



# Image Creation About Africa Within The State-Owned Media Space: A Content Analysis of the *Ghanaian Times* Newspaper

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempted to find out the various images or themes that the *Ghanaian Times* as a State-owned Print Media in Ghana portrays about Africa through its reportage. Utilizing the gatekeeping, cultural imperialist, and framing theories, the study looked at the selection of stories by the editors and the final images that were portrayed about Africa per the stories selected for publication for five (5) years. Through content analysis, the study sampled 225 stories from the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper. The study hypothesized that the newspaper would frame Africa positively but the findings did not support that hypothesis. The study further delved into the sources of the African news as it was hypothesized that the Ghanaian state-owned newspaper would also pick the majority of its stories from indigenous African news agencies. The results again caused the claim to be rejected as the newspaper indeed relied more on Western media particularly the British Broadcasting Corporation for news on Africa. While there is the need to periodically research to find out about the state of Africa's image in the media, it was recommended that the African media must reduce its dependence on foreign news agencies for stories on Africa as the tone of such stories is largely negative. The study contributes to the existing literature regarding Africa's image in the media especially how Ghanaian media frames Africa.

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## INTRODUCTION

The persistent phenomenon of how the Western Media continues to represent or depict Africa negatively is as topical today as it was decades ago when many Africans and other aggrieved proponents campaigned for the adoption of a new world information order as the best corrective approach.<sup>1</sup> Africa has indeed been projected with many negative and unhealthy images<sup>2</sup> including the fact that it is a crisis zone,<sup>3</sup> a 'dark continent',<sup>4</sup> and a corrupt society<sup>5</sup> that is nearly swallowed by crime through narcotic trade.<sup>6</sup> Other images include a poverty-stricken and war-ravaged, and a disease-ridden continent continue to reinforce negative stereotypes about

<sup>1</sup> K. Baah-Acheamfour, *African Image in the Media: A study of the 'Ghanaian Times' and 'DailyGraphic,'* (University of Education, Winneba, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Chizirim Favour Zeph-Ojiako and Blessing Winny Anakwuba, "Promoting the Image of Africa through Media: The Role of African Leaders (Case Study of Nigeria)," *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 20, no. 3 (October 30, 2020): 80–98, <https://doi.org/10.4314/ujah.v20i3.5>.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Yao Wodui Serwornoo, *The Image of Africa in Ghana's Press*, vol. 2 (Open Book Publishers, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0227>.

<sup>4</sup> J. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> F Mojtabal, "Corruption Rules over Africa," *Socybery (October 11)*, 2006; K. Pratt, "Current African Leaders Lowering Standards" (Ghana): Joy News Television, May 27, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> K. A. Aning, "Narcotic Trade Is Still Serious in Ghana," [myjoyonline.com](http://myjoyonline.com), July 21, 2011.

Africa.<sup>7</sup> Africa is also said to be dominated by news stories of ‘violence, helplessness, human rights abuses and lack of democracy’, dominated by civil war, oppressive political regimes and racial abuse (VSO, 2002).<sup>8</sup> Other racial terms such as "black-on-black violence," "black factionalism," and "tribalism" are not only still applied by the media, but are symbols of degradation, primitivism, and dehumanization of the West toward Africa.<sup>9</sup>

In many instances, Western media practitioners present fatalistic and selectively crude images of Africa to prove to their already misinformed audiences that they have visited the continent or are knowledgeable about Africa’s activities.<sup>10</sup> Walker and Rasamimanana have observed similar patterns of overgeneralization including the fact that people in Africa live in villages with very hot and humid temperatures.<sup>11</sup> The continent has been described as a place where there are constant scenes of shantytowns, emaciated children, older people, dry red earth and barren landscapes, "a dying malnourished child in a corner with outstretched arms..."<sup>12</sup> Studies on international news coverage of Africa have established that issues and events in the continent attract little attention in the world press.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, it is believed that even when attention is paid to issues in Africa, it tends to be short-lived, inaccurate and biased.<sup>14</sup>

The glaring positive aspects of Africa such as her mineral wealth are hardly emphasized by the Western media. Olujobi touches on Africa’s positives by pointing out that the continent is known for its natural beauty, landscape, bodies of water, and minerals and that Africa's minerals boost European and Asian economies.<sup>15</sup> For example, Col-tan, from which computer chips are made, is an important mineral obtained from Africa. Additionally, close to 60 percent of America's imports are obtained from Africa.<sup>16</sup> Despite these gains, the Western media continue to portray a rather sorry state of the continent, full of distortions and inaccuracies. Michira stresses that despite the seeming distortions in the way the Western media portrays Africa, the facts stand that a good number of Africans live in cities, have clean homes, and enjoy good livelihoods.<sup>17</sup>

It is worth noting that most of the works cited were conducted at a time when social media and other technologies which facilitate easy communication and content creation were not dominant in Africa. This means that Africans were largely disadvantaged in countering such negative narratives about their continent. The internet including social media platforms allow for easy means for Africans to tell their own stories and for editors to have an array of stories to publish about Africa. Africans are now in a better position to shape the images created about them to help deal with the negative news stories about the continent often being portrayed through foreign media sources. With the advent of social media, Africans are increasingly expected to take advantage of it and create stories to deal with the negative ways in which the continent has been portrayed by the Western media. In other words, the African media is expected to help correct the appalling images often created about the continent through their reportage<sup>18</sup> especially when Zeph-Ojiako and Anakwuba are accusing media in and outside Africa of failing the continent in view of the largely negative stories.<sup>19</sup>

However, despite the progressive technological growth on the continent, there seems to be very little empirical evidence on the extent to which African media is helping to create positive images about the continent. How are African media practitioners even taking advantage of the diverse internet and social media platforms to select good stories about Africa for publication? How are they helping to correct the anomaly Africans complain about in terms of the dominant negative image in the Western media? Is African media not equally guilty of portraying Africa with crisis and negative images per their publications? This research, therefore, explores the kind of images African media portrays about Africa and how such images would help in reducing or reinforcing negative views about the continent using the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper as a case. The

<sup>7</sup> J.B. Wallace, "American Perceptions of Africa Based on Media Representations," [www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com), 2005; J. Michira, "Images of Africa in the Western Media," [http://www.teachingliterature.org/teachingliterature/pdf/multi/images\\_of\\_Africa\\_michira/pdf/](http://www.teachingliterature.org/teachingliterature/pdf/multi/images_of_Africa_michira/pdf/), 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Heather Jean Brookes, "Suit, Tie and a Touch of Juju"—The Ideological Construction of Africa: A Critical Discourse Analysis of News on Africa in the British Press," *Discourse & Society* 6, no. 4 (1995): 461–94; Baah-Acheamfour, "African Image in the Media."

<sup>9</sup> B. G. Hawk, *Africa's Media Image* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 2.

<sup>10</sup> G V Kromah, "Africa In The Western Media: Cycle of Contra-Positives and Selective Perceptions," [See Http://Www.theperspective.org/Africa\\_Westernmedia.html](http://www.theperspective.org/Africa_Westernmedia.html), 2002.

<sup>11</sup> S. Walker and J. Rasamimanana, "Tarzan in the Classroom: How 'Educational' Films Mythologize Africa and Miseducate Americans.," *Journal of Negro Education* 62, no. 1 (1993): 3–23.

<sup>12</sup> S. Alam, *The Visual Representation of Developing Agencies and Western Media* (Dhaka, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> S. Livingston and T. Eachus, "Rwanda: US Policy and Television Coverage," in *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire.*, ed. H. Adelman and A. Suhrke (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 209–28.

<sup>14</sup> J. Powers, "Bad Reporting of Zanzibar's Election Is Part of a Wider Problem," [www.punchng.com/](http://www.punchng.com/), 2005.

<sup>15</sup> G. Olujobi, "The Africa You Need To Know," [Www.Truthdig.Com](http://www.Truthdig.Com) (Annenburg School for Communication., 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Olujobi, "The Africa You Need To Know."

<sup>17</sup> Michira, "Images of Africa in the Western Media."

<sup>18</sup> Baah-Acheamfour, "African Image in the Media."

<sup>19</sup> Zeph-Ojiako and Anakwuba, "Promoting the Image of Africa through Media: The Role of African Leaders (Case Study of Nigeria)."

researchers seek to interrogate the extent of guilt or otherwise of *Ghanaian Times* newspaper towards the negative image of Africa per the stories they publish about Africa and even which images of Africa dominate per their exercise of gatekeeping functions in allowing stories to be published.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Three main theories grounded this research. They are the Framing Theory, the Gatekeeping Theory and the Cultural Imperialist Theory.

### *Framing Theory*

The root of the Framing Theory is attributed to theorist Gregory Bateson in 1972 and was built upon by Erving Goffman in 1974. The theory seeks to describe the practice of thinking about news items and story content within familiar contexts.<sup>20</sup> Thus, it helps in focusing the attention of audiences on certain events and then placing them within a field of meaning. The existing literature on framing points to a concept that is useful for analysing how issues or personalities are constructed,<sup>21</sup> meaning-making,<sup>22</sup> discursive portrayals<sup>23</sup>, and symbolic representations.<sup>24</sup> The concept of framing rests, basically, on the idea that communication is constructed by asserting certain narratives, identities, themes, beliefs, values and ideas over others.<sup>25</sup> This can be done through the use of framing devices such as keywords, roots, quotes, storylines, catchphrases, narratives and life stories.<sup>26</sup> Framing is therefore a relevant concept for this study because it is intrinsically related to using words or language in contributing to identity formation.

The concept of framing in mass communication was also emphasized by Entman who defined framing as "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution."<sup>27</sup> Entman considers salience and selection as key elements of framing. Salience foregrounds a message, making it noticeable, meaningful, or memorable. Selection involves choosing some aspects of news and ignoring others.<sup>28</sup> In mass communication, framing is inevitable and essential to effective communication because journalists have to fit stories and other media content into limited space or time and present them in a way that can help the audience to categorize, label, interpret, and evaluate information.<sup>29</sup> Gitlin notes that media framing refers to patterns that emerge in the way the media select, organize, emphasize, present, and ignore certain aspects of news over others.<sup>30</sup> Norris, Kern and Just postulate that news frames bundle key concepts, stock phrases and iconic images to reinforce certain common ways of interpreting developments.<sup>31</sup>

Media framing theory was indeed relevant to the study as it talks about the deliberate ways the media "selects some aspect of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to

<sup>20</sup> Sunday Olanokunmi Arowolo, "Understanding Framing Theory," *Mass Communication Theory* 3, no. 6 (2017): 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ming M Boyer, Loes Aaldering, and Sophie Lecheler, "Motivated Reasoning in Identity Politics: Group Status as a Moderator of Political Motivations," *Political Studies* 70, no. 2 (2022): 385–401; Monica Heilman, "The Racial Elevator Speech: How Multiracial Individuals Respond to Racial Identity Inquiries," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 8, no. 3 (2022): 370–85; G. E. Sikanku et al., "A Comparative Analysis of Hillary Clinton and John Mahama's Concession Speeches in the 2016 US and Ghanaian Presidential Elections," *Howard Journal of Communications* 34 (2023): 76–91.

<sup>22</sup> Jennifer Sclafani, "Family as a Framing Resource for Political Identity Construction: Introduction Sequences in Presidential Primary Debates," *Language in Society* 44, no. 3 (2015): 369–99.

<sup>23</sup> R M Colvin et al., "The Role of Conflict Framing and Social Identity in Public Opinion about Land Use Change: An Experimental Test in the Australian Context," *Environmental Policy and Governance* 30, no. 2 (2020): 84–98; C. Wineinger and M. K. Nugent, "Framing Identity Politics: Right-Wing Women as Strategic Party Actors in the UK and US," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 41, no. 1 (2020): 91–118.

<sup>24</sup> Nana Kwame Osei Fordjour and Etse Sikanku, "Vice-Presidential Candidates, Language Frames, and Functions across Two Continental Divides: An Analysis of Acceptance Speeches," *International Journal of Communication* 16 (2022): 19.

<sup>25</sup> Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Mapedzahama, "Towards Afrocentric Counter-Narratives of Race and Racism in Australia," *Australasian Review of African Studies*, The, 2018, 6-18; G. E. Sikanku, "A Framing Analysis of Barack Obama's Afrocentric Representation in the New York Times and Daily Nation," *Legon Journal for International Affairs and Diplomacy* 10, no. 2 (2020): 1–31.

<sup>26</sup> Fordjour and Sikanku, "Vice-Presidential Candidates, Language Frames, and Functions across Two Continental Divides: An Analysis of Acceptance Speeches."

<sup>27</sup> Robert M Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and US Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and US Foreign Policy*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> K Lowry and P. Xie, *Africa in the Media* (Cambridge: Ted Publication, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> T. Gitlin, *The World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (California: University of California Press, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just, *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public* (Routledge, 2004).

promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or recommendation."<sup>32</sup> In the case of Africa, pictures from documentaries, textbooks, and missionaries' accounts have been used as the gospel truth about Africa.<sup>33</sup> According to Kromah, the problem of Western media reporting on Africa goes beyond professional inadequacies and structural bias.<sup>34</sup> He blames these negative images of Africa by the Western media on socio-cultural factors which to him have continued to account significantly for the stereotyping archetype, which has remained a hallmark of Western collection and dissemination of information about Africa.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Gate Keeping Theory***

The Gate Keeping Theory was propounded by Kurt Levin, a Social Psychologist in 1947 and adopted by Shoemaker and others, and it talks about the selective processes or gates news stories go through before they finally find space in the newspaper or other medium.<sup>36</sup> Thus, it emphasizes the filters of news before it is disseminated. The theory is important for this research as it brings out the news types the media allows into the public domain based on their judgment. Gatekeeping has been defined as the controlling of a strategic portion of a channel, so as to have the power of decision over whether whatever is flowing through that channel will enter the group or not.<sup>37</sup> In short, gatekeeping theory involves a series of checkpoints that the news has to pass through before it gets to the public. Through this process, many people have to decide whether or not the news is to be seen or heard. Gatekeepers of the media are message filters, and they include reporters, writers, editors, producers and even government officials. The concept involves every aspect of message selection, handling and control.<sup>38</sup> In this current work, the gatekeepers were the editors of the newspaper especially the African News Editor who decided what story made headlines on a given day which repetitive nature arguably resulted in a frame that Africa could be associated with.

### ***Cultural Imperialist Theory***

The Cultural Imperialist Theory espoused by Herb Schiller in 1973 states that Western nations dominate the media around the world which in turn has a powerful effect on Third World Cultures by imposing on them Western views and therefore destroying their native cultures.<sup>39</sup> This theory was also used to ascertain the level at which the newspaper also supports the claim that Western Media and culture are superior to African culture including media and also erode and devalue African culture.<sup>40</sup> If the trend of stories is the same, then the African media would be as guilty as the Western media in terms of framing Africa as a crisis-torn arena. The Western media arguably has portrayed Africa with many crisis themes like corruption, diseases, political unrest, conflict, and the like. It would be therefore interesting to notice that the Ghanaian state-owned media which is part of the broad African media would rely on Western media branded by African scholars like Hawk and Alozie among others as largely negative about Africa.<sup>41</sup> The reliance on the Western media by the Ghanaian state-owned media would indeed give credence to the fact that the Western media is indeed not just powerful but superior to African news media and culture.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used content analysis (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative) to account for a broader analysis of the frames portrayed by the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper per stories selected for publication. The quantitative approach granted researchers the ability to objectively and systematically account for the presence of specific variables such as frames in communicative texts.<sup>42</sup> Qualitative approaches are also useful because they contribute to a much broader and more comprehensive understanding of issues in a meaningful way.<sup>43</sup> The blend

<sup>32</sup> Robert M Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58.

<sup>33</sup> Wallace, "American Perceptions of Africa Based on Media Representations."

<sup>34</sup> Kromah, "Africa In The Western Media: Cycle of Contra-Positives and Selective Perceptions."

<sup>35</sup> Kromah, "Africa In The Western Media: Cycle of Contra-Positives and Selective Perceptions."

<sup>36</sup> P. J. Shoemaker, *Gate Keeping* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> Katz. E. and P. Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence - The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication* (Glencoe, IL.: The Free Press, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Shoemaker, *Gate Keeping* .

<sup>39</sup> H.J. Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Social Sciences Press, 1973).

<sup>40</sup> David Croteau and William Hoynes, "Social Inequality and Media Representation," *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*, 1997, 185–216.

<sup>41</sup> Hawk, *Africa's Media Image*; Emmanuel Alozie, "Sudan and South Africa-a Framing Analysis of Mail & Guardian Online's Coverage of Darfur: Research Section," *Ecquid Novi* 26, no. 1 (2005): 63–84.

<sup>42</sup> Godwin Etse Sikanku, "The Obama Creed in Retrospect: Communicative Frames and Representations from an Afrocentric Perspective," *Communication and the Public* 8, no. 4 (2023): 324–42.

<sup>43</sup> Sikanku, "The Obama Creed in Retrospect: Communicative Frames and Representations from an Afrocentric Perspective."

of qualitative and quantitative approaches according to Bertrand and Hughes in content analysis not only helped to establish patterns of themes, topics, mindsets and symbols but also their frequency helped in interpreting what such patterns actually mean as to the intent of the editors.<sup>44</sup>

The interviews helped give a broader interpretation of the selection choices by the editors of the newspaper arising from the frames identified. According to Kvale, interviews as purposive conversations help get a deeper insight into a phenomenon and in this case the frames or themes.<sup>45</sup> The quest to identify themes or frames brings to the fore the need for thematic analysis of the content of the African stories in the newspaper by subjecting it to a coding guide and protocols designed to help derive the themes from the publications on Africa. On the importance of thematic content analysis to the study of the text, Golding et al. indicate that themes help in analysing language in determining the overall message, themes and ideas as well as the category of news.<sup>46</sup>

### Content Analysis

A lot of studies on representation use content analysis as a basis for analysing images. Content analysis is a good methodological process for studying representation.<sup>47</sup> Content analysis is a systematic and objective method of examining text to make replicable and valid inferences based on words, themes, concepts used, and their contexts.<sup>48</sup> Fico and Lacy also define content analysis as the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods.<sup>49</sup> In the case of this study, the rule was the analysis of only stories in the African pages of the *Ghanaian Times* with respect to the dominant theme or subject matter of the entire story including the headlines as well as the news agencies that the said stories were sourced from. In this regard, a coding scheme was created that spelt out the benchmarks for the derivation of the various themes in Africa by analysing the content of the story published.

In the views of Croteau and Hoynes, content analysis not only helps study a text in a reasonably clear and unambiguous way but also the frequency of occurrences of chosen references in a text validly express a predominant meaning of the text objectively.<sup>50</sup> The assertion by Croteau and Hoynes is indeed applicable to this research as the newspaper's continuous publication of certain stories about Africa over time culminated into a definite image or frame that Africa could be described with.<sup>51</sup> For instance, more stories on political unrest in Africa could mean Africa is unstable politically. In this study, numbers were assigned to text to ease interpretation, especially as to which theme or news agency dominates in the publications of the newspaper.

### Sampling Processes

The stories selected for analysis were only stories found on the 'African Page' of the newspaper. This is a page solely dedicated to stories from Africa. No other story found elsewhere was analyzed for the sake of consistency of the data in determining the story types, and news sources among other variables to be measured. The story selection also covered the period 2018 to 2022 as the research sought to find out the newest image of Africa in the Ghanaian Media per the stories that the editors in exercising their gatekeeping functions allowed to be associated with Africa. Purposive sampling was used in selecting the newspaper because of the focus of the work which was on the state-owned print media and also other studies tended to focus more on the '*Daily Graphic*' leaving the '*Ghanaian Times*' less explored despite its magnificent reach or coverage and also the fact that it is used by many policymakers in Ghana.<sup>52</sup> Again, the newspapers enjoy government subvention and therefore are not under any pressure to sell thereby engaging in sensationalism.<sup>53</sup>

The two-week constructive Technique of data gathering and analysis was also employed in selecting the various daily editions as 14 editions were selected to represent a year's publication.<sup>54</sup> By employing Stempel's method

<sup>44</sup> I. Bertrand and P. Hughes, *Media Research Methods: Audiences, Institutions, Texts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> Steinar Kvale, "The Qualitative Research Interview: A Phenomenological and a Hermeneutical Mode of Understanding," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 14, no. 2 (1983): 171.

<sup>46</sup> David Deacon et al., *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> Deacon et al., *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*.

<sup>48</sup> Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> D. Riffe, S. Lacy, and F. G. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998).

<sup>50</sup> Croteau and Hoynes, "Social Inequality and Media Representation."

<sup>51</sup> Croteau and Hoynes, "Social Inequality and Media Representation."

<sup>52</sup> Baah-Acheamfour, "African Image in the Media."

<sup>53</sup> Baah-Acheamfour, "African Image in the Media."

<sup>54</sup> Guido H Stempel, "Sample Size for Classifying Subject Matter in Dailies," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1952): 333; Riffe, Lacy, and Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages*.

of 14 editions to represent a year's publication, 70 editions of the newspapers were selected for this study.<sup>55</sup> The simple random approach was also adopted to select a day of publication to begin the data collection and since the newspaper appears in the stands for only six days (Monday-Saturday), the simple random sampling technique was adopted again to select another day to add to the already six days to make the 7 days a week. The names of all the days were written on separate papers and kept in a bowl and one was randomly selected to begin the date and day of data collection of the editions and the same was repeated to add the additional day to make it the required 7 days. Monday and Wednesday were respectively chosen for the data collection.

To ensure the consistency and reliability of the data, a coding protocol was adopted. Coding protocol defines the study in general and the coding rules applied to content in particular.<sup>56</sup> The researcher prepared a coding protocol that set down the rules that guided the process of defining and measuring news flow in the *Ghanaian Times* newspapers. The coding protocol ensured that all stories gathered were coded in a coherent and organized manner throughout the study period with operational definitions clearly spelt out. Three coders were also employed for this coding and to ensure inter-coder reliability. Holtis's formula for co-efficiency was adopted and reliability approached .90 on direction, themes and news sources.<sup>57</sup> Holtis's Formular is illustrated below.

$$M = \frac{N_1 + N_2 + N_3}{3}$$

Where M is equal to the average number of coding decisions made by the three coders. N<sub>1</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, and N<sub>3</sub> represent the number of coding decisions by each of the three judges or coders.

In terms of data analysis and presentation of findings, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the researcher was able to calculate the number and percentage of African news thereby establishing the various themes, frames, and news agencies among others concerning the publications made on Africa by the *Ghanaian Times*. The descriptive tables and charts helped in placing the frames in their right perspective for easy understanding of the frames.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The work was based on content analysis with interviews conducted to situate the findings and both qualitative and quantitative tools were employed in analysing data. The study was undertaken primarily to establish the images or themes that the Ghanaian press specifically the *Ghanaian Times* portray about Africa in its African news pages. It was also conducted to find out the various news agencies that the two newspapers picked stories on Africa. The theme and news agency that got the biggest attention was also key to this work. The study covered a period of five (5) years from 2018 to 2022 and was due to currency reasons. Thus, such a period would help get the latest stories and images that Africa is framed with by the Ghanaian State newspaper. During the period 2018-2022, the newspapers carried 225 stories.

### Nature and Number of Stories Published by 'Ghanaian Times'

Table 1 shows that out of the 225 stories in the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper examined, about 62 percent of them were negative stories about Africa. Only about 36 percent of the stories gave a positive image of the continent. This suggests that there were many crisis-oriented stories in the Ghanaian state-owned newspaper about Africa. In other words, the newspaper paid more attention to negative stories or crisis-related stories about Africa than positive stories. This finding supports the literature that Africa as a continent has been failed by media within and outside the continent in terms of its largely negative depiction.<sup>58</sup> The result further departs from Alozie who expressed that it is the Western media that focuses more on the negatives of Africa.<sup>59</sup>

**Table 1: Nature and Number of Stories Published by 'Ghanaian Times'**

Nature Image	Ghanaian Times Newspaper	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	80	35.6
Negative	139	61.7

<sup>55</sup> Stempel, "Sample Size for Classifying Subject Matter in Dailies."

<sup>56</sup> Riffe, Lacy, and Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages*.

<sup>57</sup> O. R. Holtis, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities* (Reading, MA: Wesley, 1956), 140.

<sup>58</sup> Serwornoo, *The Image of Africa in Ghana's Press*; Zeph-Ojiako and Ankwuba, "Promoting the Image of Africa through Media: The Role of African Leaders (Case Study of Nigeria)."

<sup>59</sup> Alozie, "Sudan and South Africa-a Framing Analysis of Mail & Guardian Online's Coverage of Darfur: Research Section."



Neutral	6	2.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100</b>

### Thematic distributions in the ‘Ghanaian Times’ in terms of number of stories

The research further explored the thematic distribution in the *Ghanaian Times* newspaper. Here, the research sought to identify specific themes around which stories about Africa were created and presented by the *Ghanaian Times*. Table 1 points to the various ways that *Ghanaian Times* through its gatekeeping functions framed Africa per the stories published. Apart from 80(35.6%) stories representing positive developments and happenings in Africa, 145(64.4%) stories were selected to portray Africa as a crisis-stricken, unsafe and unhealthy place to live. The predominant negative portrayal of Africa by the Ghanaian state-owned newspaper *Ghanaian Times* goes contrary to the views of African Scholars like Alozie and Hawk who postulate that it is rather the Western media that selects and over-focuses on negative stories in framing Africa as a crisis region.<sup>60</sup> The result, however, confirms that of Kunahira who discovered that the dominant images of Africa in the media are that of crime and violence.<sup>61</sup> Over 50% of the negative stories centred on situations caused by political unrest, corruption, wars, conflicts and associated crimes or violence.

### Dominant negative theme or image Africa is associated with

It is clear from Table 2 that, there are various ways that ‘*Ghanaian Times*’ through its gatekeeping functions framed Africa per the stories published. The crises-related stories like political unrest, corruption, diseases, and poverty among others dominated in terms of the major theme Africa is associated as it accounted for 64.4% out of the total 225 stories. Developmental or positive issues accounted for 80(37.0%) of the total number of stories. Thus, though on the individual score, development seems to top, cumulatively, it is woefully poor compared to the negative occurrences that occurred in Africa within that period. In terms of the negative images of Africa, political unrest tops the chart with 38 stories representing 16.9%, followed by crime with 36(16.0%), Human Rights Abuses with 12(5.3%), civil unrest with 9(4.0%), and others following. Apart from positive developments and happenings in Africa, almost all other stories were selected to portray Africa as a crisis-stricken, unsafe and unhealthy place to live. This means that the *Ghanaian Times* did not focus more on positive and developmental issues that would put Africa higher on the international map to help erase the erroneous impression created by the Western media. The result affirms the findings of Kunahira who observed that the dominant images of Africa in the media, specifically American media are generally negative, with too much focus on crimes, violence and ethnic conflict in the continent.<sup>62</sup> The findings deviate from the views of scholars who assert that it is rather the Western media that select and over-focus on negative stories and frames about Africa.<sup>63</sup>

**Table 2: Dominant negative theme or image Africa is associated with**

Theme	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Political unrest	38	26.2	1 <sup>st</sup>
Civil unrest	9	6.2	4 <sup>th</sup>
Crime	36	24.8	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Poverty	4	2.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
Unhealthy politicking	7	4.8	6 <sup>th</sup>
Human rights abuses	12	8.3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Conflicts	4	2.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
Disease	8	5.5	5 <sup>th</sup>
Preventable human disaster	3	2.1	11 <sup>th</sup>
Natural disaster	4	2.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
Electoral disputes	3	2.1	11 <sup>th</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Alozie, “Sudan and South Africa-a Framing Analysis of Mail & Guardian Online’s Coverage of Darfur: Research Section”; Hawk, *Africa’s Media Image*.

<sup>61</sup> Kunahira. S.K., “Portrayal of Africa in American Media,” *Content Analysis of News Week Magazine’s - 1998-2008*, 2007.

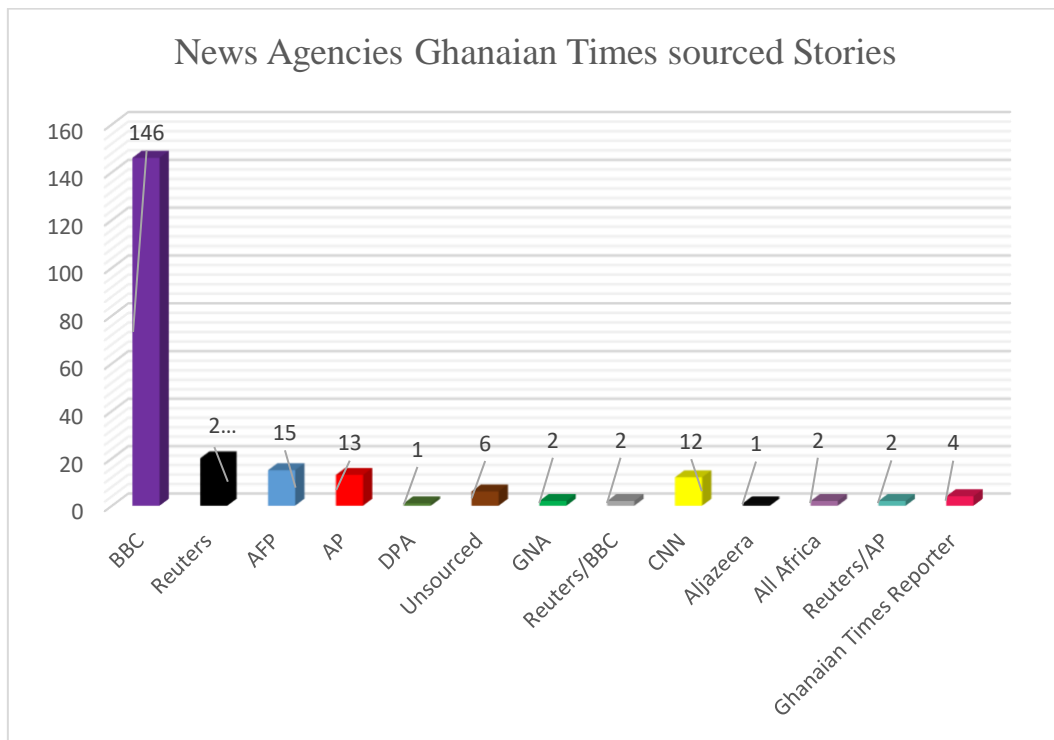
<sup>62</sup> Kunahira. S.K., “Portrayal of Africa in American Media.”

<sup>63</sup> Alozie, “Sudan and South Africa-a Framing Analysis of Mail & Guardian Online’s Coverage of Darfur: Research Section”; Hawk, *Africa’s Media Image*.

Corruption	7	4.9	6 <sup>th</sup>
Diplomatic row	4	2.7	8 <sup>th</sup>
Insecurity	3	2.1	11 <sup>th</sup>
Famine	3	2.1	11 <sup>th</sup>
Total	145	100.0	

**Dominant News Agencies ‘Ghanaian Times’ picked stories from as well as number of stories**

The final research objective considered the dominant news agencies the *Ghanaian Times* picked stories from as well as the number of stories. In addressing the objective, the researcher considered two things. First, the researcher identified all the news agencies the *Ghanaian Times* picked stories from as well as the number of stories to determine the dominant one among them. Again, the research examined the nature of the news from the dominant news agency. The rationale for this objective is that the newspapers are likely to rely on African news agencies for more stories since there are news agencies like *City Press* in South Africa which is committed to reconstructing Africa’s image and departing from the crisis themes thereby showing the Western world that Africa is a place worth living in.<sup>64</sup> From Figure 1, it can be seen that once again, *Ghanaian Times* media reposed so much trust in the stories reported by Western Media as out of the 225 stories only 8(3.6%) stories came from African sources and news agencies while the rest were from Western sources. The result is in line with the findings of Ayebofo and Serwornoo who posited that Ghanaian media prefer foreign sources for news about Africa compared to local sources.<sup>65</sup>



**Figure 2: News Agencies ‘Ghanaian Times’ picked stories from as well as the number of stories**

Also, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) accounted for a whopping 146 stories out of the 225 total number of stories. Thus, the *Ghanaian Times* as a Ghanaian State-owned print media did not only find foreign media more attractive and credible for news on Africa but also portrayed the BBC as the most credible source for news. The results support previous studies that showed that BBC is an influential news source in Africa.<sup>66</sup> The results further validate the practical relevance of the Cultural Imperialist Theory which posits that Western media and its content are more powerful than any media source.

<sup>64</sup> K. Gongo, “‘Distinctly African’: The Representation of Africans in City Press” (University of the Witwatersrand , South Africa., 2007).

<sup>65</sup> J.B. Ayebofoh, “Images of Foreign Countries in the Ghanaian Press: A Study of the ‘Daily Graphic’ and ‘Ghanaian Times, Newspapers” (University of Ghana., 1990).

<sup>66</sup> Baah-Acheamfour, “ African Image in the Media.”; Serwornoo, *The Image of Africa in Ghana’s Press*.



## Discussion Summary

Per the results, Africa's negative image in the media has not changed and African media are as guilty as the foreign media in painting Africa with catastrophic images per their publication. Out of the 225 stories published by the newspaper, only 80 portrayed Africa positively while 139 were negative. Political unrest and crime emerged as the two dominant images of Africa with 38 and 36 stories respectively. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was also the preferred destination for news on Africa even though such stories were largely negative. BBC indeed accounted for 146 out of the 225 stories published.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is indeed the need to periodically research to find out about the state of Africa's image in the media as media representation of a phenomenon goes a long way in influencing people's opinion on such issues or subjects - be it negatively or positively. Africa, therefore, cannot be expected to be accorded respect if its image in the media is negative. Again, African media must reduce its dependence on foreign news agencies for stories on Africa as the tone of such stories is largely negative. The continuous sourcing of negative stories from such foreign news agencies arguably means that African media are facilitators of the negative portrayal of Africa hence they are as guilty as the foreign media as far as the general image of Africa is concerned. Indeed, the positives of Africa are also worth talking about hence, gatekeepers of news must also pay attention to such even as they select news stories for publication. The study will therefore contribute to the literature regarding Africa's image in the media especially how Ghanaian media frames Africa.

## CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis points to certain factors which underpin the consistent negative image of Africa in the media. One of such factors is African Media's continuous reliance on foreign news agencies for news which is even largely negative about Africa. These news agencies are deemed by news editors to be cheaper sources of news even though they tend to be negative about Africa. Thus, on the note of convenience, editors of newspapers are ready to short-change Africa in terms of how Africa should be viewed by the rest of the world. Africa cannot in the prevailing circumstances overturn its negative image if news editors are not ready to consider the positive happenings in Africa as also worthy of reportage. Again, since there is an African news agency, 'CityPress' in South Africa which is committed to the reconstruction of a positive image about Africa by focusing on the positive occurrences in Africa, stories from such a news agency could also be considered for publication rather than the over-concentration on Western media stories about Africa which are largely negative. Indeed, the negative image of Africa is not likely to change until the same energy exerted in highlighting Africa's negatives is also directed towards the positive happenings on the continent.

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