Diversity in Ghanaian diasporic online news content:
Perspective of news producers
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the views of news producers on the content they provide to readers and the extent to which activities of Ghanaian diaspora community is included in the Ghanaian diasporic online news. The thesis involves four Ghanaian online news producers in the diaspora. They were approached in order to analyse their thoughts about how their news content relates to the local communities.

It is essentially relevant to start gathering more information on Ghanaian diasporic media, since Ghanaians abroad are increasing in number and new media sources are developing. I was not able to find any previous study on news content of Ghanaian diasporic media.

The theoretical framework of this study was built around dissecting the concepts of minority media and their content. Minority media plays a key role in enhancing integration by providing media sources to migrants who do not follow the local mainstream media. At the same time, minority media can strengthen the cultural identity of people living in the diaspora. This study is qualitative in its nature and the data was gathered using structured and semi-structured interview approach. Additionally, a minor mapping of available online news content was observed. The collected data was analysed by applying thematic analysis.

The findings of this study indicate that even though the online news media outlets are created in the diaspora, the focus of most of the news providers is wide as they do not only focus on Ghanaians abroad. The findings suggest that all four participants see themselves as producing content for people in the diaspora that the mainstream media do not offer. Additionally, the findings show that the news providers often use news content from Ghana and use news editors and bloggers from Ghana, lacking the diasporic perspective in their news production. Therefore, the findings illustrate that in many cases the Ghanaian diasporic media fail in providing news content that is directed specifically to readers in the diaspora.
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**APPENDIX 1 – Topic Guide**
1. Introduction

Over the years, there has been quite much literature about diasporic communities, especially concerning their use of various forms of media as a communication tool. People who have settled outside their country of birth are conceptualized as living in the diaspora (Georgiou 2010), whether they left by their own will or were forced out of their homeland (Eide, Knudsen & Krøvel 2014). In another context, Akyeampong (2000) characterises African citizens in diaspora as people with the ability to support Africa in both political and economic ways. Despite settling in different countries, they keep a strong relationship with each other as well as with friends and relatives living in the homeland (Orozco 2005).

Even though the population of diasporic communities has increased in many countries, they are seldom represented in the mainstream media. The need of staying connected to each other has motivated people living in diaspora to create their own forms of media to produce news content that deal with their lives in the communities. These media platforms are mostly online-based. Georgiou (2013) believes that diasporic media are necessary and maintain a sense of inclusion for minority groups in various countries.

The number of diasporic online media has increased because diasporic communities have been ignored in the mainstream media (Ekwo 2011). The media of these minority communities now act as an alternative media and fill the gap with content that cannot be found in the mainstream media. Because of the increase in diasporic media, news outlets compete with each other for readers (Ogunyemi 2006), which puts pressure on news editors to produce content more rapidly. With such a competition “there is a clear danger that copy and paste becomes the basic principle” (Quandt 2008, p.729).

The government of Ghana has stated that it is ready to listen to the concerns and suggestions of Ghanaians in the diaspora (Ghana government 2016). The diasporic media should play a significant role in the distribution and sharing of information between the diasporic communities and the Ghana government. However, Ghanaian online media often rely on news articles from mainstream media in Ghana (Sikanku 2008, p.16). In my Master’s thesis I investigate the views of a sample of producers of Ghanaian diasporic online media on the level of diversity of their content and a number of matters related to content creation.
1.1 Scientific Problem

As shown in the literature review below, some studies have been done on news content in general but none of them concerns the content of Ghanaian diasporic online media. The reality that there is no study done on the content of Ghanaian diasporic online media is a problem that needs to be further researched. It can be seen that the problem has a significant social and even political relevance. The content that diasporic media offer to their readers can influence their identity development as well as the integration of migrant groups to their host countries.

It is relevant to conduct academic research on the topic, because currently there are only a few studies on diaspora media in general. Some of the studies done on diasporic media examine how minority communities’ use media to communicate, but very little can be found about content creation. I chose to study the views of content producers instead of the content itself, so that I can understand the idea behind their choice of the news content they produce and whom the content are created for. Studying only the content will not provide me with this information. It is my hope that this Master’s thesis will begin filling this gap and be a base and reference point for future studies on the content of diasporic media.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this research is to examine the views of small sample of news producers about the diversity of content and the content’s relationship to the local community. It is my hope that the result of my thesis will help Ghanaian diasporic content producers to create adequate content that will address issues within the diasporic communities.

The following research questions will help to achieve the aim of the thesis.
RQ1: According to news producers, to what extent and how does the content of their websites relate to the local community?
RQ2: According to news producers, to what extent do Ghanaian diaspora media provide alternative news from the mainstream media?
RQ3: According to news producers, what is the share of news content that the diaspora media produce themselves?
1.3 Background
The migration of Ghanaians to other countries, which is here referred to as the diaspora, started with somewhat small number of people after the independence of Ghana in 1957, most of who migrated to England, which was Ghana’s colonial master. The collapse of the Ghanaian economy in the 1980’s forced many people to look for jobs in neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, with unofficial figure of 300 migrants per day (Anarfi 1982).

By the end of the 19th century the migration of Ghanaians to other countries increased as people sought better economical opportunities or study places abroad. Political asylum was also among the reasons of leaving, but the number of asylum seekers was small compared to those travelling because of other reasons.

A report published by International Organization for Migration (2009) estimates that the population of Ghanaians in the diaspora was between 1.5 to 3 million. There is no current data on the number of Ghanaians who live abroad, however, with many Ghanaians leaving the shores of Ghana every year, it can be assumed that by now the number has increased distinctly.

As the population of Ghanaians in the diaspora increased, they yearned for a source of media that they could identify themselves with. As a result of this, the first Ghanaian diasporic radio station was established in the 1990’s in London. The radio station, Weekend Black Listeners Station (WBLS), served the Ghanaian diasporic communities in London with news and songs from Ghana (Ghanaweb 2015). Later, when the use of Internet became popular among Ghanaian diasporic communities, many Internet radio stations were established. Currently Modern Ghana news website (2016) has a record of over 300 Ghanaian diasporic Internet radio stations in all parts of the world. Some of these stations collaborate with Ghanaian-based radio stations in information sharing.

Since the Ghanaian diasporic communities have become diverse in how and where they consume news, majority of the Internet radio stations have shifted their attention to the production of digital online news. Some of the news content included in the websites of these online media are news from Ghana, and information about events and happenings in the local Ghanaian communities.
1.4 Scope of Thesis
In this research I deal with producers of four websites of Ghanaian diasporic online news media in four different countries. These online media organizations are based in the Netherlands, Finland, United States of America (USA) and Canada. The research will only focus on producers of active news websites of the diaspora media.

1.5 Outline of thesis
After this chapter, chapter two presents a review of previous research and chapter three introduces the theoretical framework used in the thesis. In chapter four, I present in detail the research design, sample selection process and the method used in conducting the interviews for this thesis. In chapter five, I present and analyse the findings of the interviews. Chapter six is the last chapter of the thesis where I present my conclusions and recommendations.

2. Previous Research

There is a lot of research about diaspora media at large, but the field of media in itself is so broad that various studies tend to diverge in different directions. In some of the literature I reviewed for this thesis, the focus is on diaspora media as a communication tool in a public sphere where diasporic communities meet to interact with each other. In these kinds of studies, attention is mostly shifted to common social media platforms that are used by migrants living in the diaspora. Other studies also focus on how diasporic communities create their own online media. Although these studies deal with media in diasporic communities, they do not directly relate to the focus of my thesis, which are the views of producers on the diversity of news content of the online media they produce. Some of the literature is mainly based on comparison of previous studies and observation of people’s lifestyle.

Two of the studies (Orozco 2005; Owusu 2000) were conducted on Ghanaian diaspora of their migration and integration to the host countries. The studies examine their use of media in communicating and their integration into the country of settlement. Although my interest is on the media of Ghanaian diaspora, both studies have different focus than I aim to achieve.
Doudaki and Spyridou (2015) and Seelig (2008) discuss the news content of online media but the study focuses more on the technical aspect of online news. The study discusses more about the interactivity of the content and also compares online news content to the content of print media. Attention was thus not drawn to producers of the content itself, which is the main focus of my research. It is also worth mentioning that the study only focuses on Greek online news media. The research was also based on empirical analysis of the content of various news websites and newspaper contents, but there was no mention of interviews of news content producers.

One study (Quandt 2008) was based on examining ten online news media in five different countries (United States, France, United Kingdom, Germany and Russia). It focuses on the lack of multi-media content and how often news content among online news media are copied from other mainstream media without any authorship attribution to the source of the information. However, no one was interviewed; the study was based purely on observation and analyses of content of the news websites.

The study conducted by Ndangam (2008) focuses on news content from Cameroon media that is created to target audiences in the diaspora. And this Cameroon online news, according to the study, is as a result of pressure from the Cameroonian in diaspora asking the local newspaper based in Cameroon to create an online media for them. The study also includes the production process of the news and how the newsroom is organized. The study highlights the fact that there are not enough journalists working on diasporic online media. Unlike other studies I have mentioned, Ndangam conducted face-to-face and semi-structured interviews with web editors and website coordinators. Some of the methods used in this study are relevant to my thesis, as I will also interview content producers.

Sikanku (2008) conducted a study on Ghanaian online news and the traditional media, however, the study examines online media in Ghana and it concentrates on inter-media agenda setting. This is to say that there is no research so far on the content of Ghanaian diasporic online media where the views of the content producers are examined.

As can be seen from this review, I only found a few studies that relate in some ways to the topic I am interested in. The focus of my research is on a new area that has not been studied before, even among diasporic communities of other countries.
3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will be drawing on different theories relating to minority media and minority media content. The theory background will help in getting a broader view of the topic that this thesis is focusing on. There is almost no information that can be found specifically of Ghanaian minority media.

3.1 Minority media content

Riggins (1992) presents that minority media have a significant role in constructing the identity and self-confidence of immigrants in their host countries. That can be said, because most often the mainstream media presents news and information from the point of view of locals and perhaps even ignores the minority perspective totally. In such a setting, minority media can affect the ways migrant groups see themselves or integrate to their host countries.

By offering news content about the surrounding happenings in a meaningful and well-planned manner, minority media can enhance integration and assimilation. It seems that many Ghanaians in diaspora do not follow the mainstream media and therefore Ghanaian media might be the only source of information to many immigrants. The reasons for this can vary from lack of language skills to lack of knowledge about local news broadcasters. Thus, given that the minority media is able to offer information targeted specifically to migrants in the diaspora, it can help the migrants to strengthen their socio-cultural identity as well as to adjust to the surrounding culture. (Riggins 1992)

Riggins (1994) points out that minority media are often ran by volunteers and are informally constructed, non-profitable constitutions. With few or no paid workers, tasks are divided in a non-formal way and one person might be in charge of several different areas of work. This fact might also affect the quality of the news content, as not all minority media may have the resources to produce content themselves. (Riggins 1994)

As Riggins (1992) presents, the minority media exist as part of a larger social system. The social reality of the host country, as well as its legislation, affects the functioning of minority media. Depending on the country, the state can have various reasons to be interested in minority media. As Ghanaian population for example in Scandinavian countries is not notable, the state has probably no remarkable interest in supporting or objecting Ghanaian minority media. In the case of larger minority groups such as Finnish people in Sweden or
Russians in Finland, the host states show daily news of these minorities in the national channels and besides that they have active websites as part of the mainstream media websites. (YLE 2016; SVT 2016) Another example is given by Riggins (1992) from Canada in 1970’s, where remarkable resources were used in creating minority media content for Inuit in Canada.

Another external structural system affecting minority media are social movements. Social movement can be defined as something that is made to happen by those who do not have legislative or other official ways to power. (Riggins 1992) In the case of Ghanaian diaspora media, they could affect in how Ghanaians in diaspora view themselves and value their own cultural and ethnic heritage by producing news media content that directly relates to the readers. For example, despite high education level of many Ghanaians in the diaspora, it is often difficult for them to find employment in their fields. Therefore many Ghanaians work in fields requiring lower qualification. This may be due to lack of language skills, but also because of e.g. racial profiling. Ghanaian online news media platforms stand in a position to make change by creating a forum where such issues are raised to the knowledge of people and made seen not only by Ghanaians but also the majority.

3.2 Minority media and context

The significance of media and its different forms have increased rapidly during the last century. Internet age, which allows more and more individuals a free access to information through different channels, has changed our worldview. Alongside other forms of media, news casting has also shifted more and more to an online format, making it easier for minority media platforms to find readers and listeners. However, the mainstream media still have a strong hold on deciding how different groups in the society are presented. Mainstream media has the power to specify the roles of those who belong to the society and who do not. In addition, they have the power to decide the tone in which news about for example minority groups are presented to listeners, readers and viewers. With this power, the mainstream media constructs the idea of a nation and its citizens. (Cottle 2000) Mainstream media are strongly linked to state institutions, politicians and elite groups in the society, also in countries where there is a freedom of press. (Cottle 2000)

The Ghanaian minority media in diaspora have very little power in terms of affecting the majority in the host country, but they stand in a key role in affecting the opinions and identities of Ghanaians in the diaspora. The importance of developing Ghanaian diasporic online media content lie not only in being a minority group in another country, but
specifically being a black minority group in a white host country. As mainstream media most often vow being multicultural and neutral in representation of all groups of people, stereotypical thinking and even xenophobia does evidently exist in mainstream media content. (Cottle 2000) Ghanaian media in diaspora alongside other minority media are in a position to confront the mainstream media’s hidden negative representations of different ethnic groups and their qualities. After targeting specific minority groups in the diaspora, minority media platforms should also aim at reaching to the majority in their host countries, since as Cottle (2000) presents, most white readers have no other sources of information apart from the mainstream media.

Hassane (2009) gives an example from France, where the minority media have stood against mainstream media for years due to increasing racism and xenophobia in the society. He recalls (2009) that for example African / Caribbean minority media, Afrikara.com issue well explained, deep and detailed stories of people with foreign origin in France. The reasons why the minority media is more developed by some ethnic groups and in some countries can probably be traced to the history of the country and its immigration policies. Again, in countries such as Finland, where the history of larger scale immigration is still young, the communication forms of minority groups are also less developed.

3.3 Diversity in minority media

The significance of diasporic media is to provide an alternative content to the mainstream media. However, that alone does not mean that there is diversity in the content that minority media provide. Diversity in itself is such a broad topic, but for the purpose of this study it is used in relation to content that concern the Ghanaian diasporic community. Hiller, Savage and Waldman (2015) discuss diversity as the extent to which news content reflect different viewpoints. They classify the level of diversity into three categories: low, medium and high. High level of diversity means that there is much news content about the activities of the community and many different viewpoints are represents. The low level, on the hand, means that few activities of the community are covered with just one viewpoint. Audiences’ preferences of news content may vary significantly by for example age, ethnicity or educational level. In order to reach a high level of diversity in news content production, diasporic media outlets should be willing to involve all parties in the community in their content production.
4. Sample and Method

This chapter presents the method of the study. It accounts for the research design, the method of structured and semi-structured interviews, the sampling criteria and sample of the thesis as well as the limitations of the method used.

4.1 Research Design

In order to achieve the aim of this thesis, a qualitative approach for collecting information is used. Qualitative research aims to understand the behaviour of people, their experiences and the reasons behind what they do. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative approach uses words as data by interviewing people rather than using numbers (Patton & Cochran 2002). This method was chosen to reach a clear understanding of the views of news editors and how they produce their content.

The research questions of this study are properly answered using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative approach aims to answer questions about “‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ of a phenomenon rather than ‘how many’ or ‘how much’, which are answered by quantitative methods” (Patton & Cochran 2002, p.3).

4.2 Sample Selection

My original intention concerning interviews in this research was to involve five participants from Ghanaian diasporic online media outlets. However, only four participants showed interest in the research. The four participants were selected based on their knowledge and personal involvement in news content production of their media outlets.

In reaching out to participants for this research, a combination of purpose and convenience sample was used. The purposive sample implies choosing participants who possess a particular knowledge or characteristics that are needed for a research. A convenience sample entails selecting participants who are available and willing to participate (University of California 2016). The participants I chose for the research are Ghanaian diasporic online news producers.
In order to determine the news sites from which I would recruit producers as participants in this study, I proceeded as follows. I was able to find a Ghanaian news website that has published a list of several Ghanaian diasporic online radio stations. Most of these radio stations have websites where they publish their own online news content. I made a quick review of eight of these news sites in order to acquire background knowledge of the content on their websites. My choice of selecting five news sites out of the eight was motivated by the fact that the news sites were different from each other. Some of the content related to issues in Ghana and others related to activities of Ghanaians abroad. The selection process did not include how often content are updated on various news websites, however online news websites that had static content were not considered.

Once the five news sites were selected, I approached the producers and tried to recruit them as participants. I contacted some of them through direct emails and contact forms on their news websites. For other producers whose emails or forms were unavailable, I reached out to them through their media organisation’s Facebook page. Four producers out of the intended five replied and showed interest of participating in the research, however, I did not receive any reply from the fifth producer. I then contacted the three other producers whose websites were among the eight I reviewed earlier, however, none of them replied. This left me with four producers.

There is a risk of using email as a platform for making a first contact to participants because some people may disregard an email that is coming from an unknown person. (Seidman 2013) However, since the participants live in different countries, email was the only available option.

4.3 Participants

The selected participants for this research are online news editors, news publishers and company owners of Ghanaian diasporic online news media outlets. For the sake of simplicity they are hereafter referred to as ‘producers’. Two of the participants have their media organization located in Europe and the other two have their media organization in North America. Before the commencement of the interviews, I agreed with the participants to keep them anonymous. Keeping the participants anonymous was intended to make them feel comfortable and open up in their contribution to this research.
This means that I am not able to mention their names and the name of their media throughout this research. For the sake of simplicity the websites are hereafter referred to as Website A, Website B, Website C and Website D. Furthermore, participants are referred to as Participant A, Participant B, Participant C and Participant D respectively. In the following, I give a brief characterization of the news sites.

Website A is based in Canada and has an active workforce of four people. According to Participant A, the medium generates their own source of funding through advertisement from individual companies and also by the use of adverts automatically generated by Google. Apart from the news content, they provide other services like video coverage (weddings, funerals and birthday), event promotion and marketing and graphic design. The media outlet has a partnership with five other media outlets based in Ghana and in the diaspora.

Website B is based in the United States of America and it also doubles as an online radio station. Two Ghanaians founded it and at the moment majority of the funding is from their personal funds. They have four unpaid active workers of which two are news editors. On the online radio there are other volunteers who host programs. Quite small amount of money is generated from the online radio advertisement and from the Google advertisement on the news website.

Website C is based in the Netherlands and has two people who work on the news content of the website. It relies on the contributions of bloggers around the globe. The funds generated from the website is solely through adverts automatically generated by Google, which is quite small.

Website D is based in Finland and has three active workers, two of whom are responsible for producing news content. According to Participant D, the news producers are paid on commission; based on how many readers read their content. In addition to the news content, the media outlet provides online television streaming service to subscribed customers. The service includes live television channels mostly from Ghana and Nigeria. Similar to Participant A, Participant D has partnership with some television station in Ghana from where the channels are streamed. The creation of news content are funded by the revenue from the television subscription and advertisement on the news website.
4.4 Methods

This section presents details of the step-by-step approach of the method used in conducting the interviews for this thesis. It also discusses some of the advantages and disadvantages of the use of this method.

For this thesis, both Structured and Semi-structured interview techniques were used to gather information from the Participants. With Structured interview technique, all questions are prepared in advance and the order of the questions is strictly followed during the interview. Semi-structured interview on the other hand allows conversational communication between the interviewer and the interviewee (West Lothian Council 2012). The interviewer usually uses a topic guide during the interview. A topic guide is designed for semi-structured interviews with a list of questions that the interviewer wishes to cover during the interview (Patton & Cochran 2002, p.11). Not all interview questions are designed beforehand, some of questions arise during the interview and it is meant to give flexibility to both the interviewer and the interviewee. The order of questions could be changed to make the interview more conversational.

The topic guide I designed for my interview was divided into three different themes; relating news to the diasporic communities, providing alternative news and the share of own content that their media outlet produce. The topic guide is shown in Appendix 1 of the thesis. There are no strict rules to systematically follow as to how the questions are designed. I designed open-ended questions and made sure that all the questions were covered during the interviews. I used prompts when it was necessary to encourage and guide some of the Participants when a response went beyond the study area of the thesis. I was not judgemental towards the responses of the Participants; neither did I suggest any answers to them.

The advantages of using semi-structured interviews are that questions are prepared before the interview and the interviewer has enough time to prepare ahead of the interview. Furthermore it provides reliable information from interviewees since they are allowed to speak freely and in their own term. It is a two-way conversation and the interviewee could ask questions from the interviewer (Laforest 2009).

However, using semi-structured interviews requires interviewing skills to be able to have control of the duration of the interview. Much time is needed in preparation and planning so that the interviewee understands the questions clearly. Furthermore, it takes much time to analyse the response of interviewees.
In analysing the data, I used thematic analysis approach since it is commonly used for analysing qualitative data. A thematic analysis looks through all the available data “...to identify the common issues that recur, and identify the main themes that summarise all the views you have collected” (Patton & Cochran 2002, p.23).

The procedure for analysing the information was done in stages. The first important step in thematic analysis is to become familiar with the data, which is done by reading the interview transcripts (Crowe 2015). I read and re-read the transcripts several times to clearly understand the responses from Participants.

I generated the initial code from the transcripts following the data familiarisation. Coding is the categorisation of individual pieces of data (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood 2013). This involves “keeping the research questions at the forefront”. It is important to observe any material that gives understanding to “participants’ experience”. (Crowe 2015, p. 618).

I reviewed the transcripts and the compared the responses of the Participants for differences and similarities. The text that I thought were not relevant was left out as I grouped the needed codes into themes and later into categories. By re-examining the categories, I created new sub-categories. I frequently fell back on the original data to make sure that the gathered date still relates to my research questions. The sub-categories that had similarities were grouped into themes. I created sub-themes where the main theme answers more than one questions.

4.4.1 Conducting the Interviews
My original intention was to conduct the interviews in real time using Skype instant messenger as a platform for all the interviews. However, only one interview was done in real time on Skype because the other three participants had a busy schedule, which made it impossible for a live interview. The interview questions were sent to them by email for them to answer at their free time.

Ethical principles in qualitative research demand that the full consent of people who are involved in the research should be sorted. All the Participants involved in this research freely gave their consent without being unfairly pressured to do so. They were given detailed information about the aim and purpose of this research, their participation and their right to withdraw from the research at anytime if they felt uncomfortable.
4.5 Assessment of the scientific quality

Interviews, although resembling everyday conversation, need to be conducted in a rigorous way in order to achieve reliability and validity. This ensures that both the researcher and the participants are satisfied that the findings are a true reflection of “what the research set out to answer rather than reflecting the bias of the researcher” (Patton & Cochran 2002, p.11). For assessing the scientific quality of this thesis, the generalisability, reliability and the validity of the research were taken into consideration.

Generalisation in qualitative research as defined by Thomas and Magilvy (2011) is “the ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group to another” (p. 153). The task of the researcher is to form findings from the data that can be easily understood also in different kinds of settings (Polit 2010, p.1453). I have provided detailed descriptions of the approach of this thesis and it is the readers who will assess whether the results of this thesis are applicable to other areas.

Reliability in relation to qualitative research “occurs when another researcher can follow the decision trail used by the researcher” (Thomas & Magilvy 2011, p. 153). To achieve this, I have clearly explained the purpose of this thesis, the sample selection, and methods used in this research and how the information gathered from participants was analysed.

Validity in qualitative research “is the element that allows others to recognise the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants’ experiences” (Thomas & Magilvy 2011, p.152). The research is considered valid when people with similar experiences as the participants can associate themselves with the interpretations. To achieve this, I was interested in the participants’ experience in news content production and not to be influenced by findings of previous studies.

4.6 Limitation and Challenges

The limited amount of time for conducting this research was one of the main challenges. Another thing that affected the research was the availability of Ghanaian diasporic news editors, publishers and media owners to volunteer as interviewees. Most of the emails I sent were not responded. Some of the people, who had earlier showed interest to take part in the research, did not respond to subsequent emails I sent them.
In addition, the inability to have all the interviews conducted in real time posed a great challenge. This was due to the busy schedule of the participants, as a result of which some participants answered the questionnaire rather briefly even though they were freely allowed to express themselves.

I did not need to transcribe the interview because it was written, however, it took a long time for the participants to return the answered questions and it was difficult to ask follow up questions when it was needed.

5. Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, I present the results and the findings from the analysis of interviews with four online news content producers of Ghanaian diasporic media outlets and discuss conclusions based on this analysis.

The chapter is divided into sections that correspond to themes that are analysed in detail. The identified themes include the diversity of news content, choice of news content, how news contents are produced, scope of targeted audience and how news contents relate to diasporic communities. There are also sub-themes within some of the main themes.

5.1 The scope of target audience

This section provides an analysis of Participants’ views concerning their target audiences. The analysis concentrates on identifying Participants’ conceptions of their target audiences and the strategies they use to attract these audiences.

There were more similarities in the scope of target audiences for most of the Participants, with the exception of Participant A. Most of the content of the media outlet of Participant A concentrated on some Ghanaian diasporic communities (North America and UK) and as such the primary target audiences are based in those communities. The secondary target, however, are Ghanaians in other diasporic communities and in Ghana. The participants want other Ghanaians to have knowledge of activities in the communities that are the primary target area:
We focus on the new generation of Ghanaians who utilize technology and social media and live in North America, specifically Canada. (Participant A)

In attracting the audiences, Participant A says his media outlet uses various forms of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google+). Since many people within the target area are active social media users, sharing the link of the content draws readers to Website A.

Some of the similarities that are found among the rest of the Participants are that their target audiences are Africans in the diaspora. Additionally, they all say that make their content available on various mobile devices to attract their audiences. They say making mobile versions of news content enable readers to access the content anywhere and at anytime. It can be argued that it is impossible to reach the set target since the outlets do not have enough resources to produce content to such a broad audiences. Moreover, all the content of the outlets are produced in English language, which does not serve the purpose of targeting all Africans especially those from French speaking countries.

5.2 Relying on mainstream content

This section analysis the Participants’ views on some of the reasons why greater percentage of the news content on the website of their media outlets are copied from the mainstream media.

As mentioned in earlier chapters of this thesis, diasporic online news media have been criticised for solely relying and copying news content from the mainstream media. All the Participants admit to the criticisms of copying of content while justifying their reason of copying. The participants say that the share of content created by their media outlets is between thirty per cent (30%) to forty per cent (40%).

5.2.1 Economic justification of copying

All the Participants say that lack of adequate funding is a common reason why their media outlets tend to rely mostly on the content of mainstream media. Lack of funding also means that they have limited resources to be able to get access to news stories. The diasporic online media outlets do not have enough resources compared to the mainstream media. With the internal generated funds from online advertisement which according to the Participants are not enough, their media outlet are only able to employ the services of just a few publishers to
create content for their websites. Even though there are some volunteer bloggers, Participants say they are unable to provide them with incentives that will motivate them to create more content:

It is an undeniable fact that we copy news from mainstream media. However we take news from them because we do not have access to such news. (Participant C)

Some of the participants say their media outlets have written proposals for government funding in their host countries but they have not received anything yet. With adequate funding, the participants say they will be able to produce greater percentage of the news content themselves.

5.2.2 Media-related justification of copying

Mainstream media have the capacity to produce a wide range of news content, which the diasporic media cannot, and therefore the Participants say that relying on content of mainstream media is inevitable. According to the Participants, copying of news content is the current phenomenon in many news media. They think the phenomenon is not only found in minority online media but it is a trend that is even seen in the mainstream media. Participants say the mainstream media with their adequate resources and funds are not able to report on news everywhere making them sometimes rely on news content from other media outlets:

Well, news is meant to be shared. CNN would take news feed from BBC if they do not have access to that information at the time. (Participant A)

Normally, when news content are shared or copied among the mainstream media, credit of authorship is given to the source of the content. This is a practice that Participants say they do, when they copy content from elsewhere. Authorship is something that the Participants see as necessary in their work. They therefore do not see any reason why they cannot also follow the steps of the mainstream media:

If you can’t beat them you join them, they have more capacity to produce news than us. So long as it is normal and accepted that you can copy and credit the source, I see no wrong in that. (Participant D)

Even now, the Participants say that the mainstream media are heavily relying on news from consumers’ and eyewitnesses to generate their content. Some of the participants presume that in the near future both majority and minority media will be dependant on each other on content sharing.
5.2.3 Demand from audiences’ as justification of copying

The pressure from readers of the online content was seen as a contributing factor why the Participants rely on content from the mainstream media. The readers use feedback forms on the websites of Participants to share their opinion on how they feel about the content on the websites. According to the Participants, they very much appreciate the feedback from readers, however, majority of them want frequent update of new content and also more news content from Ghana and activities from other Ghanaian communities abroad. With each of the Participants competing for readers, Participants say they try to satisfy readers by keeping up to their demands:

Some audiences like to see us cover more news outside of Canada and Ghana. Some audiences actually want more Africa business related news. (Participant A)

Some of the Participants say creating news content everyday is quite challenging for them, looking at the limited number of bloggers they have. The inability of Participants to meet the demands of the readers’ by themselves, also lead them to copy content from the mainstream. None of the Participants, however, see anything wrong with copying content from the mainstream media as long as credit is given to the source of the news. The Western mainstream media that the Participants say they mainly relied on are BBC Africa, CNN and Al Jazeera. Regarding Ghanaian mainstream media, some of the Participants say they rely on content from Ghanaweb while the rest relied on Myjoyonline (both are major online news media in Ghana).

5.3 Alternative content to mainstream news

This section analysis the responses of Participants on whether their media outlets produce different content compared to the content of mainstream media. Additionally, the section addresses the differences of content between the Participants’ media outlets and the mainstream media.

All the Participants share similar view that there is a gap in the news content of the Western mainstream media. They say they fill the media gap by producing alternative news content that cannot be found in the mainstream media. Most of the Participants agree that there is limited number of news about Africa in the mainstream news. Even more, Participant A says activities about Ghanaians in Canada are not found. Participants say the news content they
create make them stand out from the mainstream media:

Western mainstream online news websites do not cater for Ghanaians in the diaspora. They do not produce news that we produce. (Participant A)

We provide Ghanaian news, which cannot be found in mainstream news. (Participant D)

We provide news about Africa that is not mostly found in the mainstream media. We give more information about Ghana than the mainstream gives. (Participant B)

Some of the common content the Participants say they produce are entertainment, sports, politics and culture. Some of the sources of the alternative content are from diasporic communities while others originate from Ghana. Even so, half of the Participants say that some of the content cannot be found in the Ghanaian mainstream news either.

Participant A says, his media outlet has a direct connection and access to the Ghanaian community in Canada and therefore his outlet is able to provide exclusive content in North America, which according to him is quite different from what can be found from other Ghanaian diasporic online news:

Ghanaian diasporic media periodically publish news relating to this particular demographic only when it has already circulated on other major websites. (Participant A)

Similarly, other Participants say they also feel that the content they provide are different from other Ghanaian diasporic online media and especially in this case is Participant D. Apart from the general content about Ghana that the media outlet of Participant D produces, he says they also provide live television content to his audiences. So far except for Participant D, none of the media outlets of the Participants provide online television content to audiences:

We give our audience access to Live Television news from Ghana. (Participant D)

It is worth mentioning that the television content are not created by the media outlet of Participants D. According to Participant D, the only service his outlet provides is streaming the content through the Internet. The outlet has acquired permission from various Ghanaian television stations, which gives his outlet the right to offer television content to his audiences.
5.4 Diversity of news content

In this section I analyse the views of Participants concerning the degree of diversity in the news content that is produced by their respective media outlets. I carefully examine the responses of Participants to understand their views on diversity.

All the Participants share the same opinion that diversity is relevant to their work. However, the responses received from the Participants show a great deal of difference in the approach of diversity of news content. Participant A and B believe that their content do not show a great deal of diversity and that they need to more to enhance their content. As mentioned in ‘The scope of target audiences’ section of this chapter, the target audiences of Participant A are Ghanaians living in North America and the UK. Additionally, Participant A says the share of content that is created by his media outlet and the content that are reproduce from mainstream media all relate to the target audiences. Participant A feels that creating content for other diasporic communities will make the content on Website A more diverse:

I think our content is focused on the demographic we aim to cater to, however it could be more diverse since we live in a globally connected world now. (Participant A)

The target audiences of the media outlet of Participant B is quite different from the audiences of Participant A. Participant B says that his media outlet primary target are Africans everywhere, and the whole world at large. The content his media outlet creates are able to reach the target audience, however at the moment majority of content on his media outlet relates to entertainment. Participant B says it is not satisfying and needs improvement:

The news is not much diverse to me. Majority of our news are related to entertainment and we need to add different categories of news. (Participant B)

Participant C and D argue that they have diverse content on their news websites, however, reflecting on ‘Alternative content to mainstream news’ section of this chapter, they mention that their media outlets provide Ghanaian news content, which is seen as different from what Western media provides. However, there was no mention of African news content in general even though the media outlets of both Participants seek to target all Africans in the diaspora.

5.5 Relating news content to Ghanaian diasporic communities

The analysis in this section shows whether the alternative content produced by the diasporic media outlets include activities of the Ghanaian diasporic communities.
5.5.1 Relating own content to diasporic communities

The Participants unanimously say that they provide alternative content to the mainstream media. The relation of the alternative content to the diasporic communities could be identified by comparing the scope of target audiences of all the Participants to the kind of alternative content they produce. Even though all the Participants are Ghanaian content producers, the media outlets of some of the Participants do not specifically mention Ghanaians in the diaspora as their primary target. The Ghanaian diasporic community are rather seen as a part of bigger target audiences, which is Africa as a whole.

While Participants A and B say they relate their content to the diasporic community, Participants C and D say they do not directly relate their content to the diasporic community but the content is still useful to the people living in the diaspora. Ghanaians abroad keep a good relationship with families and friends in Ghana. Participants C and D believe that Ghanaians in the diaspora and Africans as a whole will be interested in content coming from Ghana and do not necessarily have to relate to the diasporic community.

Participant A states that his media outlet has partnership with Ghanaian Canadian Association in Canada and other professional outlets. The media outlet also has a good relationship with the Ghana consulate general and the Ghana High Commission in Canada, from where official information are received. With the help of these outlets the outlet gets easy access to activities that happens in and around the North American communities. Participant A states his media outlet produces content that are of social-economical, educational and cultural relevance that also relate to Ghanaians in the community:

We provide useful information from the Ghana consulate general and High commissioner to Canada.¹ This information is sent to our attention to be shared to the community. (Participant A)

Participant B on the hand says his media outlet relates news content to the diasporic communities by first discussing it on their online radio show. Listeners are allowed to contribute by sharing their opinion on what is discussed on the radio. The content are then later published on Website B.

¹The Ghana High Commission in Canada is the main Ghana diplomatic office in Canada with the responsibility for conducting and facilitating all aspects of the bilateral relationship with Canada.
5.5.2 Relating news from Western media

Although all the media outlets of the Participants reproduce some amount of content from the Western mainstream news, only Participant A says that his media outlet relate content from Western media to the Ghanaian diasporic communities. His media outlet only chooses content that affect the diasporic communities in North America. The choice of content could be for example government policies of the host country and also about immigration:

   We share useful related news from mainstream media such as BBC Africa and Al Jazeera when we find it suitable to our audience. (Participant A)

The rest of the Participants, however, say that their outlets do nothing to relate content they reproduce from the Western media to the Ghanaian diasporic communities or even to their audiences at large. They mainly choose content that are current and trending in the Western news.

5.5.3 Relating news from Ghanaian media

There is similarity in how the media outlet of Participant A says his outlet relates news content from Western media and Ghanaian media. His media outlet pay attention to news content that is important to Ghanaians abroad. The media outlet of Participant B, as presented in earlier sub-sections also relate news content from Ghana to the diasporic community by discussing it on the online radio. The other Participants say they relate content to the diasporic community but it is not clearly stated as to how this is done:

   We relate our news to the Ghanaian community by using student journalists residing in Ghana. (Participant D)

Content on Website D are determined by what the editors deem fit according to Participant D. There is no specific guideline for the choice of content on this website. The editors are free to publish any content they find adequate. It cannot therefore be determined whether the content produced by the media outlet of Participant D have any relation with the diasporic communities:

   I allow editors to write and upload news contents online by themselves. Editors have an account of their own where they can publish news content. (Participant D)
It is seen from the Participants responses that only Participant A follows one pattern of somehow relating all content whether self-produced or reproduced from the mainstream media to the diasporic communities in North America.

5.6 Challenges in news content production

Except for Participant B who showed dissatisfaction in the content on Website B due to the inability of editors to produce more content, the rest say they are satisfied with the news content they produce. However, they believe that they could do more if there were adequate funds. They all face similar challenges of poor funding and limited workforce, which limit their ability to produce more news content by themselves. As already mentioned, all the Ghanaian diasporic online media outlet involved in this study do not generate enough money to hire the services of journalists, bloggers and news editors to create more content and also are not able to report on events in other parts of the diasporic communities:

  Because we are based in Canada, we do not have a lot of exclusive content from other diasporic communities on regular basis. Ideally we would need bloggers from all the major cities that Ghanaians reside, which will demand a lot of funding. This is why we have to resort to content from mainstream media. (Participant A)

  Every editor demands to be paid for every story. Some want to make the name. The later is OK but the former can be daunting. (Participant D)

Without funding, it will be difficult for the Ghanaian diasporic online media outlets to improve their services and produce more content of their own. The funding could help them to employ the services of professional journalist and news editors to help in their content production.

6. Conclusions

The conclusion chapter summarizes the result of the analysis made in the previous chapter and relates these results to previous research and the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter presents three sub-sections that try to answer the research questions. It also presents a recommendation for this study.
6.1 The site content relation to the local community

The proportion of content that relate to the local community is quite small. Majority of the content, whether they are produced by the media outlet of the Participants or copied from the mainstream news, do not relate to the Ghanaian diasporic community or even to the target audiences as a whole. The primary target audiences of most of the media outlets are not the Ghanaian community, but the focus is rather on the entire African community in the diaspora. One of the reasons of the inability to relate news content to the local community is the fact that the outlets have set a really wide target. Additionally, most of the media outlets rely on news editors who live in Ghana or bloggers who live in different diasporic communities. The outlets fail to provide internal guideline to address the issue of relating content to the Ghanaian diasporic community, allowing the editors to produce content that do not concern the local community.

The work of the diasporic media is in contradiction with what Riggins (1992) presents, which states that minority media specifically produce content that targets people living in the diasporic communities to help them to strengthen their socio-cultural identity. In a sense, not only are the perspectives of the minority community neglected in the mainstream media but also in the minority media as well. The minority media claim they fill the gap created by the mainstream media by promoting activities of the local community, however, most of them tend to neglect this core responsibility and rather blame it on the mainstream media.

6.2 Share of news content produced by diaspora media

The share of content that the diasporic online media outlets involved in this study produce is between thirty percent (30%) to forty percent (40%). This means that the media outlets rely heavily on other sources for their content. The small share that the media outlets produce is as a result of limited funding and workforce in content production. Most of the funds that the media outlets generate are from website advertisement which is not enough. Because of the limited financial standing of the media outlets, they employ few news editors and journalist, which is not enough, looking at the workload in news content production.
How much content diasporic media produce, mirrors what Riggins (1994) presents, that the minority media have few or non-paid workers, which affect the quality of the news content because they are unable to produce most of the content themselves. Even with the help of contributors and bloggers in creating news content, diasporic media are not able to increase the percentage of the share of content they produce. The bloggers write stories on their free will and are not given incentives to motivate them. To be able to increase the percentage of share of content, media outlets should look for funding from their various hosts countries or other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) that might be interested in the activities of minority media.

6.3 Alternative content produced by diasporic media

The Ghanaian diasporic online media produce alternative news content to the Western mainstream media. The Western media do not pay attention to activities of Ghanaians in the diaspora. This leaves a content gap, which diasporic media tend to fill by producing Ghanaian related content that cannot be found in the mainstream news. Some of the news content produced by diasporic media relate to sports, politics, culture or social issues. However, only smaller amount of the news content are produced for the local diasporic community. Even though majority of the alternative content do not directly concern Ghanaians in the diaspora, it is highly accepted by the diasporic community because the issues are most of the time related to Ghana.

As Bailey, Cammaert and Carpentier (2008) presents, alternative media provide a representation that is different from the content that originate in the mainstream media. This is exactly what the diasporic media outlets are doing, however, it is only limited to the Western mainstream media. While all the diasporic media outlets involved in this study provide different content to the Western mainstream news, the content that most of them produce or reproduce are quite similar to what is seen in Ghanaian mainstream media.

6.4 Diversity in news content

The news content, that the media outlets involved in this study provide are not highly diverse, even though some of the outlets claim otherwise. Comparing the news content of diasporic media to the categories laid out by Hiller, Savage and Waldman (2015), I will classify few of
the media outlets under the low level category of content diversity. Although the content concern the Ghanaian community, it however only focuses on the younger generation of Ghanaians, which leaves the viewpoints of those outside this specific generation not represented.

The rest of the media outlets, although they provide diverse news content (sports, politics, religion, education) to their audiences, cannot be counted as diverse under the context of this study simply because none of the content focus on the activities of the diasporic community. In order to show diversity in news content, the media outlets should redefine and set new targets that specifically include the community as part of the audiences and bring as many viewpoints as possible in the production of news content.

6.5 Recommendations

There are over 300 Ghanaian diasporic online radio stations (Modern Ghana). Most of these online radio stations have their own website where they publish digital news content. There is a possibility that the number of Ghanaians diasporic online media will increase. The diversity in the inclusion of diasporic activities in news content of diasporic media is a topic that is relevant and needs more academic research. Furthermore, there was not enough time and only four participants were interviewed, therefore more research time needs to be given to the study of the views of Ghanaian diasporic content producers in other diasporic communities about the diversity of their content.
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APPENDIX 1 – Topic Guide

How are Content produced?

1. How do you decide about what content you include on your website?
2. How do you produce your news content?
3. What do you think about your content in terms of diversity?
4. Are you satisfied with your contents or could they be improved? (If they could be improved, how would you do that?)
5. Could you please assess the share of content that you create yourselves and the share that you reproduce from other media?
   a. To what extent do you edit or modify reproduced material?
6. How often are news content updated on your website?

How are content related to target audience

1. What is the scope of your targeted audiences?
2. In what particular ways do you present your content to attract your audiences?
3. In what ways do you work so as to relate news from Ghana to the diasporic communities?
4. How do you relate news from Western mainstream media to the diasporic communities?
5. Do you receive any feedback from your audience concerning your contents?
6. What do they focus on/appreciate/criticize your content? Do they ask for more of something?
7. Does your site offer any interactive opportunities for the audience to communicate their feedback?

Alternative content and challenges in content production

1. What are the problems you face in the production of news content?
2. How would you describe your experience in operating as Ghanaian diasporic news media?
3. What does your site offer your audiences that they cannot find in other Ghanaian minority online news websites?
4. What does your site offer your audiences that they cannot find in other Ghanaian based online news websites?
5. What does your site offer your audiences that they cannot find in other Western mainstream online news websites?
6. Some studies have shown that news media in the diaspora sometimes copy their content from mainstream media, what is your opinion on that?