

**THE ROLE OF BROADCAST MEDIA IN A DEMOCRATIC  
DISPENSATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE GHANAIAN NEWS MEDIA IN  
THE 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS.**

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## STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

We, the undersigned have read the university regulations relating to plagiarism and certify that this report is our own effort, and does not contain any unacknowledged work from any other source. We also declare that we have been under supervision for this report herein submitted.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research highlights the outcome of investigation into the role of the broadcast media in a democratic dispensation using the 2016 General Election in Ghana as case study.

The purpose of the study was to find out how the Ghanaian broadcast media covered the election campaign, be it in a horse race or issue based. Other issues studied included the level of media coverage given to the contesting political parties as well as the sector of policies mentioned in the coverage of the parties' campaign messages.

This study found out that the broadcast media in Ghana played a democratic participatory role by providing electorates with options through their coverage of relevant issues, and also served as an arena for the various contesting political parties to sell their message during the 2016 General Election. It also revealed that the two major political parties, NDC and NPP were given prominent media coverage which reflected in the results of the election. The smaller parties on the other hand received just about twenty percent media coverage combined. Compared to prevailing trends in the western press, it was refreshing to see an issue based coverage.

Even though the Ghanaian news media covered the 2016 elections in an issue based manner, it is worrying to see a skewed proportion of coverage for the two main political parties (NPP and NDC). This has the tendency to drag the country into a default 2 party state system.

## **DEDICATION**

For their compassionate love and support, we dedicate this academic work to our families.

Most specially to Mrs. Emelia Akua-Boatema, Mr. Kofi Amoako, Mr. Frank Awuah Adjei, Mary Tenewah, Godfred Apomasu, Solomon Nkrumah, Agnes Nkrumah, Pastor Kofi Asamoah-Boateng, Emmanuella Apomasu and Yaw Kyei.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The role of broadcast media in deepening democracy during an electioneering process cannot be undermined in any sense whatsoever. The media is a term used to denote a section of the media specifically envisioned and designed to reach a very large audience such as the population of a nation state (Oberko, 2010). Media has to do with the television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books and the internet. Broadcast media being the main focus of this study on the other hand can be defined as “the dissemination of message through transmission over radio and television that provides for reception by the public as opposed to narrow-casting” (Media Dictionary, 2005:32).

Apart from advancing public knowledge, the news media’s main mission is to keep the society aware of the public concern and interest (Ochilo, 1998). Each media has a message it wants to convey to the public in order to fulfill their role in the society, such as to provide relevant information, educate, promote democratic values such as the rule of law, good governance, transparency and accountability, entertain and impart knowledge.

They regularly cover all sorts of issues such as health, music, fine art, crime, sport, entertainment, political events among others (Meyer, 2002, Soela, 2004). Tosanisunmi (2004) has observed that the mass media educate, inform and entertain beyond these functions as they also persuade and catalyze for social mobilization. Free press,

public's right to be informed, change and retain of government in electoral processes, just to mention a few are all true reflections of democracy.

On the other hand, an election being a fundamental element of democracy facilitates the public's sense of belonging to a political system. The simplest definition of democracy has been given by Karl Popper as a system that makes it possible to get rid of a government without spilling blood (Dahrendorf, 2006). Consequently, Sodaro (2004) reveals that "the essential idea of democracy is that the people have the right to determine who governs them".

Media has a role to play in the day to day activities of the state (Mkujanga, 2009). In a more definite term, the media has a role to play in governance.

Giving perspective to the aforementioned, the Ghanaian broadcast media has a role to play in Ghana's democracy, and their coverage of the 2016 General Election is a sound indicator of how they played their role in Ghana's democracy.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

After the independence of Ghana from the British in 1957, the media in this country struggled to carry out its role resulting from fear and intimidation of various governments, especially the military. It was after the adoption of the 1992 Constitution as the fundamental law that the fourth arm of government realized its true role, freedom and potential. "Since the return to constitutional rule in 1992, Ghana has made significant strides towards democratic governance as the country conducts its seventh presidential and parliamentary elections of the Fourth Republic this year" (Graphic online, 2016).

Consequently, with 25 years down the lane since the return to constitutional rule and the repealing of criminal libel law in 2001, the Ghanaian media has become the mouth and ear of the public with the potential to make and unmake a government. Free and fair elections is not only about casting a vote, but also having adequate information about parties, candidates and the election process to enable voters make an informed choice (Goroi 2009). As a result, the broadcast media has to play the role of providing that needed information to voters, candidates and observers, by providing a common arena that unites all stakeholders and allow them to reach and interact with each other. However, little is known about the role played by the broadcast media. This study is therefore intended to examine how the media play their role in deepening democracy.

### **1.3 THE PURPOSE STATEMENT**

This study is aimed at exploring the role played by the Ghanaian news media in the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary election.

### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To examine how the broadcast media played its role in the 2016 general elections.
2. To reveal how the media built public awareness towards the election.
3. To ascertain the level of equal media coverage given to political parties and candidates.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How did the broadcast media play its role during the 2016 general elections?
2. How did the media build awareness to the public concerning the elections?
3. What was the level of media coverage given to contesting political parties?

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

At the end of this project, the end result will benefit academics, students of communication studies (specifically broadcast journalism students) and other researchers who may want to carry out further research on this study.

It will enlighten the public with regards to the democratic process in political changes and make them aware of their rights in decision making through the broadcast media. After elaborating on the outcomes of the broadcast media's participation in the 2016 election, the government can use this study to make further media policies that would foster development in the profession. Politicians would also be aided by this study to be aware of the various roles of the broadcast media in the distribution of democracy to all stakeholders. With this, they can effectively use the broadcast media to inform their people and also create peace and harmony in the political scene. On the other hand, the study aims at assisting the broadcast media community to see if they're on the right path in participating positively to a democratic election.

The threshold significance of this research study is for us researchers to provide knowledge and gain experience of carrying out subsequent research studies and to attain our Bachelors Degree in Communication Studies.

## **1.7 SCOPE OF STUDY**

The scope of this research work will cover political news articles published between November 1 and December 6 on both [peacefmonline.com](http://peacefmonline.com) and [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com). The study focuses on the democratization roles played by the broadcast media during the 2016 Presidential and Parliamentary election.

## **1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study, being an academic research, may be faced with time and financial resources constraints. The study will be limited to some areas due to the problems of funds, shortage of texts, journals and information relevant to the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The functions of the media in democracy and subsequently in an electoral process have induced much interest from the public, politicians, governments, media practitioners and outsiders. However, many scholars have tried to bring forth a simple explanation about how the two institutions work alongside each other but have not had it the easy way.

This chapter then seeks to review selected related significant theoretical frameworks, historical frameworks, role and impact of the broadcast media and conceptual frameworks propounded by scholars and researchers in the field of mass communication, about media's role in entrenching democracy during elections. Reviewing these studies will in spades help in finding gold recommendations for further research studies in this area.

#### 2.2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

##### 2.2.1 Normative Theory

In 1956, three professors of communication -- Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm brought out their *Four Theories of the Press* which went a long way in establishing a typology in the minds of journalism educators and students (Karthic, 2012). In the words of S J Baron and D K Davis in the third edition of their book *Mass*

*Communication Theory*, “the normative theory explains how ideal media ought to operate within a specific system of social values. The theory of the press’ role in democracy would most likely fit here as would theories of media in an Islamic Republic or an authoritarian state”(pp. 32). Respectively, the obligations of the media will be in consonance with accepted values in a given society. According to Siebert in their book *Four Theories of the Press*, “the press takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates” (1956:1-2).

There are four widely known accepted and criticized press theories of Siebert’s (see Occult 1999). These include the authoritarian theory, the libertarian theory, the soviet theory and the social responsibility theory.

For the purposes of this study, the social responsibility theory best describes the role of the Ghanaian media, specifically in democratic elections.

The Social Responsibility Theory revalues that the press has a duty to give voice to the voiceless and put more focus on the poor, the segregate and minority (Occult, 1999). It seems to be working very well towards advancing democracy in various societies. “This theory keeps certain areas free for the Press but at the same time puts lot of responsibility on media” (Tripti, 2012). Ochilo(1998) opines that apart from advancing public knowledge, the media’s main mission is to keep the society aware of the public concern and interest. More than any other theory, the sense of responsibility is emphasized better in this theory. The basic premise of the theory is as follows: media has certain obligations to society; the media must show truth, accuracy, objectivity, and balance; the media is pluralistic; the forum for ideas; and media ownership is a public trust. Journalists are therefore accountable to their audience/readers (Tripti, 2012).

The third edition of Mass Communication Theory cites the major criticism of this theory as being overly optimistic view about media's willingness to meet responsibility (pp.113).

### **2.2.2 Democratic Theory**

“Not long after military suppression in 1989 of the demonstration for democracy by Chinese students in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, I had an occasion to talk with a participant. He told me that although he had risked his life in Beijing and some of his friends had lost theirs in the democratic cause, neither he nor they could claim to know just what democracy is” (Cunningham, 2002).

CitingGoroi (2013), the term democracy refers to participation of the people in the political life of a nation (Narayan, 2000).According to Musambachine (1998), democracy refers to a system of Government that is based on and representative of the view of constitutive people. It is usually held up as the most desirable form of government.

From the same citation, Schultz (1998) claims that the press emerged as the fourth estate by the practical application of the principles of the freedom of expression that were strongly required in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By declaring an independent role in public life and the centrality of freedom of expression, the press began to legitimize itself as the conduit for public discussion and took a crucial step towards becoming a source of power in political life.

The media achieved this by informing the citizens about events that significantly affect their lives. In that respect, the press is considered as the fourth estate of a society's governance that provides the necessary checks and balances to prevent the

domination of one sphere of government on another. The three other estates are the Legislature, Executive and the Judiciary (Kieran, 1999).

On the one hand, irrespective of the above core positive qualities of democracy, scholars have drawn attention to its limitations. Robert Dahl observes (1982:97–9) that since any democracy will exclude some people from participation in democratic procedures (for instance children and noncitizens) they will to this extent be deficient in democracy if the latter requires that those affected by a decision have a say in making it. Dahl thinks this problem is an unsolvable ‘embarrassment of democracy, or would be were it not ignored’ (1982: 97–9).

On the other hand, Hurley departs from Dahl’s view that these criteria (if reasoned at all) must come from general ethical theories beyond considerations of democracy, but she is enabled to do this by invoking such ‘distinctively democratic values’ as ‘self-determination, autonomy, respect for rights, equality, and contestability’ (Hurley 1999: 274).

What then constitutes the principles of democracy? The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, Article 19 provides that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers” (Goroi, 2013). Dahl (1989) adds that among the key principal of democracy includes people representation outside the formal political structures, good governance, accountability, protection of human rights, rule of law, and social justice. It is the mass media that undertakes the duty of searching for information so as to inform the public on what the government is

doing. However if the media has no access to information, it will end up reporting rumors and incorrect facts (Goroi, 2013).

This leads us to the criteria of the democratic process. Effective participation, through the process of making binding decisions, citizens ought to have an adequate opportunity and equal opportunity for expressing their preferences as to the final outcome. To deny any citizen opportunities for effective participation means that their preferences are unknown or incorrectly perceived, they cannot be taken into account (Goroi, 2013). Dahl (1986) made emphasis on the participation criteria of democracy when he said “in determining outcomes at the decisive stage, the choice that must be taken into account requires citizen to have equal opportunities to express their choice and explicitly require an association to adopt the principle of majority rule”.

As Bratton (2013:17) notes, some scholars have argued strongly that repetitive elections, even when flawed, will eventually lead toward competitive democratic rule, whereas others have also strongly argued, to the contrary (Appiah-Thompson, 2015). “There has been talk of an African political renewal and political rebirth, even if it exists side by side with considerable political violence” (Gyimah-Boadi, 2004:5). For instance, in his article, “the End of the Transition Paradigm”, Thomas Carothers (2002:16) argued strongly that “elections are in and of themselves largely insignificant to democratization” (ibid).

## **2.3 HISTORICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **2.3.1 Historical perspective of the Ghanaian broadcast media**

It must be emphasized that journalistic activities during the struggle for independence were purely in the print because the world was not in tuned with the operations of the electronic media (Asante, 1976:8-9).

Broadcasting in Ghana is said to have begun in the colonial era dating as far back as 1935 when the then Governor of the Gold Coast (as Ghana was then called), Sir Arnold Hodson established the first and the only wired radio distribution system in Accra (Asare, 2009). The network was established in Accra and it was later given the name Station ZOY and started service on 31st July, 1935. The period between 1946 and 1953 saw station ZOY being administered by the Public Relations Department of the Colonial Government (Alhassan 2005: 211-212). According to Ansah, “radio was to cater for the information, cultural and entertainment needs of the political educated elite consisted of European settlers, colonial administrators and the small group of educated Africans” (Kyeremeh and Karikari, 1998: 4).

Alhassan(2005: 211, 213) notes that “based on recommendations made by a commission set up in 1953, the station’s name was changed to Gold Coast Broadcasting Service (GCBS) and transformed into a separate department of government. Another commission set up in 1958 by the self-rule government of Kwame Nkrumah upon examining the growth and development made recommendations for GCBS to be relocated. This was done and GCBS was moved to new premises with improved infrastructure and state-of-the-art broadcasting equipment. The GCBS was later renamed the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). Ever since it was introduced until 1967, the GBC was wholly funded by

government. But in the course of time, GBC had to supplement government support by making some operations commercial. This was gradual, with the state retaining the monopoly over broadcasting” (Ansah, 2009). In order to make the access to radio wider, the state owned industrial establishment Ghana Sanyo Limited entered into partnership with the Japanese company SANYO, to assemble radio sets and related technologies in Tema. The small portable *Akasanoma* radio was made available on the Ghanaian market at reasonably affordable price (Kyeremeh and Karikari 1998: 4).

### **2.3.2 The Quest for FM Radio Broadcast**

Though many thought the 1992 Constitution provided for the liberalization of the airwaves, the Rawlings government refused to grant licenses or allocate frequencies to private stations until the mid-nineties (Asante & Junko, 2017). They add that “in 1994 opposition politician Charles Wireko-Brobbe protested this policy with a series of pirate broadcasts, the infamous Radio Eye”. Radio Eye operated for 15-days – from November 19 to December 4, and operated on the frequency 96.2 (Wireko-Brobbe, 2017). Though the government pressed for criminal prosecution of Wireko-Brobbe and confiscated his equipment, his provocative action ultimately pressured the government to allow private FM stations.

But prior to the witness of private Fm stations in Ghana, Ansah (2009) unearths that there was a period of litigation in court between IMCG (name of Wireko-Brobbe’s FM station) and the government of which the court ruled that the search and seizure of the equipment was not legal and that the security personnel were to return the equipment’s of IMCG to them. There were also a number of demonstrations by the public against the seizure of equipment and closure of Radio EYE following evidence that Ghana Frequency Registration Control Board (GFRCB) had failed to react to an

application made by IMCG and several others for assignment of frequencies for radio and television broadcasting services (Asare 2009:15).

It could now be said that radio broadcasting in Ghana has been transformed since the middle of 1995 into an ocean of aural delight. The radio listener can now be selective and feel so good as far as local radio is concerned due to the birth of a host of new FM radio stations (Dotse 1996: 14).

## **2.4 EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

### **2.4.1 Broadcast Media and Democracy in Ghana**

Arguably, the media's role in consolidating democracy and development becomes even more critical in a developing country like Ghana (Owusu, 2012). The media in Ghana continues to play critical role in the consolidation of democracy and development. As part of the democratic culture, the 1992 Constitution assigns roles and responsibilities to institutions of state and the media is not left out in this (Rosenstiel, 2001).

According to Blay-Amihere (2011), Ghana has a diverse media sector with about 200 authorized FM stations, 12 private television stations and hundreds of newspapers. The chairman of the National Media Commission further elaborated that, "journalists can no longer be arrested and detained for their editorial functions" and adds that "Ghana's standing in the comity of nations is high as the country with the freest press in Africa. Good for our image, good for investor confidence."The watchdog role of the media has to some extent been fulfilled in the view of Vice President Mahama. He says, "Our media has served us well as a nation. And we know there can be no true

democracy without a free and independent media” (Owusu, 2012). Chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Ghana also said, “let us be clear: the media in Ghana have made great and fantastic contributions to the development of our society and impacted the world around us” (Graphic online, 2016).

Owusu (2012) further comments that irrespective of the Vice-President and the NMC Chairman’s commendation of the media for its role so far in Ghana’s democracy and development, there are others who still feel the media has not done enough in the acceleration of our development in democracy (Owusu, 2012).

#### **2.4.2 Repeal of the Criminal Libel Law**

The criminal libel law was repealed in July 2001 – six months into the administration of the New Patriotic Party. The law de-criminalizes libel and gives citizens the option to use civil means to check the practice of journalism in Ghana. It has also been hailed as having brought to an end of over a century-old of a regime that repressed the law of free expression.

However, for more than 14 years after the repeal of the law, concerns rose about irresponsible reportage and inappropriate contents across some media platforms keep growing.

The Ghana Journalists Association has now been pressuring government to pass a game-changing Broadcasting Law which most analysts and professionals say will inject professionalism in the media (Daily Graphic, 2001).

#### **2.4.3 Role of the Broadcast Media in Elections**

The role of the media in elections in developing countries in Africa is a significant area often overlooked by academics (Temin & Smith, 2002). Studying a notable

recent study about the news media and election campaign coverage, Atta Poku (2016) posits that “scholars still know very little about the relationship between media ownership, media bias and political election coverage in developing countries.

The growing influence of the media in the democratisation of countries has seen them move to the centre of the social process in what is mostly referred to as the mediatization of politics (Strömbäck, 2008). As a result of the increasing mediatization of politics, the media has assumed a greater role and influence by shaping and framing the process and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which the communication takes place (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhard & Rucht, 2002). Strömbäck (2008) has noted that this has seen the media turning out to be the most important source of political information for electorates.

The role of the media in every competitive democracy is intense. Relatedly, broadcast media in an electoral democracy has several duties such as the collection, processing and dissemination of news and information on daily basis. It is however implausible to organize elections in this robust Ghanaian democratic era without active management and involvement of the electronic media.

Consequently, the broadcast media plays the role of informing people about the election. It should therefore report fairly on the campaigns of all political parties so the people can determine if there are differences between them and make their own choices. Relatively, the media also provides opinions by columnists, commentators’ and talk-show presenters. It also educates the people on the candidates, when to vote, where to vote and how to vote in secrecy. In addition, it may carry advertisements’ from the political parties seeking the people support (Brandt, 2006). Candidates on the other hand have come to realize that the media provides easy publicity and perhaps

the most efficient means of getting their message out to the electorate to win their votes (Gyimah-Boadi, 1999).

The media is the watchdog over the fairness of the electioneering campaigns and voting. It is the media's job to report if there is no free speech because some candidates are afraid to speak, if there is corruption in elections and voting procedures, or if the Electoral Commission is not doing its job fairly (Goroi, 2013).

Third, since an election is not just for politicians, the broadcast media should be the voice of the people. An election is also an opportunity for ordinary people to speak up, to say what issues they think are important and why (Brandt 2006). At the 2016 awards night of the Ghana Journalists Association in Accra, Mrs. Charlotte Osei, chairperson of the Electoral Commission said "according to Thomas Jefferson, the founding father of America and its third President, "where the press is free and every man is able to read, all is safe."

Finally, the media in democratic societies serve as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints. Parties require an outlet for the articulation of their policies and programmes to a mass audience, and thus the media must be open to them (Mc Nair, 2002).

Irrespective of the aforementioned roles of the media, recent studies and trends have shown the media is gradually shirking this responsibility in their coverage of presidential election campaigns (Kaplan, Goldstein & Hale, 2005).

Two other critiques of news media performance in western democratic elections may also be relevant to the Ghanaian case, and merit investigation. The first is the focus on "horse race" coverage. Horse race coverage is media coverage which focuses

primarily on strategies campaigns are employing or who is winning or losing in the polls (Graber, 2002). Western campaign news increasingly focuses more on the “game frame” or horse race news coverage (discussing who is ahead, who is behind, and campaign strategies and events) than on substantive policy issues (Graber, 2002). This is as a result of audience preferences for such kind of news on elections as compared to policy issues. The audience will look out for such news regardless of where it is in a particular news bulletin or the page it is in, in a newspaper (Anderson & Thorson, 1989) and find it more interesting than issues of policy covered in these election campaigns (Iyengar et al, 2004).

#### **2.4.4 Influence and impact of broadcast media on the society**

Amathila (1999) has recognized the impact and influence of media in different aspects. The media can bridge the gap between politicians and electorates, and demystify the whole concept of the government. The media also provokes the public interest in the government, especially when people manifest a disinterest in the government (Goroi, 2013).

During campaign periods in general elections, the media plays an important role in developing a culture of tolerance by presenting diverse and critical views. This encouraging wide array of ideas and beliefs among individuals and institutions builds an equitable and non discriminatory environment that enhances political life. Even when some media outlets are overtly biased in their editorials, most seems to engage in developing a culture of tolerance which promotes the democratic process.

The media again makes a valuable contribution to democracy by educating and informing electorates and by providing analytical thought and stimulating debate and

dialogue, allowing the people’s voice to be heard irrespective of their view points (Kasoma, 1999).

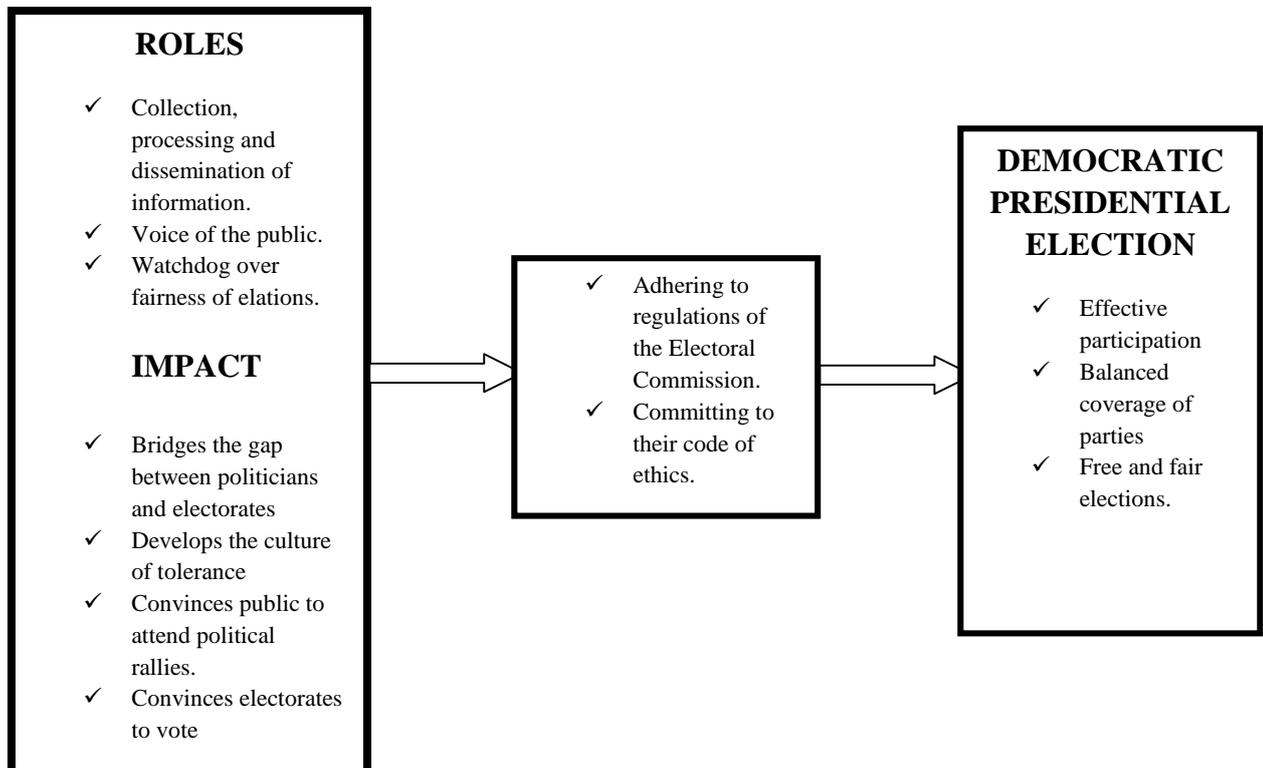
Finally, apart from the various media influence and impact discussed above, electorates are however indirectly persuaded to attend party rallies, which in turn, contribute to the promotion of democracy.

## 2.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To be able to examine the role of the electronic media in a democratic dispensation during the 2016 general elections, the following aspects were examined:

- Role of media
- Influence of media

**Figure 1: Conceptual model**



Source: Researchers’ construct (2017)

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter seeks to present the appropriate research method adopted for the study. It gives description of the research design, unit of analysis, sample size, sampling technique, data collection technique and data analysis.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is the framework that specifies the information to be collected, the source of data, as well as the data collection procedure (Kothari, 1990). According to Kothari, a good design will elicit consistency in the information gathered with the objectives of the study. Hence data is collected by an accurate and economical procedure.

As a descriptive study qualitative content analysis, the researchers employed the case study design as the mode of investigation. This will enable us to come forth with viable and specific findings. This method is also adopted “when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1994). Another significant reason for this method stems from the fact that the topic under study demands a number of sources of evidence since researchers have little control over events.

### **3.3 UNIT OF ANALYSIS**

This study would be focused on *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com*. Political news articles published between November 1 and December 6 on both conglomerate media platforms would be observed.

This population is chosen because it is a fair representation of the Ghanaian broadcast media. *Peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com* are both a part of conglomerate media houses that operates a number of radio and television stations across the length and breadth of the country. Hence, they are a fair representation of the Ghanaian media.

Although newspapers form a significant part of the media, this study concentrated on the electronic broadcast media.

### **3.4 SAMPLE SIZE**

A total of three hundred and ninety three (393) political news articles would be observed from both *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com*. Two hundred and seventy (270) of these articles would be observed on *peacefmonline.com*. The remaining one hundred and twenty three (123) articles would be reviewed on *myjoyonline.com*.

There is a big disparity in the sample size stated above because political news articles on hand varied on both sites. On *peacefmonline.com*, about twenty (20) political news articles were published per day, out of which close to ten (10) were talking about elections. On the contrary, the maximum number of articles published each day

*onmyjoyonline.com* was just about ten (10), with mostly a maximum of five (5) of those articles talking about the election.

The above sample size has therefore been adopted in accordance with the availability of data on both media platforms.

### **3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND PROCEDURE**

According to Kombo (2002), sampling is the procedure researchers use to gather people, places or things to study. He adds that it is the processes of selecting a number of people as a representative element of the characteristics found in the entire group.

In this study, both probability and non-probability sampling techniques would be employed. The probability sampling technique to be used is the simple random sampling technique. On the other hand, the purposive sampling technique is the non-probability sampling technique to be used.

The non-probability sampling technique has been employed in this study because not every media house in the country stands the chance to be studied. Moreover, out of the number of conglomerate media houses in the country, this study focuses on *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com* because they possess the largest number of sister stations in the country and the accessibility of their news archives.

The probability sampling technique on the other hand implies that every political news article found on *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com* stands the chance to be reviewed.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

A qualitative coding method would be employed in the collection of data.

In the process of observation, the source of news item, the difference between democratic credible news and horse race news coverage would be coded. Again, coding of the sector of policies mentioned as well as the political party mentioned in each article would also be executed.

The basic concern of data analysis is to summarize large mass of data, to take out descriptions, to identify causal factors and to make estimations and generalisations (Goroi, 2009).

As a qualitative study, data collected from the archival study (observation) would be analyzed with the use of simple percentage arithmetic table.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the research.

Political news articles from *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com* were reviewed. They sought to check whether the Ghanaian broadcast media played the role of disseminating democratic credible news or horse race news to the Ghanaian electorate within the period of November 1 and December 6 – i.e. homestretch or the peak period of campaigning in the 2016 General election.

#### 4.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

**Table 1: Type of news (peacefmonline.com)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Democratic credible news	191	70.7
Horse race news coverage	79	29.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2017)**

The table above reveals a total of 270 (100%) political news articles reviewed on *peacefmonline.com*, out of which 191 (70.7%) were democratic credible news items focusing on the various policies of the contesting political parties and their presidential candidates. The remaining 79(29.3%) articles were found to be disseminating horse race news or news on polls and campaign strategies to the Ghanaian electorate.

**Table 2: Sector of Policies Covered (peacefmonline.com)**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Governance	75	19.1
Infrastructure	61	15.5
Employment	55	14
Education	46	11.7
Agriculture	40	10.2
Trade and Industry	35	8.9
Health	24	6.1
Security	10	2.5
Water	7	1.8
Oil and Gas	6	1.5
Gender	6	1.5
Economic	5	1.3
Energy	5	1.3
Sanitation	4	1
Finance	4	1
Tourism	2	0.50
Aviation	2	0.50
Ports and harbor	2	0.50
Sports	1	0.25
Mining	1	0.25
Housing	1	0.25
Land	1	0.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2017)**

The information in the table above shows that 19.1 percent of campaign policies were on governance, followed by infrastructure, employment, education and agriculture with 15.5 percent, 14 percent, 11.7 percent and 10.2 percent respectively. The sector of trade and industry garnered 8.9 percent coverage, 6.1 percent for the health sector, 2.5 percent for security, 1.8 percent for the water sector, 1.5 percent each for oil and

gas and gender, then 1.3 percent each for both the economic and the energy sector. The sectors of sanitation and finance were given 1 percent coverage each, Then 0.50 percent for the sectors of tourism, aviation and ports and harbour. The sports sector, mining, housing and land also attained 0.25 percent each.

**Table 3: Coverage given to contested parties (peacefmonline.com)**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
New Patriotic Party	111	41
National Democratic Congress	104	38
Progressive People's Party	28	10.4
Convention People's Party	15	5.5
National Democratic Party	4	1.5
People's National Congress	4	1.5
Independent	4	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2017)**

The above table indicates that the New Patriotic Party was given the highest media coverage with 41.1 percent. The National Democratic Congress followed with 38.5 percent coverage, then 10.4 percent coverage for the Progressive People's Party. 5.5 percent of media coverage was attained by the Convention People's Party. And then 1.5 percent each was gained by the National Democratic Party, People's National Congress and the Independent candidate.

From another conglomerate media in Ghana, 123(100%) articles were reviewed from *myjoyonline.com*. The study was focused on political news articles between 1st November and 6th December. Tables 4, 5 and 6 analyses the media's role, sector of

policies covered and the level of media coverage given to the various contested political parties.

**Table 4: Type of news (myjoyonline.com)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Democratic credible news	95	77.2
Horse race news coverage	28	22.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2017)**

From the table above, 77.2 percent of articles on *myjoyonline.com* were democratic credible news. Only 22.8 percent of the total articles observed were found to be covering horse race news.

**Table 5: Sector of Policies Covered (myjoyonline.com)**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Governance	49	31
Infrastructure	39	24.7
Employment	22	13.9
Education	16	10.1
Trade and Industry	9	5.7
Security	8	5
Agriculture	5	3.2
Health	4	2.5
Oil and Gas	2	1.3
Energy	1	0.6
Water	1	0.6
Sanitation	1	0.6
Sports	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2017)**

The data above denotes that governance was most covered among all the sectors with 31 percent out of the total 100 percent. Infrastructure, employment and education gained 24.7 percent, 13.9 percent and 10.1 percent respectively. The sector of trade and industry attained 5.7 percent, security got 5 percent, 3.2 percent for agriculture, and then 1.3 percent of media coverage was on the oil and gas sector. The energy sector, sanitation, water, as well as sports all settled on 0.6 percent of media coverage.

**Table 6: Coverage given to contested parties (myjoyonline.com)**

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
National Democratic	53	43
Congress	44	35
New Patriotic Party	12	9.8
Progressive People's Party	10	8.1
Convention People's Party	3	2.4
National Democratic Party	0	0
People's National		
Congress		
Independent	1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Data (2017)**

From the table above, the National Democratic Congress obtained the highest level of media coverage with 43.1 percent. The New Patriotic Party followed with 35.8 percent. The Progressive People's Party was given 9.8 percent coverage, and then the Convention People's Party with 8.1 percent coverage. The National Democratic Party received 2.4 percent. The Independent candidate gained 0.8 percent. And then the People's National Congress with no coverage at all is representing 0 percent.

### 4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents key findings of the analysis conducted earlier in this chapter with the conclusions made on the role the Ghanaian broadcast media played in deepening democracy during the 2016 general elections.

The study found that the Ghanaian news media played a vital role in the 2016 General Elections, a finding that is reflected in the theoretical review, the empirical studies, the conceptual framework and the statistical analysis covered in chapter 2 of this project.

This established fact stems from a number of reasons;

- 1) On the one hand, 70.7% of the articles observed on *peacefmonline.com* were issue based credible news whilst 29.3% were on horse race coverage. On the other hand, 77.2% of articles reviewed on *myjoyonline.com* were issue based credible news whereas 22.8% were covering horse race news.

Combining the number of democratic news gathered on both *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com* as well as the number of horse race news discovered on both sites, the statistics presents 72.8% of issue based news coverage up against 27.2% of horse race news coverage.

Now, putting the statistics obtained from these two conglomerate Media into perspective, it can be argued that the Ghanaian media intemperately informed electorates on the various policies of the contesting political parties and also provided an arena for the political parties and the electorate to meet and interact. They provided information which sought to inform the electorate on the options available to them in the 2016 General Elections.

- 2) On both *peacefmonline.com* and *myjoyonline.com*; Governance, infrastructure and employment were three sectors that gained much prominence in the policies of the various contested parties.

Similarly, the energy sector, water, sporting sector, sanitation, oil and gas, just to mention a few were all sectors at the bottom of priority in the policies of the various contested political parties.

- 3) The New Patriotic Party led the level of media coverage on *peacefmonline.com* with 41.1%. Followed by the National Democratic Congress and the Progressive People's Party with 38.5% and 10.4% respectively, the National Democratic Party, the People's National Congress and the Independent candidate were all given the least coverage of 1.5% in the 2016 general elections.

The statistics on the level of media coverage changed between the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress on *myjoyonline.com*. The National Democratic Congress had 43.1% coverage. The New Patriotic Party followed with 35.8% media coverage. The Convention People's Party, National Democratic Party, People's National Congress and the Independent candidate received minimum media coverage in that order.

The statistics on level of coverage from *peacefmonline.com* showed that the opposition NPP had more coverage than the ruling NDC. This is strange as ruling parties tend to get more coverage than opposition parties because of incumbency.

The two major parties NPP and NDC got 79% of the media coverage which reflected in the results of the election. The smaller parties on the other hand got just about 20%. Something which shows that the media are pushing Ghana into a default two (2) party state as it is only those two parties who have won elections in the 4th republican era.

The aforementioned discussions throw some solid lights on the fact that the Ghanaian broadcast media fulfilled their role of collecting, processing and disseminating issue based news and democratic messages intended to provide the electorates with alternatives by hammering on the plans and policies of the various contested political parties.

There are numerous studies that show that the media of the United States of America covers elections in a horse race manner – i.e. Focusing on the opinion polls and the negative developments that are far from the policies of the candidates. “A new report from Harvard Kennedy School’s Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy analyzes news coverage during the 2016 general election, and concludes that both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump received coverage that was overwhelmingly negative in tone and extremely light on policy” (Patterson, 2016).

Citing Iyengar (2004), “Western campaign news increasingly focuses more on the “game frame” or horse race news coverage (discussing who is ahead, who’ is behind, and campaign strategies and events) than on substantive policy issues (Graber, 2002). This is as a result of audience preferences for such kind of news on elections as compared to policy issues. The audience will look out for such news regardless of where it is in a particular news bulletin or the page it is in, in a newspaper(Anderson

& Thorson, 1989) and find it more interesting than issues of policy covered in these election campaigns” (Iyengar et al, 2004).

Now, even though Ghana is a third world democratic country but not as grown as the Americans, we have demonstrated the prevalence of credible news coverage from the press in elections using the last General Election as a case study. And as revealed from the data analyzed in this chapter, the 2016 general election was yet another strong consolidation of the country’s democracy by the media in elections.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The research study was established on the role of the Ghanaian broadcast media in consolidating democracy using the 2016 General Elections. As the fourth arm of government after the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary, this study generally aimed at examining whether the media provided electorates with horse race news coverage or democratic credible news coverage, which happens to be their objective role.

#### **5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The major limitation of this study was discovered at the stage of data collection.

Political news articles relevant to the study were not readily available. Out of the number of conglomerate media houses in the country, the archives of only [peacefmonline.com](http://peacefmonline.com) and [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com) were readily available to researchers. The scope of this study was then accordingly narrowed to just those two media sites.

Another challenge researchers faced was the minimal number of articles available on [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com) as compared to those on [peacefmonline.com](http://peacefmonline.com). This challenge also resulted in a big disparity in the sample size of this study.

### **5.3 SUMMARY**

This project has unearthed that the Ghanaian broadcast media fulfilled their role of providing electorates with democratic credible news coverage towards the 2016 general election. This conclusion was made after an archival study was carried out on 393 political news articles on both [peacefmonline.com](http://peacefmonline.com) and [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com).

The first chapter of this study in chronology covered the background, statement of the problem and purpose, objectives of the study, research questions, the hypothesis, significance of study, scope of study and the limitations of the study. In totality, this chapter set our research work into motion by focusing on our angle – roles the broadcast media played in deepening democracy during the 2016 general election.

In the second chapter of the study, we adopted some theoretical reviews, historical frameworks, empirical studies and a conceptual framework. Under the theoretical review, the normative theory was reviewed together with the social responsibility theory. The democratic theory was also reviewed. The historical perspective of the Ghanaian broadcast media and the quest for FM in Ghana were reviewed under the historical framework. Also featured in the second chapter of this project are the empirical studies which covered the Ghanaian broadcast media and democracy, repeal of the criminal libel law, role of the broadcast media in elections and the influence and impact of the media on society. In the latter part of this chapter, a conceptual model was constructed to examine the role and influence of the media in elections.

The appropriate research method adopted in this study was presented in the methodology. As a descriptive study, the case study design was adopted as our research design with both probability and non-probability sampling techniques employed. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were

employed respectively. Again, data was collected through an archival study and was interpreted using arithmetic tables and simple percentage.

To analyze data gathered, a total number of 393 political news articles were studied. 270 of these news articles were from [peacefmonline.com](http://peacefmonline.com) whereas 123 were from [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com). After a critical observation of all these articles, it was revealed that democratic credible news coverage was the priority of reportage by the Ghanaian broadcast media towards the 2016 general election. Democratic credible news received a total of over 70% media coverage whereas horse race news coverage lagged behind with a total of less than 30%.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it is not out of place to conclude that the Ghanaian broadcast media overwhelmingly consolidated the democratic aspect of Ghana's politics during the 2016 General election. In the cause of upholding their responsibilities as responsible fourth Arm of Government, the media relinquished opinion poll and negative reportage and consistently focused on the policies of the various contested political parties. Their focus provided information which informed electorates on the options available to them in the election. The significance of this revelation to the project is its affirmation to the empirical studies covered in the second chapter about the role of the media in elections.

However, the media overly concentrated and revolved its reportage around the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress. Media coverage given to the other five contested political parties was terribly below the belt.

## **5.5RECOMMENDATIONS**

Out of the findings of this research study, the following recommendations have been suggested:

1. The Ghanaian media should provide an equal and impartial platform for every contesting political party's policies to be aired to electorates in subsequent General elections.
2. The media should stop using misleading headlines. This observation was made in the process of data gathering when some headlines denoted horse race news whilst the content of the said articles were real issue based newscovering the campaign messages of contesting political parties.

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## **APPENDICES**

**RESEARCH TOPIC: THE ROLE OF BROADCAST MEDIA IN A DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE GHANAIAN MEDIA IN THE 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS.**

### **Appendix 1:**

**peacefmonline.com**

1. What is the name of the news item?
2. Distinguish between Horserace news coverage and Democratic credible news coverage.
3. What sector of policy or policies is the news article talking about?
4. Which political party was covered in the news article?

**Appendix 2:**

**myjoyonline.com**

1. What is the name of the news item?
2. Distinguish between Horserace news coverage and Democratic credible news coverage.
3. What sector of policy or policies is the news article talking about?
4. Which political party was covered in the news article?