



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE IN MALAYSIAN AND
UGANDAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS**

ADNAN ALI ADIKATA

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**INTERNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE IN MALAYSIAN AND UGANDAN
DAILY NEWSPAPERS**

By

ADNAN ALI ADIKATA

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in the Faculty of
Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

December 1999



This humble thesis is dedicated to my late father
Ali Abdallah Said for his endless urge for education

And

my mother

Amina Mohammad Aditei

for her patience, perseverance, understanding, encouragement and prayers

throughout the duration of my studies,

when my presence beside her was very much needed.

**Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science**

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Chairman : Associate Professor Musa Abu Hassan, Ph.D

Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

Coverage of international news, represented in the newsworthiness determinants, news categories, and roles of the national, regional and international news agencies from a developing countries perspective, is an area that has not been thoroughly investigated. It was adopted wholly by the developing countries from the Western system with its basic news standards. Hence, a need arose to undertake a study on international news coverage.

The population was sampled by constructing weekly tables, which comprised of 1825 international news articles published between Jan 1st, 1996 and Dec 31st, 1998 by The Star (Malaysia) and The New Vision (Uganda) newspapers. Statistical procedures employing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences

(SPSS) was used in data analysis. Specifically, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and chi-square were used.

The findings indicate that the standard newsworthiness determinants were considered but at an alterable degree in determining the coverage of international news. It was also reported that news categories were substantial, however some categories were reported more than the others. The study also reveals that the national news agencies played a minimal role while the regional news agencies were found to be without any considerable role in international news coverage. Nevertheless, the international western news agencies played an overwhelmingly greater role in the coverage of international news. Reuters however, contributed much news than the AFP and AP towards international news coverage. The UPI on the other hand, did not provide any news story to the newspapers. The investigation suggests that the south-south cooperation concept exerted some considerable impact on the international news coverage. Hence, coverage of international news was based on the realisation of the concept.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**LIPUTAN BERITA ANATARABANGSA DALAM AKHBAR HARIAN MALAYSIA
DAN UGANDA**

Oleh

ADNAN ALI ADIKATA

Disember 1999

Pengurus : Profesor Madya Musa Abu Hassan, Ph.D

Fakulti : Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Liputan berita antarabangsa yang tertera di dalam penentu-penentu nilai berita, kategori-kategori berita dan peranan agensi berita kebangsaan, serantau dan antarabangsa dari perspektif negara-negara membangun adalah satu bidang yang belum diterokai secara mendalam. Ia telah dipinjam sepenuhnya oleh negara-negara membangun daripada sistem Barat bersama dengan piawai beritanya yang asas. Oleh itu, terdapat suatu keperluan untuk menjalankan kajian ke atas liputan berita antarabangsa.

Kaedah kajian minguwan telah digunakan untuk mengambil contoh populasi yang terdiri daripada 1825 artikel berita antarabangsa yang diterbitkan di antara 1

Januari, 1996 dan 31 Disember, 1998 oleh akhbar-akhbar The Star dan The New Vision. Pakej Statistik Sains Sosial (SPSS), frekuensi dan kaedah statistik chi-square telah digunakan dalam menganalisa data.

Keputusannya menunjukkan bahwa penentu nilai berita yang piawai telah digunakan tetapi pada kadar yang berbeza dalam menentukan liputan berita antarabangsa. Kategori-kategori berita juga didapati termasuk sebahagian daripada liputan tersebut, tetapi sesetengah kategori dilaporkan lebih dari yang lain. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa agensi berita kebangsaan memainkan peranan yang minima, sementara agensi berita wilayah didapati tidak mempunyai apa-apa peranan yang diiktirafi dalam laporan berita antarabangsa. Namun begitu, agensi berita antarabangsa Barat memainkan peranan yang jauh lebih besar dalam liputan berita antarabangsa. Reuters bagaimanapun menyumbang lebih banyak daripada AFP dan AP dalam liputan berita antarabangsa. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa kerjasama selatan-selatan memberikan kesan yang mendalam ke atas liputan berita antarabangsa. Oleh itu, liputan dibuat atas dasar merealisasikan kepentingan konsep tersebut.

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Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Universe, He Who taught man the use of the pen and He taught him what he knew not. May Blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad (peace be upon him) the seal of prophethood, His companions and those to follow his tradition until the day of judgement.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 24th December, 1999 to conduct the final examination of Adnan Ali Adikata on his Master of Science thesis entitled "International News Coverage in Ugandan and Malaysian Daily News Papers" in accordance with Univesiti Pertanian Malysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant Degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

MUHAMAD ROSLI SELAMAT

Pensyarah
Univesiti Putra Malaysia
(Pengurus/Wakil Dekan Pengajian Siswazah)

MUSA ABU HASSAN, PhD.

Professor Madya
Jabatan Komunikasi
Fakulti Bahasa Modan dan Komunikasi
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

MD. SALLEH HJ. HASSAN, PhD.

Professor Madya
Jabatan Komunikasi
Fakulti Bahasa Modan dan Komunikasi
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

EZHAR TAMAM

Pensyarah
Universti Putra Malaysia
(Member)



.....
MOHD GHAZALI MOHAYIDIN, PhD.
Professor/Deputy Dean of Graduate School

Date: **07 JUN 2000**

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and was accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

Kamis Awang
.....
KAMIS AWANG, PhD.
Associate Professor,
Dean of Graduate School,
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 13 JUL 2000

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

.....

ADNAN ALI ADIKATA

Date: 15/05/2000

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANEX	:	Asia News Exchange
AP	:	Associated Press
ASEAN	:	Association of South East Asian Nations
BERNAMA	:	Berita National Malaysia
MCA	:	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	:	Malaysian Indian Congress
NANAP	:	Non-Aligned News Agency Pool
NRM	:	National Resistance Movement
OANA	:	Organisation of Asian News Agencies
OAU	:	Organisation of African Unity
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UMNO	:	United Malay national Organisation
UNA	:	Uganda News Agency
UPI	:	United Press International
USA	:	United States of America
WTO	:	World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the subject of this study. It shades light on the important and basic areas of the research. It provides information on the background of the study, statement of research, purpose and need of the study, research objectives, scope and limitations, and definition of terms.

Background of the Problem

Newspapers have come along way and slowly progressed to reach their current status in society. The industry has developed with time, while going through some rapid stages of transformation and enlargement that were deemed necessary and constructive. One of the important features of these newspapers today is their incorporation of international news contents, which represent a significant section of contemporary newspapers.

These newspapers in essence, are important agents of socialisation. People belonging to various segments of life depend on newspapers among others, to learn about events taking place within and beyond their immediate surroundings. In light of this fact, newspapers are considered to play a paramount role in informing readers and disseminating news on world affairs.

However, in an attempt to achieve the basic goals, newspapers function under divergent sets of principles and perform as a result different roles in diverse societies. These roles manifested in information, education, public betterment and entertainment differ significantly between a society where almost all means of information are owned by the government and a society where the press is privately owned. Hence, the role of a newspaper can not reasonably be neglected as a vital agent of socialisation in society.

In a government governed press system, the role of a newspaper is categorically limited to preserving and expanding the political thoughts of the nation states, and contributing to their national economic development. However, where the press is run by private enterprises, the role of the media is defined basically as to inform, entertain and sell regardless of the political goals of the governments.

There is a close interrelationship between newspapers in particular with the existing political systems within the respective countries of operation. A nations' political system can be looked at in terms of the philosophy and the structure of its' government. The existence of a number of facets of political systems automatically necessitates the availability of corresponding press concepts. For instance, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) established the New Vision, a daily newspaper in Uganda in 1986. The movement wanted the paper to be a "progressive, anti-contra and anti-corruption newspaper that was accurate,

objective and works in accordance with the principles laid down by the NRM" (McArthur, 1996:14).

News in essence is defined differently in different circumstances. What is news in one location may not necessarily be so in another situation. The same news event can be valued and meant different things from one place to another, thus leading to the introduction of mixed contextual news values. In his study of the press in Algeria and America, Azzi (1992) established that the Algerian and American press differ in their concept of what constitutes news and how it can be reported. However, he pointed out that the press in both countries report international news and contributes to the formation of the picture of other countries and cultures that audiences usually develop. Likewise, Hachten (1992) stated that

"the worlds' system of distributing news can be linked to a crystal prism. What in one place is considered the straight white light of truth travels through the prism and is refracted and bent into a variety of colours and shades. One person's truth becomes, to another, biased reporting or propaganda depending on where the light strikes the prism and where it emerges" (p.xx).

The national, regional and international news agencies on the other hand, play a significant role in the daily operation of newspaper organisations. Consequently, these news agencies support directly or indirectly the role of the domestic or local newspapers in covering international events. Al-Hester (1991) singled out the contribution of the international news agencies and argued that although the international wire services are currently facing growing competition in foreign

news gathering and disseminating, they still maintain the most complete transmission networks and capacity for widespread and rapid coverage of international news.

Statement of Research

Scholars and media researchers in the past have conducted a considerable number of studies on press coverage of international news, (Larson, 1979; Fair and Astroff, 1991). These studies were based on some newspapers issues in the locality of these investigations, most of which have been in the developed countries. Chang, Shoemaker and Brendlinger (1987, p. 408) stated that

"the study of international news coverage within the United States over the past years, and the flow of international news world-wide has yielded a rich body of literature describing the amount of news present from various countries in various content categories."

However, most of these studies content analysed newspaper coverage of international news in the developed countries.

During the imperialist era, everything was designed, planned and executed in a manner that pleased their needs and satisfied their goals. The press, and its' significance as an administrative tool in the colonial period is not an exception. When the Colonialists were pressurised to leave or driven away, the locals inherited a system that was totally alien. The whole structure was to serve a purpose that slightly belonged to the natives. With the colonialists departure and the natives inheritance of the system in its totality, the designed study is expected to explore the status, developments and the relative historical ties

existing between the independent third world countries and their historical masters, in relation to international news coverage.

Generally, international news coverage by newspapers, which are business and profit oriented entities, depends on the audience interest and view of what constitutes newsworthiness. Therefore, during the selection process of international news items for coverage, newspapers rely on the pre-set standards of newsworthiness determinants, however, more from the audience perspective. Hence, this seems to be an unprecedented area of exploration, with specific reference to the role of the interests of the audience in the selection of international news items.

In consideration of the facts mentioned above, press coverage of international news becomes an important area of research and exploration. Nevertheless, the salience of the study lies in scrutinising the factors inspiring international events' coverage, cited news categories and the roles of the national, regional and international wire services in the coverage of foreign news in selected English language dailies from a developing world perspective.

Research Questions

1. What news values contribute to international news coverage by Malaysian and Ugandan English language dailies.

2. What news themes are reported by Malaysian and Ugandan dailies in their international news coverage.
3. What is the contribution of the national, regional and international wire services to international coverage by the Malaysian and Ugandan dailies.
4. What is the effect of the cooperation among the third world (developing) countries on international news coverage by the Malaysian and Ugandan dailies.

Purpose and Need of the Study

Knowledge of the happenings within and around is a basic information need to almost every nation and community in the contemporary global village. Newspapers play a significant role in satisfying this compulsion without marginalising the other media - television, magazines and the Internet. Newspapers in their reporting of international news depend on some factors to determine what constitutes news that should be disseminated to the readers. With plenty of studies having been conducted on this subject, the results have contributed a considerably rich literature to the area. Therefore, it is hoped that the current study will depict and unveil the developing countries' view and trend in international news coverage determinants.

It has more than twenty years since the emergence of the proponents of New World Information and Communication Order who subscribed to the idea of equal flow of information (Masmoudi, 1985). It is expected that this study will yield some important findings on the position of the developing countries' news



agencies in realising the vision and dream of the New World Information and Communication Order proponents. This could be as a result of examining the role of the national and regional news agencies in covering international news.

It is believed that the outcome of this study will provide some basic guidelines and a benchmark on which governments as well as media practitioners can rely on in evaluating their international news selection criteria in the Information Technology era. These will be beneficial in figuring out the areas ignored and or overlooked by media organisations in the process of disseminating important news to their readers as well as fulfilling their social responsibility.

Inception of the south-south cooperation concept with the urge for partnership among the developing countries has been a recent development as well. The corporation is supposed to cover a number of areas, such as economy, health, science and technology and others. Effects of this concept have been realised and established in a number of different sectors. However, the media or press in particular is yet to be examined. Therefore, this study considers and regards it important to examine the impact of the south-south cooperation in press coverage of international news while analysing the geographical locations covered by the studied newspapers.

There has never been a study, based on the reviewed literature, on international news coverage by The New Vision. However, some literature indicated the

existence of studies conducted on international news coverage by Malaysian newspapers including The Star (Hasim, 1991). This study however, has been an extensive investigation that is expected to assist the two media organisations in evaluating and improving on the quality of their international news coverage.

Research Objectives

General Research Objective

The study is designed to investigate the newsworthiness determinants, news categories, role of news agencies and the impact of the south-south cooperation on international news coverage in the Malaysian and Ugandan English language daily newspapers.

Specific Research Objectives

The study was designed to investigate the following:

- a. To identify the newsworthiness determinants depended upon by the Malaysian and Ugandan English language dailies for international news coverage.
- b. To identify the news categories in the international news reported by the Malaysian and Ugandan English language dailies.