspondent on his programme „Jefferson Reports“ published (September 13, 2015) noted: we journalists on the continent know the real situation and could better tell the story.

- (3) The Freedom of Information Bill (FOIB) which has been on the statute books for over a decade should be given much needed attention in order to get it passed because its absence is inconsistent with the provisions of the Fourth Republican Constitution on media independence.
- (4) The subject of independence of the media in the Ghanaian print media context should be tackled more from the perspectives of funding and ethical tendencies.
- (5) Due to some political connotations read into the allocation of advertising among newspapers in Ghana, the Media Development Fund proposed by the government should be repackaged further by the media fraternity and lobby for parliamentary approval. This fund, if distributed equitably by media’s own created secretariat, will help eradicate or lessen influences on the media which are currently motivated by financial concerns.
- (6) Media ownership objectives according to this study are three-pronged: namely *political*, *humanitarian* and *business*; all have made strides towards diversification for the purpose of revenue generation and should be encouraged because it is one of the avenues to mitigate an over-reliance on the lone income from advertising which does not augur well for the independence of the media.
- (7) With unethical concerns shown to be frequent in the landscape, attributable to the infiltration of laymen in the job, coupled with high graduate unemployment in Ghana, all media firms should by law be encouraged to hire only media certificated graduates with the requisite journalistic skills to practice the profession. This policy has been made possible and is in use in Rwanda.
- (8) The weak financial base of the NMC is traced to its dependence on the central government for subvention to run a Commission mandated to defend the state media

against government manipulations. To be more effective, the NMC should also investigate raising its own income to run its operations.

- (9) Media ethics which is already part of the curricula in media academic institutions should be modelled firmly on the Ghanaian culture / context, before African and global dimensions, and should be given more space in media schools and the newsroom.
- (10) Media associations and regulatory bodies such as GJA, PRINPAG and NMC need more recognition through legal empowerment. Beyond that, the GJA for instance, should have a policy that requires that every mainstream media student agree to a declaration prior to the start of media degree programmes that makes them automatic members of the parent association when they complete their degrees and enter the job market. This will arrest the lack of allegiance felt by some practitioners towards the Association.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX ONE

#### Interview Questions

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##### A. Legal Environment

1. How you would assess the independent and freedom of the press and of expression beyond the constitutional provision? Are they enforced?
  2. Has a freedom of information legislation been put in place? If **No**, what has delayed it? and if **Yes**, how will it enhance the work of journalists?
  3. In your opinion, are there any category of laws that restrict reporting and are journalists punished under these laws? If so, which laws are involved, and how do they work to inhibit journalistic activity?
  4. Do courts judge cases concerning the media impartially? Please explain the reason(s) for your answer.
  5. In your experience, how easy can individuals or business entities legally establish and operate private media outlets without undue interference?
  6. Are media regulatory bodies, such as National Media Commission able to operate freely and independently? How would you define their level of autonomy?
- 

##### B. Political Environment

1. In the Fourth Republic, has an editor been asked to proceed on leave within the same government or after a transition? If so, what led to the incident?
  2. How would you assess the extent to which media outlets' news and information (content) are determined by the government or a particular partisan interest?
  3. Have you ever experienced difficulty accessing official or unofficial information? If **Yes**, explains how? And If **No**, what is the current climate?
  4. Has access to newsprints any political strings? If yes, how does this impinge on media freedom?
  5. Give a short assessment of the degree to which both local and foreign journalists are able to cover the news freely or otherwise.
  6. How serious have journalists or media outlets been subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor if any?
-

### **C. Economic Environment**

1. To what extent are media owned or controlled by the government and how does ownership influence the diversity of views expressed in the media?
  2. How would you define the transparency of private media ownership in allowing consumers to judge the impartiality of the news?
  3. Does the state place prohibitively high costs on the establishment and operation of newspaper outlets? If so, does this influence media freedom?
  4. In your opinion, do the government or other actors try to control the media through the allocation of advertising and subsidies? If so, how pervasive do you believe this practice to be?
  5. In terms of funding, to what extent is the media dependent on the state, political parties, big business or other influential actors?
  6. Do you believe that the media has over-relied on advertising to generate revenue?
  7. Is there diversification within the media industry? If so, is this diversity increasing? Is the change in diversity a response to the media seeking new areas in which to generate revenue? If yes, what are the areas?
  8. Do you see the institution of the *media fund* by the government as a means to get the media to do its bidding? How?
  9. How does „newspaper review“ by broadcast stations affect revenue base of newspapers?
- 

### **D. Others (Professional Standards of Journalism)**

1. In your opinion, what is the standard of journalism in Ghana?
  2. To what extent has the National Media Commission enhanced quality standards in the media profession?
  3. Has the media abused its freedom? What is your assessment?
  4. In your experience, do journalists receive payment from private or public sources as a design to influence their journalistic content? If so, how common do you believe this practice to be?
  5. Do you see disregard to journalistic standards and ethics as an affront to media’s independence? How?
- 

Some of these questions were partly adapted from Freedom House (2005: Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc).

## APPENDIX TWO

CODING <u>INSTRUCTIONS</u> FOR ADVERTS & EDITORIAL CONTENT ANALYSIS: GUIDELINES FOR CODERS	
<p><b>Objective:</b> To carry out a content analysis to code adverts and news headlines placed in <i>state</i> and <i>privately-owned</i> newspapers to determine who funds the media most (government or businesses) as well as analyse agenda-setting/framing pattern and their impact on the independence of the media under the Fourth Republic in Ghana.</p> <p><b>*Use pencil only for coding: This is to enable change in the verification process if need be.</b></p>	
<p><b>What to Code:</b> All advertisements and paid-for contents (for funding), headline news (for agenda-setting) and articles (for framing) are to be coded.</p> <p><b>What to exclude:</b> Advocacy adverts, Africa /global news as well as general stories [fiction, romance etc] are completely not part of this exercise.</p>	
<b>Newspaper Identification: (NID)</b>	Newspapers were uniquely identified as <b>01,02,03,04 .... 020</b> . A coder is expected to clearly write this ID number in the apportioned field labeled as <b>PAPER ID</b> .
<b>Coder Identification: (CID)</b>	Two coders were recruited for the exercise and named as Coder C1 and Coder C2. A coder is expected to <b>tick</b> appropriate box to signify identity. See box <b>C1</b> and <b>C2</b> on top right corner of the coding instrument.
<b>Newspaper Date: 2</b>	<b>ENTER</b> the exact date of each newspaper. The format should be for example: <b>01/06/14</b> .
<b>Time Frame: 3</b>	Four weeks were selected weekly for two months. Each week beginning from Monday to Friday will have a starting date and ending date. A coder is expected to tick the box depicting the date (time frame) within which a newspaper falls. E.g. <b>01/06/14 - 05/06/14</b>
<b>Newspaper Category: 4</b>	For the purpose this exercise, selected Ghanaian newspapers have been categorised into two. Tick the applicable category..... Daily Graphic & Ghanaian Times: <b>Government Owned</b> = [ 1 ] Public Agenda & Daily Guide: <b>Private Owned</b> = [ 2 ]

<b>Headlines (Agenda): 9</b>	This comprises of the major editorials / articles that are presented in the selected newspapers. Here, a coder is expected to tick or underline the major subject that an article focuses on. E.g. Corruption, Development, party politics .....
<b>Story Positioning:10</b>	Refer to coding instruction <b>No.13</b> below labelled as <i>advert positioning</i> and apply it instruction here.
<b>Story Content:11</b>	This section requires that the coder read through each article and <b>briefly</b> write out the exact message in the story. This is a technical aspect where <i>framing</i> will be looked out for. It is advisable for coder to read each article twice or more if necessary. Write clearly to make data organisation easy.
<b>Sources 12</b>	This explains where the story is coming from (reference/informants). Thus, it serves as authenticating the storyline thus seen as a form of reference. This can be at the end of the story or beginning. The source can be an URL, government ministry, academic institution etc.....
<b>Advert Positioning: 13</b>	This considers the exact page an advert is inserted in a said newspaper. Though there are several pages in each of the papers to be coded, these pages have been categorised into <b>3</b> major parts labelled as <b>FrontPage</b> , <b>Middle Page</b> and <b>Back Pages</b> for the sake of this work to make coding easier. Tick applicable category. <i>Positioning has been defined in the context of this exercise as follows:</i>
<b>Advert Positioning (Cont'd): 13</b>	<b>FrontPage:</b> This means an advert is located within the first <u>5 pages</u> (pages 1-2-3-4-5) of the newspaper. [ 1 ] <b>Middle Page:</b> This represent all other pages that fall <u>between</u> the FrontPage and Back Page. [ 2 ] <b>Back Page:</b> This means an advert is located within the last <u>6 pages</u> of the newspaper. [ 3 ]
<b>Advert Format: 14</b>	This explains the format of the advert illustration. The message can be colour or black and white format. The essence is to determine the cost of the advert hence the revenue. Tick as appropriate where the message is:  Colour: [ 1 ]                      Black and White: [ 2 ]
<b>Advert Size/Space:15</b>	This considers the physical size of the advert in terms of space it occupies in a newspaper. Like instruction 14 above, the advert space determines the cost of the advert hence the revenue. Tick appropriate box to signify spaces as shown below on the coding instrument: <b>See Specimen A below:</b>

<p><b>SPECIMEN</b></p> <p><b>‘A’</b></p>	
<p><b>Main Advert Categories</b></p>	<p>There are <b>four major categories</b> in carrying out this content analysis and each have alternatives for coding purposes. The alternatives will be used as the unit of analysis in EACH case. <b>These are:</b> Government, Corporate bodies, Foreign missions/philanthropy (Diplomats /embassies, NGOs and religious bodies. example churches), Others (Individuals - Birthday, Festivals, Wedding, Outdooring, Announcement, Obituaries, Change of identity, Missing persons etc).</p>
<p><b>Government Level:16</b></p>	<p>Due to recent decentralised systems, most governments operate at different levels and Ghana is no exception. This is to know whether an advert is coming directly from the national, regional and/or district /municipal offices. Tick one of the following to represent level of government: [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ]</p>
<p><b>Government Adverts/ Offers: 17</b></p>	<p>These are adverts or offers coming from the government. Tick as appropriate the boxes labeled 1-5 [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]</p> <p><b>Tenders:</b> They are government contracts on offer for contractors to bid.</p> <p><b>Jobs:</b> Official government vacancy inviting application from the public.</p> <p><b>Education:</b> Ministry of Education or State school advertising admissions, graduation etc. <b>State Function:</b> Adverts about impending state events. Example Farmers Day .....</p> <p><b>Others:</b> Government adverts that may fall outside the above four.</p>

<b>Business Organization: 18</b>	<p>These are adverts or offers coming from the corporate bodies. Tick as appropriate the boxes labeled 1-5 [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ] [ 4 ] [ 5 ]</p> <p><b>Retailing:</b> These are businesses that are into the sale of all kinds of finished products. E.g. are businesses like „Pick &amp; Pay“, „MTN“, „Sainsbury’s“, „Wal-Mart“, „Shoprite“ etc. <b>Manufacturing:</b> These are businesses who are into industrial production and do not sell in units to final consumers as retailers do. <b>Services:</b> These are businesses that sell intangible products. Example Health, banking etc. <b>Education:</b> All academic institutions that are privately-owned and operate as businesses. <b>Other:</b> Business adverts that may fall outside the above four.</p>
<b>Foreign Missions /Philanthropy:19</b>	<p>Captures advertisements that may come from these bodies. Tick as appropriate the boxes labeled 1-3 [ 1 ] [ 2 ] [ 3 ]</p> <p><b>Diplomats/Embassies:</b> These are establishments that represent their home country in another country. Example: South Africa’s embassy in Ghana. <b>Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):</b> These are not-for-profit organisations and there is a chance that some of them may fall into the advocacy group. <b>Religious Bodies:</b> In Ghana the visible are broadly grouped into three. These are (Christianity, Islamic and Traditional).</p>
<b>Others:20</b>	<p>These will include mainly <b>individuals</b> who have advertised something or an event. This covers birthday, festivals, wedding, outdooing, announcement, obituaries, change of identity, missing persons among others which are paid for. <b>NOTE:</b> This is completely different from classifieds based on the <b>size</b> of advert.</p>
<b>Classifieds:21</b>	<p>These are the „small’s“ and in terms of size, they are defined as all those insertions <math>&lt; \frac{1}{16}</math> clustered in one page. Count the number of adverts in EACH category and write the number in the empty boxes beside them.</p>
<b>Business sponsorship:22</b>	<p>This relates to programmes whose advertisement in the newspapers is being paid for by businesses either as a form of PR or social responsibility. Tick the appropriate box.</p>

### **Instruction 23: Definition of Framing Variables**

[1] **Favourable:** One-sidedness stance to favour: unbalanced

[2] **Defensive:** Reactionary- response to other stories or statements (a counter posture) to defend .....

[3] **Neutral:** Do not take sides ... straight-forward .... Balanced

[4] **Unfavourable:** Negative tone but ... head-on (critical)

**Streamline the framing:** Mention *political, business, societal / environmental*. Where a story falls outside the domains of these four areas, code as *others in writing*.

**APPENDIX 3: CODING INSTRUMENT**

		<b>PAPER ID</b>	001	<b>CODER</b>	C1 <input type="checkbox"/>	C2 <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b>	<b>Newspaper Title</b>	Daily Graphic <input type="checkbox"/>	Daily Guide <input type="checkbox"/>	Ghanaian Times <input type="checkbox"/>	Public Agenda <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Newspaper Date</b>	ENTER HERE → <input style="width: 200px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>				
<b>3</b>	<b>Newspaper Category</b>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>4</b>	<b>HEADLINE Category</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Agenda Set	Corruption <input type="checkbox"/>	Health <input type="checkbox"/>	Partisan/Politics <input type="checkbox"/>	Education <input type="checkbox"/>	Business <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>Count headline(s) in each of the following categories to know issues with most coverage....</i></p> <p>To determine issues media covers frequently or silent about? ... <i>Salience</i></p>		Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture, Telecommunication, Environmental/Societal, Oil/Fuel, Employment, Production, Transportation, Sports/Leisure, State Function, Judiciary, Security, Romance, Robbery, Governance, Policy, Economy, Chieftaincy, Industry				
<b>5</b>	<b>Headlines Tone</b>	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutral <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Story Genre</b>	HDL News <input type="checkbox"/>	Local/Reg. <input type="checkbox"/>	Editorial <input type="checkbox"/>	Opinion/Column <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Story Contents</b>	..... ..... ..... ..... .....				
Succinctly write out <b>major</b> issues in the article under the headline in 4 above (framing)		..... ..... ..... ..... .....				

8	<b>Source(s)</b>	Official/Gov. <input type="checkbox"/> Non-official/Gov. <input type="checkbox"/> Others <input type="checkbox"/>																				
9	<b>FRAMING</b> Enter Exact Headline →																					
10	<b>Streamline Headline</b> Further Categorisation	Political <sup>1</sup> Business <sup>2</sup> Societal/Enviroment <sup>3</sup> Corruption <sup>4</sup>																				
11	<b>Framing: See Instruction 23 to Code</b> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>[A]</td> <td>Favourable<sup>1</sup></td> <td>Defensive<sup>2</sup></td> <td>Neutrality<sup>3</sup></td> <td>Unfavourable<sup>4</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>[B]</td> <td>Favourable<sup>1</sup></td> <td>Defensive<sup>2</sup></td> <td>Neutrality<sup>3</sup></td> <td>Unfavourable<sup>4</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>[C]</td> <td>Favourable<sup>1</sup></td> <td>Defensive<sup>2</sup></td> <td>Neutrality<sup>3</sup></td> <td>Unfavourable<sup>4</sup></td> </tr> <tr> <td>[D]</td> <td>Favourable<sup>1</sup></td> <td>Defensive<sup>2</sup></td> <td>Neutrality<sup>3</sup></td> <td>Unfavourable<sup>4</sup></td> </tr> </table>		[A]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>	[B]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>	[C]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>	[D]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>
[A]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>																		
[B]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>																		
[C]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>																		
[D]	Favourable <sup>1</sup>	Defensive <sup>2</sup>	Neutrality <sup>3</sup>	Unfavourable <sup>4</sup>																		
12	<b>Advert Positioning</b>	Front <input type="checkbox"/> Middle <input type="checkbox"/> Back <input type="checkbox"/>																				
13	<b>Advert Format</b>	Colour <input type="checkbox"/> Black & White <input type="checkbox"/>																				
14	<b>Advert Size/Space</b>	(1) Full Page <input type="checkbox"/> ( <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub> ) of Full Page <input type="checkbox"/> ( <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> ) Half Page <input type="checkbox"/> ( <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub> ) of Full Page = <input type="checkbox"/> ( <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> ) Quarter Page <input type="checkbox"/> Other, rule measure= <input type="checkbox"/>																				
15	<b>Government: Level</b>	National <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal/District <input type="checkbox"/>																				
16	<b>Government: Ads/Offers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tender <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> State Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other																				
		Where <b>OTHER</b> , state the ad/offer type here: ..... ..... ..... ..... .....																				

16	<b>Business / Enterprises Ads/Offers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacture <input type="checkbox"/> Services <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Where <b>OTHER</b> , state the ad/offer type here: ..... ..... ..... .....
17	<b>Foreign Missions / Philanthropy</b>	Diplomats/Embassies <input type="checkbox"/> Religion [e.g. churches] <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Governmental Org <input type="checkbox"/>	
18	<b>Others</b>	Individuals <input type="checkbox"/> Chieftaincy <input type="checkbox"/>	
19	<b>Classifieds</b>  <i>Count <b>smalls</b> in <b>each</b> of the following listed <b>categories</b> and enter figure in corresponding empty box.</i>	Individuals <input type="checkbox"/> = <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> = <input type="checkbox"/> Religion <input type="checkbox"/> = <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> = <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> = <input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Confirmation: All aspects of newspaper read and fields attended to correctly.....</i>			
<b>Tick Appropriately</b>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

## APPENDIX FOUR

### **Informed consent – permission to interview.**

*Please note that this document is produced in duplicate – one copy to be kept by the respondent, and one copy to be retained by the researcher.*

Researcher	Mr. Jacob Nyarko	+27-71-9958306 (SA) +233-247407264 (Ghana)	<a href="mailto:jaynyarko@yahoo.com">jaynyarko@yahoo.com</a>
Department	Centre for Culture and Media in Society (CCMS)	+27-31-2602505	
Institution	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)	Howard College Campus, Masizi Kunene Ave, Glenwood, Durban, South Africa.	
Supervisor	Prof. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli	+27-31-2601813	<a href="mailto:teertoma@ukzn.ac.za">teertoma@ukzn.ac.za</a>
Chair, UKZN Human Sciences Research Committee	Dr Shenuka Singh	+27-31-2608591	<a href="mailto:singshen@ukzn.ac.za">singshen@ukzn.ac.za</a>
<i>Please do not hesitate to contact any of the above persons, should you want further information on this research, or should you want to discuss any aspect of the interview process.</i>			

### **Research Consent Statement**

This research is being conducted to assess the independence of the media through legal, economic and political spheres in present-day Ghana. Data will be gathered through interview and content analysis of selected newspapers in order to determine media funding and agenda-setting/framing by coding and their relationship to editorial independence. Population for this interview includes selected managers from media houses, media regulatory body (National Media Commission), Ghana Journalists Association, Private Newspaper Publishing Association of Ghana and working journalists.

The purpose of the interviews is to understand the views and opinions, and to get to know other people's beliefs, attitudes and expectations and to gain understanding into the cognitive models that shape the world-views of key stakeholders. The data to be gathered from this interview is expected to contribute to making the media free from interference in exercising its functions and most importantly to become pluralistic as the mouthpiece of society.

The data will be kept securely for five years for purposes of verification. Should you request it, an electronic copy of the final thesis will be sent to you on completion.

### **Signed consent**

- I understand that the purpose of this interview is solely for academic purpose. The findings will be published as a thesis, and may be published in academic journals.

Yes  No

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand I will remain anonymous. (Please choose whether or not you would like to remain anonymous.)</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand my name will be quoted. (Please choose whether or not you would prefer to have your remarks attributed to yourself in the final research documents.)</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand that I will not be paid for participating but a souvenir will be given.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand that I reserve the right to discontinue and withdraw my participation any time.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I consent to be frank to give the information.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand I will not be coerced into commenting on issues against my will, and that I may decline to answer specific questions.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I understand I reserve the right to schedule the <i>time</i> and <i>location</i> of the interview.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I consent to have this interview recorded.</li> </ul>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

**\* By signing this form, I consent that I have duly read and understood its content.**

<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Name of Participant</b>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Signature</b>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Date</b>
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Name of Researcher</b>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Signature</b>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Date</b>

# APPENDIX FIVE



15 January 2014

Mr Jacob Nyarko (213551924)  
School of Applied Human Sciences  
Howard College Campus

Protocol reference number: H55/L353/013M  
Project title: Assessment of media independence through legal, economic and political spheres (Ghana case study)

Dear Mr Nyarko,

With regards to your response to our letter dated 18 November 2013, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

  
Dr Shekha Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc: Supervisor: Professor R Teer-Tomaselli  
cc: Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken  
cc: School Administrator: Ms Asale Luthuli

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
Dr Shekha Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag 254001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/3060/4507 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4928 Email: [hrsc@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hrsc@ukzn.ac.za) / [hrsc@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hrsc@ukzn.ac.za) / [hrsc@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hrsc@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

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