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## The News Types of Two Countries: A Comparative Study of News Values *Quality Newspapers and Popular Newspapers in Malaysia and Britain*

### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the news values in the front page lead stories and thus identified types of news that frequently published in front pages of two quality newspapers and two primary tabloid newspapers from Malaysia and Britain. Sample for this research taken from March 2008 and content analysis had been used as the research method for the further development of this research. This comparative study is not merely assessing the distinction or similarity within these quality and popular newspapers in Malaysia and Britain, but also to compare the different newspaper format used in both selected countries. The findings indicating that quality newspaper from both countries are prone to report news regarding on politics, economics, and internal issues involved in the country itself. The worthiness or the values of this news consist of traits such as magnitude, surprise, bad news, and the power elite. In contrast of popular newspapers, it emphasize heavily on sensational news such as crime news stories, social illness, and so forth where these news items gripping strongly on traits such as entertainment, surprise news, bad news, and celebrity news.*

**Key words:** *news values, quality newspapers, popular newspapers, comparative study, and Malaysia and Great Britain news papers.*

### INTRODUCTION

This article discusses and explores the types of news published in front page leads of the main newspaper from Malaysia and Britain which are the *New Straits Times*, *Harian Metro*, *The Times* and *The Daily Mirror*. News values that applied in this research were based on the research findings by T. Harcup and D. O'Neill (2001) whom examined newsworthiness in the context of Britain newspapers. This comparative research expands T. Harcup and D. O'Neill's perspective in their findings and explores the front page lead news published in Malaysia.

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Newspapers categorized as quality newspapers and popular newspapers, which is also known as tabloid, has own style in choosing and presenting news stories (Gripsrud, 2008). A quality newspapers always gathers and presents news that contains serious values (Brighton & Foy, 2008) while popular newspapers gathers news which has great celebrity influential stories (Bird, 2008; and Turner, Bonner & Marshall, 2008) to present more sensational value news items (Becker, 2008).

In general, the main purpose of this research is to identify the values that emphasis in news reporting and create an understanding on how newspaper format in influencing news that being published. This influence is studied within handpicked newspaper in Malaysia and Britain. This research also compares the different newspaper format being used in Malaysia and in Britain, values of the news and the types of news items being presented.

### **RESEARCH PROBLEM**

It is believed that there are numerous factors exist to influence the selection and the production of news (Niblock, 2005; and Venables, 2005). Newspaper format is an interesting element to study and to be related with news values because this is basically dynamic and constantly changing over time (Conley, 2002; and Allan, 2004) which raises the need to be updated frequently. According to J.F. Staab, news values have dragged most scholars' attention since 1950s and it is still considered very much important in this modern age (Staab, 1990). On the other hand, newspaper format also triggered most journalism scholar's interest in discussing tabloid type newspapers till today (Harrison, 2006).

This research does not thoroughly explore about the tabloid aspect of a newspaper, but the priority focus is given to the comparison made between popular newspaper and quality newspaper in Malaysia and Britain, thus discussing about academic benefits in the communication field itself. This specialization is ideal with the nature of the research which is to examine the news values and other additional factors that is believed to influence the selection and production of news items.

In the basis of news selection and production, W. Donsbach has contended his anxiety on not having a proper or systematic model to help explain this particular process in news production (Donsbach, 2004). This research has been inspired by W. Donsbach (though he never tried to create a complete model in explaining how news is produced comprehensively), where this research will answer early subject matters in the main newspapers in Malaysia and Britain. Since these two countries are Commonwealth countries, it added additional interest to conduct this research because of the diverse variation in geography, culture and social structure these countries posses, especially in viewing the comparison between quality newspaper and popular newspaper.

So, some research questions are: (1) What type of news value used to determine news publication in quality newspaper and popular newspaper in Malaysia and Britain, and how does this news value influence and determines

the front page news in newspaper sample chosen for this research?; (2) What type of news highlighted frequently in the front page of the *New Straits Times*, *Harian Metro*, *The Times* and *The Daily Mirror*?; and (3) What are the similarities and differences in the type of news and the news values in the newspaper sample chosen for this research?

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Fundamental theory used in this research is based on the research of T. Harcup and D. O'Neill (2001) where it is inspired by news values presented by J. Galtung and M.H. Ruge (1965) in Britain's context. The J. Galtung and M.H. Ruge's 12 news Factors include as follows:

F1. *Frequency*. An event that unfolds at the same or similar frequency as the news medium (such as a murder) is more likely to be selected as news than is a social trend that takes place over a long period of time.

F2. *Threshold*. Events have to pass a threshold before being recorded at all. After that, the greater the intensity, the more gruesome the murder, and the more casualties in an accident—the greater the impact on the perception of those responsible for news selection.

F3. *Unambiguity*. The less ambiguity, the more like the event is to become news. The more clearly an event can be understood, and interpreted without multiple meanings, the greater the chance of it being selected.

F4. *Meaningfulness*. The culturally similar is likely to be selected because it fits into the news selector's frame of reference. Thus, the involvement of UK citizens will make an event in a remote country more meaningful to the UK media. Similarly, news from the USA is seen as more relevant to the UK than is news from countries that are less culturally familiar.

F5. *Consonance*. The news selector may predict—or, indeed, want—something to happen, thus forming a mental “pre-image” of an event, which in turn increases its chances of becoming news.

F6. *Unexpectedness*. The most unexpected or rare events—among those that are culturally familiar and/or consonant—will have the greatest chance of being selected as news.

F7. *Continuity*. Once an event has become headline news it remains in the media spotlight for some time—even if its amplitude has been greatly reduced—because it has become familiar and easier to interpret. Continuing coverage also acts to justify the attention an event attracted in the first place.

F8. *Composition*. An event may be included as news less because of its intrinsic news value than because it fits into the overall composition or balance of a newspaper or news broadcast. This might not just mean light stories to balance heavy news; it could also mean that, in the context of newspaper reports on alleged institutional racism within the police, for example, positive initiatives to combat racism which would normally go unreported might make it onto the news pages.

F9. *Reference to Elite Nations*. The actions of elite nations are seen as more consequential than the actions of other nations. Definitions of elite nations will be culturally, politically and economically determined and will vary from country to country, although there may be universal agreement about the inclusion of some nations (e.g. the USA) among the elite.

F10. *Reference to Elite People*. The actions of elite people, who will usually be famous, may be seen by news selectors as having more consequence than that actions of others. Also, readers may identify with them.

F11. *Reference to Persons*. News has a tendency to present events as the actions of named people rather than a result of social forces. This personification goes beyond “human interest” stories and could relate to “cultural idealism according to which man is the master of his own destiny and events can be seen as the outcome of an act of free will”.

F12. *Reference to Something Negative*. Negative news could be seen as unambiguous and consensual, generally more likely to be unexpected and to occur over a shorter period of time than positive news (cited in Harcup & O’Neil, 2001:262-264).

Meanwhile, T. Harcup and D. O’Neill show that Galtung and Ruge’s 12 news Factors are problematic, thus raising certain questions during their research as follows:

F1. *Frequency*. How does this relate to stories that are not about events at all, but about trends, speculation, or even the absence of events?

F2. *Threshold*. Isn’t this still open to subjective interpretation? Which is bigger – 20 deaths in ten road accidents or five deaths in one rail crash?

F3. *Unambiguity*. Is the ambiguity in the subject or in the journalist’s interpretation?

F4. *Meaningfulness*. This is a slippery concept that changes over time and relies on subjective interpretation.

F5. *Unexpectedness*. How can we tell if the journalist is simply taking an unexpected angle on a predictable event?

F6. *Consonance*. How useful is this category if it is possible only to guess if and when it has applied?

F7. *Continuity*. Something may be in the news today because it was in the news yesterday, but what does that actually reveal about why it was news in the first place?

F8. *Composition*. How is it possible to know what was in the selector’s mind when making a particular decision?

F9. *Elite Nations*. The dearth of foreign news in UK tabloids newspapers renders this relatively infrequently identified factors; does that mean it does not apply?

F10. *Elite People*. How useful is a category that does not distinguish between the Spice Girls and the President of the USA?

F11. *Reference to Persons*. Is this intrinsic to the subject or the journalist’s technique?

F12. *Reference to Something Negative*. Negative for whom? Bad news for some might be good news for others (Harcup & O’Neil, 2001).

Analysis by T. Harcup and D. O’Neill after a month of detailed studies has shown that each news item will possess one or more characteristics that they have listed. The more characteristic an event possesses, the higher the possibilities are the event will be transformed into news. The characteristic or news values news story possesses are as below:

1. *The Power Elite*. Stories concerning powerful individuals, organizations or institutions.
2. *Celebrity*. Stories concerning people who are already famous.
3. *Entertainment*. Stories concerning sex, show business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.
4. *Surprise*. Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.
5. *Bad News*. Stories with particularly negative overtones such as conflict or tragedy.
6. *Good News*. Stories with particularly positive overtones such as rescues and cures.
7. *Magnitude*. Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or in potential impact.

8. *Relevance*. Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience.
9. *Follow-up*. Stories about subjects already in the news.
10. *Newspaper Agenda*. Stories that set or fit the news organization's own agenda (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001).

These are the news values or characteristics suggested as a substitution to J. Galtung and M.H. Ruge's news values. However, both T. Harcup and D. O'Neill carried different approach in determining an event transformed to news, unlike J. Galtung and M.H. Ruge (1965), they both focused on approaching the framework of news. According to T. Harcup and D. O'Neill, despite the way it has been so widely cited, J. Galtung and M.H. Ruge's taxonomy of news factors appears to ignore the majority of news stories. Besides that the authors also saw that news are not reports of events at all, but *pseudo-events* free advertising or public relations spins (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001:276).

This research however, looking news as a social construction where, according to H. Molotch and M. Lester, media is not reflecting a world out there, but the practices of those having power to determine the experience of others. Mass media is not reflecting reality, but for purposes which underlie the strategies of creating one reality instead of another (Molotch & Lester, 1999). This study agrees to see news as a construction material and a product of a group of newspapermen who work to determine which events will become news the next day.

#### ON THE NEWSPAPERS

There are four newspapers under study which include two newspapers of Malaysia and two of Britain. The selection was based on the format of the newspaper, whether they are serious or popular newspaper and its reputation in both countries.

First, the *New Straits Times*. The newspaper of *New Straits Times* in modern Malaysia has always been an authoritative newspaper. A paper that held itself responsible for the well-being and progress of the nation in all fields. So much so it has often been described as "the newspaper of the nation" (<http://www.nstp.com.my/Corporate/nstp/products/productSub.htm>, 3.7.2009). Its latest circulation based on the ABC Report for the period ending 30 June 2008 is 136,530 copies (The ABC Report Circulation Figures for the period ending 30 June 2008). It commands a nationwide readership of 429,000 aged 15 and above. There has been quite a clear state that UMNO (United Malay National Organization) is having control over NST (*New Straits Times*), the largest media conglomerate in Malaysia (Zaharom, 2000). As we know that UMNO is the ruling party of Malaysia at the moment.

Second, *Harian Metro*. The newspaper of *Harian Metro* is of the same publishing company as the NST (*New Straits Times*). It is Malaysia's first Malay daily afternoon tabloid in Klang valley and morning tabloid in other regions was established to fill a vacuum in the niche market for Malay readers who were

becoming increasingly market oriented. The change in demography resulted in a growing audience of young people who were looking for entertainment, shopping news, lifestyle features and news that interested them. *Harian Metro* met those needs in a most interesting and exciting manner by way of exciting editorial presentation (<http://www.nstp.com.my/Corporate/nstp/products/productHM.htm>, 3.7.2009). The latest circulation is 324,097 copies (The ABC Report Circulation Figures for the period ending 30 June 2008). It commands a nationwide readership of 370,000.

Third, *The Times*. The newspaper of *The Times* is a daily national newspaper in United Kingdom. The newspaper was printed in broadsheet format from 219 years but switched to compact size in 2004 partly in an attempt to appeal to younger readers and partly to appeal to commuters using public transport. The certified average circulation figures for November 2005 show that *The Times* sold 695,581 copies per day. The British Business Survey 2005 named *The Times* as the UK's leading daily newspaper for business people. The selection of *The Times* of Britain and the NST (*New Straits Times*) of Malaysia is mainly for its similar characteristic that tries to penetrate alike readers which are the business people and professionals.

Fourth, *The Daily Mirror*. The newspaper of *The Daily Mirror* was once known as *The Mirror*. It is a tabloid newspaper in United Kingdom. In 1930, *The Mirror* transformed itself from a gently declining, respectable, conservative, middle-class newspaper into a sensationalist left-wing paper for the working class that soon proved a runaway business success. Today, it sells around 1.5 million copies per day. The selection of *The Daily Mirror* in this research is not due to its high circulation because obviously it is not compared to other leading tabloid newspapers in the UK such as *The Sun* with over 3.5 millions copies of circulation per day. However, the uniqueness of the newspaper lies in its different political view holds which will diverse the research findings.

## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative content analysis used in this research with front page news from 109 newspapers for the month of March 2008 from selected newspapers. The month chosen for this research is random and highly influenced by researchers' access on selected newspapers (*New Straits Times*, *Harian Metro*, *The Times* and *The Daily Mirror*).

News from *The Daily Mirror* was collected through Lexis Nexis and not the conventional way of referring to the printed version of the newspapers. The reason behind this, tabloids are not necessarily need to be kept neither in university library nor in Public Library of Nottingham. Yet, this insufficiency caused no downfall to this research because all the vital information such as pictures, which printed together with the news story, available at Lexis Nexis. Hence, Lexis Nexis is a popular database for accessing unlimited archive for newspaper, magazines and other printed materials.

**Table 1.1.**  
Number of Front Page News

Num.	Newspaper	Main News in Front Page of Newspaper
1.	<i>The Times</i> and <i>The Sunday Times</i>	31 News
2.	<i>New Straits Times</i> and the <i>New Sunday Times</i>	31 News
3.	<i>The Daily Mirror</i> and <i>The Sunday Mirror</i>	18 News
4.	<i>Harian Metro</i> and <i>Harian Metro Ahad</i>	29 News
<b>Total</b>		<b>109 News</b>

(Note: Undiscovered newspaper - *Harian Metro*, 10 and 24 March 2008. Table shows number of front page lead news being studied).

Materials available in Lexis Nexis comes in a complete package with news and attached picture graphics, even though pictures are not necessary for this research. Besides this, accessing Lexis Nexis also lead to explore news from various edition such as Eire Edition, Scots Edition, South Wales Edition, Ulster Edition and 3 Star Edition. With overflowing information, this smart database has its frailty part when it causes confusion among the researchers to identify the front page news. To overcome this error of confusion, researchers chose front page lead news with only 200 words excluding date published until March 2008. This step ensures, a wide coverage given only to very important main news to help develop this research.

## RESULTS:

### A. NEWS VALUES

The main subject matter is to identify the news values that embedded in front page lead news. News values or characteristics used for this whole research are based on the findings of T. Harcup and D. O'Neill (2001) which has been explained in the theoretical framework section.

*First, Average Number of News Value in Newspapers.* Out of 586 news values on front page lead news being studied, an average of 147 news value used in every newspaper in determining the main news story, in front page every month.

**Table 1.2.**  
Average, Highest and Lowest News Value for Each News According to Newspaper

Num.	Newspaper	Average News Value	Highest News Value in News	Lowest News Value in News
1.	<i>The Times</i>	6	8	4
2.	<i>New Straits Times</i>	6	8	4
3.	<i>Harian Metro</i>	4	6	3
4.	<i>The Daily Mirror</i>	2	6	3

The results of this research show both quality newspapers in Malaysia and in Britain (*New Straits Times* and *The Times*) has the same highest average news value which is 6 values per news. The same goes to one of the front page lead news which recorded as holding highest news value of 8 in both newspapers. The lowest news value recorded is 4.

These findings show that different newspaper format will influence the news values in determining news. We argue that due to different set of target audience and market driven readership popular newspapers generally have the tendency to explicitly or implicitly chosen the more sensationalized news items which carry similar news values regardless of the geography boundaries. We further argue positively that this is not an unhealthy situation; it is in fact providing the readers with more choices. It is up to the readers to choose, whether to read the popular one or the serious newspapers. We would strongly argue that smart readers will go for both, the serious newspapers for the information they might need and the popular ones for leisure.

Unexpectedly, these findings also indicate that Malaysia and British newspapers use the similar level of average news values for both quality newspaper and popular newspaper. This could indicate the universalities of news values in general in both countries. An event with similar news values embedded in it is seen as important to news workers in both countries. This might support the argument presented by H. Moloth and M. Lester (1999) above that news is a construction of the news workers. We would support this argument by adding that, due to experience they have with similar build up, most journalists will see things in the same way – which they claim the *nose of the news*. They construct the news and they seem to *know* which one is news, and which one is not. This universality however, could not be generalized in a more qualitative way, that is, the practice that embedded in different newsroom is never the same, even though if we are talking about two different newsrooms in a country or even in one publishing group with different newspaper formats.

*Second, News Value Distributions in Newspapers.* News that contains news values such as “newspaper agenda”, “relevant”, “magnitude”, “the power elite”, “surprise” and “bad news” are determined as the main news for all the 4 newspapers that studied. Quality newspapers are more prone to news values such as “magnitude” and “the power elite”, while popular newspaper more to news values such as “surprise” and “bad news”. Basically, *The Times* and *New Straits Times* use the same news value which is “magnitude” because of the newspaper’s status as quality newspaper with wide readers across the country. The quality newspaper never limits its reader by setting targeted audience or readers, in contrast of popular newspaper which sets its audience.

Yet, very different pattern is seen between *The Times* and *New Straits Times*. For instance, highest news value found in *The Times* (besides news values such as “newspaper agenda” and “relevant” are compulsory to go through editorial process) is “magnitude” (28 news out of 31 news), “surprise news” (26 news out



of 31 news), and “bad news” and “the power elite” (18 news out of 31 news). While the *New Straits Times*, on the other hand, holds news values (besides “newspaper agenda” and “relevancy”) which are more prone to “the power elite” and “magnitude” (29 news out of 31 news), “follow ups” (27 news out of 31 news), and “surprise” (12 news out of 31 news).

This findings show that though there are similarities in newspaper formats but once it operates in different regions, the news values of a news is specifically influenced by other factors such as the newspaper ownerships. For example, the *New Straits Times* (owned by Media Prima) has great bond with the government party (<http://www.pressreference.com/Ky-Ma/Malaysia.html>, 3.7.2009), where this newspaper is tend to report news with great elite authority with huge impact. *The Times* is a national natured newspaper which reports news with great magnitude news value in it.

**Table 1.3.**  
Main News Values in Quality Newspapers, *The Times* and *New Straits Times*

Num.	Newspaper	Main News Value
1.	<i>The Times</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnitude</li> <li>• Surprise</li> <li>• Bad News and the Power Elite</li> </ul>
2.	<i>New Straits Times</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Power Elite and Magnitude</li> <li>• Follow Ups</li> <li>• Surprise</li> </ul>

(Note: Table shows that *The Times* and *New Straits Times* with its main news values in the newspapers).

*Third, Average Number of News Value in Popular Newspaper.* The newspapers of *Harian Metro* and *The Daily Mirror* share the same amount of news value in determining the main news stories in front page newspaper which is 3 for lowest news values, and 6 for highest news values.

**Table 1.4.**  
News Values in Popular Newspaper, *Harian Metro* and *The Daily Mirror*

Num.	Newspaper	Average News Value	Highest News Value	Lowest News Value
1.	<i>Harian Metro</i>	4	6	3
2.	<i>The Daily Mirror</i>	2	6	3

(Note: Table shows that *Harian Metro* and *The Daily Mirror* with main news values).

\*Half part of the same table stated above.

Highest news values consist of “entertainment”, “bad news”, “newspaper agenda”, and “relevant”. Accordingly, “entertainment” is the highest news value for *Harian Metro*, while “bombshell” or “shocking news” are the highest news value for *The Daily Mirror* apart from “relevancy” and “newspaper

agenda". This findings also highlights that *The Daily Mirror* uses less news value but sensational enough and ideal for its newspaper format. For instance, stories with "surprise" news values related to celebrities or any human interest is very bright idea and sensational enough to be selected as the front page lead news of the newspaper. "Brother 7, and Sister 8, Killed in a Car Crash"; "Mum Fights for Life after Tragedy"; "Macca in love"; and "Exclusive Secret Romantic Caribbean Hol with Millionaire Nancy" are some of the exclusive news that are sensational and are sure to trigger human interests. Targeted readers for popular newspaper are completely different the from quality newspaper readers (Hansen, 1994) where this is the factor of determinant for its different news selection (Alexander, 1995).

The outcome of this research also exposes that popular newspapers uses more news values but sensational natured, compared to the quality newspapers. The nature of news value applied is almost the same in Malaysia and in Britain as well. The result of this research supports the findings of S. Allern (2002), whom studied about news values in the front page of newspapers in Norway. Not surprisingly, he found that news values for popular newspaper in Norway, *Verdens Geng* (VG) consist of violence, crisis, snatch theft which are completely contrast of Norway's quality newspaper *Dagens Noeringsshlir* (Business Daily) which reports about businesses, share market, interest rate and so forth in its front page.

**Table 1.5.**  
Main News Values in Popular Newspapers, *Harian Metro* and *The Daily Mirror*

Num.	Newspaper	Main News Values
1.	<i>Harian Metro</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Surprise</li> <li>• Bad News</li> </ul>
2.	<i>The Daily Mirror</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Bad News</li> <li>• Celebrity</li> </ul>

(Note: The table shows main news value in *Harian Metro* and *The Daily Mirror*).

The amount of news values is similar for both countries which is 3. This tremendous finding proves that the newspaper format influence news that published and thus news value holds by this newspaper is generally the same wherever it operates (Allern, 2002; and Gripsrud, 2008). However, it is undeniable that current decision in selecting and producing news greatly influenced by factors such as advertisements (Meech, 2008); journalistic view, rating, reader's stress, advertisers, public relation practitioners, politicians, medias and so on (Conley, 2002; and Venables, 2005); where these scholars have divided these into internal and external stresses that believed to influence news. Internal stresses are within the media organization with operational factors includes composition, continuum, not properly clarified, frequency. News organization structure, inexpedient influence especially if the news is

from the media itself. Meanwhile, external stresses are from non-governmental organization, politicians, public relation practitioners, corporate speakers, news language. To identify which factors influence the most in production of news in the newspapers in both countries, more detailed research should be conducted in the future for empirical affirmation.

### **B. TYPE OF NEWS IN NEWSPAPERS**

We also studied type of news that frequently published in the front page lead of this research newspaper samples. Hence, P. Brighton and D. Foy analysis had been used as a basis to categorize all these news items where they have categorized it into 9 types which are Business, Celebrity, Domestic News, Education, Health & Beauty, International News, International Politics, Op-ed, and Sport (Brighton & Foy, 2008). In this research, categories suggested by P. Brighton and D. Foy have been slightly modified to suit the need of this research. The genres in this research are as follows: (1) Economics, Business and Trade; (2) Celebrity; (3) Domestic News; (4) Education; (5) Health & Beauty; (6) International News; (7) Politics; (8) International Politics; (9) Sport; (10) Social Problem, includes social problems and issues related to sexual misconduct; (11) Crime, includes crime related to sexual misconduct; (12) Accident; (13) Unusualness; and (14) Others.

All four newspapers, published different type of news from one another, with *The Times* having highest news published under the category of economics, business and commerce; while the *New Straits Times* publishes news on politics. Followed by this is *Harian Metro* with social problem; and *The Daily Mirror* with crime themed news.

*First, Newspaper of The Times.* Out of 31 front page lead news of *The Times* newspaper: 10 news stories (32.3%) are news based on economics, business, and commerce and internal country news. Other news are about politics (3 news), international politics (2 news), crime (2 news), sports (2 news), and social problems (1 news).

This research findings are consistent with J. Harrison (2006), saying that newspaper format will influence anything selected as news item. For instance, *The Times* are renowned among the professionals and business people because the news are about economics, internal country news, which has great impact on people of Britain.

*Second, Newspaper of News Straits Times.* Generally speaking, the *New Straits Times* and *The Times* share the same targeted readers. Detailed studies on the *New Straits Times* and *The Sunday Times* show that most of the news are about politics affairs. Yet these findings are highly influenced by the General Election 2008 conducted on 8 March 2008 in Malaysia. Amount 27 news out of 31 main news of the front page lead are consist of political news, which is 87.1% from the entire news analyzed. Others are health and beauty (2 news), and internal country reports (2 news).

To ensure these findings are free from the influence of General Election on March 2008 in Malaysia, researchers had done a random studies on NST Media Online for the whole month of August 2008. Words as “Minister”, “Accidents”, and “Sex” selected and typed into the search box column where it keeps news archives for NSTP Groups.

Amount 213 news published under the word “Minister” for the month August 2008, and 16 news for the word “Accidents” and “Sex”. This proofs that (generally, not scientifically), weather it is election or not, the *New Straits Times* does publish most of its news based on political affairs. In addition, news title for the entire month of July and August 2008 attached to view that NST is more prone to publish political news stories.

*Third, Newspaper of Harian Metro.* The newspaper of *Harian Metro*, from same NST Groups, shows different findings compared to the *New Straits Times*. Hence, *Harian Metro* as a popular newspaper includes sensational news for its targeted readers whom mostly are home makers. In this context, apart from factors such as newspaper format, issues like “who will read this newspaper” or “who are the targeted audience” influence the news published in *Harian Metro*.

Findings show that the front page lead news of *Harian Metro* and *Metro Sunday* are not related to General Election 2008 in Malaysia. Most of the news published are concerned with social problems in Malaysia where 22 news out of 29 news (75.9%) are about social illness related issues. Additional news are consist of political news (3 news), education (2 news), crime (1 news), and others (1 news).

*Harian Metro* and *New Straits Times* though presents different type of news, but still recorded as the most famous newspaper among people because it serves different targeted audience whom varies from housewives to business people. Different news values drag different readers to different newspapers. For example, news readers whom are concerned with national policies are less attracted to sensational news and vice versa provided in most sections in *Harian Metro*. This group of target audience who look for serious news will go for NST (*New Straits Times*) which establishing its own group of loyal readers for over 150 years.

At the same time, *Harian Metro* is currently rated as top tabloid in Malaysia with more than two million readers ([http://adtimes.nstp.com.my/circulation\\_readership/hm\\_cr.htm](http://adtimes.nstp.com.my/circulation_readership/hm_cr.htm), 3.7.2009). Though *Harian Metro's* news value resembles “entertainment”, “surprise”, “bad news” with not so much on educational or academic value but readers are attracted to these types of news material because that is the type of news they wanted – for pleasure and relaxation and not purposely to gain serious knowledge.

This situation supports J. Harrison’s description on tabloidization which not only related to its size but also the news values in the selection of news for publication. Sometimes, sensational news in front page of tabloid are common stories featuring common people but the tabloidization made it high valued

news items (Harrison, 2005). Followed this, those news items are given wide coverage to trigger people interest to buy those newspapers.

*Fourth, Newspaper of The Daily Mirror.* Total of 18 news analyzed, most of the news are about crime (11 news or 61%). Other news are consist of celebrity stories (3 news), internal country reports (2 news), accidents (1 news), sports (1 news), and odd news (1 news).

Both *The Daily Mirror* and *Harian Metro* puts sensational news in front page of the newspapers. This explained by Franklin (in Harrison, 2006), saying that popular newspaper focuses on sensational news in contrast with quality newspaper which focuses on human interest such as political news. We agree with the argument and the content analysis informed that both popular newspapers in Malaysia and Britain chosen for this research show similar patterns. Again, in light of our support to the newspaper industry, we argue that the popular newspapers in both countries could have their freedom to choose the types of news to be published in the newspapers. If they need to limit the selection and bounded to certain serious news values, there will be no distinction between the popular and the serious newspapers anymore. In this modern era with the popularization of the internet, when our mind is closed to openness, it is a signal that the print media is dying. We again reaffirm the argument that, with this openness in mind, it will help the print media industry to grow, providing a clear platform for them to operate and granting more diverse ideas to go around the minds of the readers.

The different political view of both newspapers also did not influence news values of the newspapers. *Daily Mirror* which is a left-wing newspaper holds similar news values in comparison to *Harian Metro* which is supporting the government in office of Malaysia. In this respect, we argue that news values in the newspapers are not influenced by political views, but the format of the newspaper plays a stronger role.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it is concluded that news values in quality newspapers and popular newspapers in Malaysia and Britain are (geographically) surprisingly similar. This, however, is not a surprise if we look into the practice of journalists around the world; they are basically trained with similar ways. Practice wise, they are a group of people with similar build up. What is being seen interesting to one journalist might probably see similarly, especially if they are operating in a similar newspaper format. Not denying the influence of personal bias among journalists and other fine qualitative factors that might influence the news selection, this research however reveals a clear conclusion that the newspaper format is one very crucial determiner of how news is selected. That of course, effects the news values chosen in a particular newspaper and the types of news published.

This research, even though inspired by W. Donsbach's thought about having a comprehensive model of how news is produced is far from reaching

this ambitious aim (Donsbach, 2004). However, this research might be able to provide useful insights on a very fundamental matter of journalism – news values in two different countries that informed the selection of news published in the selected newspapers.

Understanding how news is constructed before it is published brings about some understanding and agreement with H. Moloth and M. Lester (1999) that news are being published by a group of professional people who know their stuff. They who have similar build up decide news similarly. However, they are bounded with many other factors, and one of them is where they work. In other words, it is not only about the ownership of the newspaper, but its format as well. Two newspapers from the same publishing house could be very different due to its different format and target audience.

Future researches will look more enhanced if the research is not limited to front page lead news only but explores newspaper variations from more countries to consolidate more tremendous findings. Varieties in methodology is yet another way to increase research findings and thus to identify any other potential factors that influence the selection and production of news.

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**Attachment:**The *New Straits Times* (July 2008)

Num	Date	Main Title for News in Front Page
1	1 July 2008	Anwar Assured Safety, Leaves Envoy's Home
2	2 July 2008	Sex Charge Classified as Sodomy
3	3 July 2008	Ex-Convicts Among Councillors?
4	4 July 2008	Why Now? That is the Question - Datuk Seri Najib Razak on the Statutory Declaration by Private Investigator P. Balasubramaniam Linking Him with Murdered Mongolian Woman Altantuya Shaariibuu
5	5 July 2008	Flip Flop Bombshell - Police Probe if there are Hidden Agendas Behind both Sworn Statement by Private Investigator
6	6 July 2008	Dirty Politics - "I Have to Accept the Fact that Politics in the Country Has Become Dirty. There are Certain Quarters Willing to Do Anything to Achieve Their Aims" - Datuk Seri Najib
7	7 July 2008	Mystery Of The Missing Private Eye
8	8 July 2008	PM : Slander an Act of Treason
9	9 July 2008	A Global Threat - Challenge Warning Facing the D8 from the G8
10	10 July 2008	Easing Housing Loan Burden
11	11 July 2008	Abdullah Confirms He Will Hand Over the UMNO Party Leadership to Najib - PM: I'll Step Down in 2010
12	12 July 2008	Visa Bribe Arrests - ACA Detains Top Immigration Officer, Two Datuks Also Held in Major Swoop
13	13 July 2008	Another Top Officer Nabbed
14	14 July 2008	A Paradigm Shift is Taking Place...In A Positive Way - Thought Times, Good Times
15	15 July 2008	No-Show the Rally that Didn't Happen - Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim Defies Police Order to Give His Statement on the Sodomy Allegation
16	16 July 2008	Deadline for Anwar - Turn Up at 2pm Today or Face Arrest
17	17 July 2008	Anwar Arrested
18	18 July 2008	What is He Afraid of? - Anwar Refused to Give Blood Sample for DNA Test, Possibility of Bringing in Foreign Medical Expert to Conduct Test
19	19 July 2008	PM Tells Anwar: Accept DNA Tests
20	20 July 2008	We Didn't Force Anwar to Strip Naked
21	21 July 2008	PM and PAS in Talks - No Conditions were Set's at Meetings
22	22 July 2008	Serve & Volley - IGP Sues for Defamation, See You in Court, Says Anwar
23	23 July 2008	Lions Share - Singapore Claims Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Around Pedra Branca
24	24 July 2008	Driving Datuk Ahmad - Cabinet Expresses Dismay Over Terengganu's Decision to Replace Perdana's with Mercedes Benzes but MB Remains Defiant ...
25	25 July 2008	The Merc Perk Controversy - Cost Wrench
26	26 July 2008	Perdana First - State Must Continue to Use Proton as Official Car



27	27 July 2008	Changes to Free Young Minds – Proposed Amendments to the University Colleges Act 1971
28	28 July 2008	Protons Seeks Answers – What’s the Beef about the Perdana V6 Executive ?
29	29 July 2008	Merger Push in Perak – Perak Barisan Chief Leads Charge for Talks with PAS to Form New State Government
30	30 July 2008	Investigations into Sodomy Claim – Probe Will Go On, Says Syed Hamid, Drop It, Says Anwar
31	31 July 2008	Sex, Video and MCA – Another Top Leader Implicated as Party Polls Loom

## The New Straits Times (August 2008)

Num	Date	Main Title for News in Front Page
1	1 August 2008	Safe Haven – Anwar Opts for the Safest Seat, Denies He’s Rushing it Because of Rumours that He Will Soon be Charged with Committing Sodomy
2	2 August 2008	Petrol Price Floats from Sept 1
3	3 August 2008	Cooperatives on a Leash
4	4 August 2008	Danger Above the Crack are Showing
5	5 August 2008	Missing Evidence – Drugs Worth RM 1 Million Stolen from Johor Police Headquarters
6	6 August 2008	Flyover Fiasco: ACA Gets Cracking
7	7 August 2008	Anwar Cries Conspiracy – PM: No Itsn’s
8	8 August 2008	No Black Eye, No Handcuffs, No Riots, No Untoward Incidents. Unlike 1998, Anwar Arrived in Court in His Own Car, Accompanied by His Family and a Battery of Lawyers.
9	9 August 2008	Flame On! – The Greatest Show on Earth Starts with a Bang
10	10 August 2008	RT Online to Foster Unity
11	11 August 2008	Govt to Revise Existing Contracts – Construction Industry Faces Changes in the Light of Rising Cost
12	12 August 2008	Drug ‘Party’ in the Lock-Up
13	13 August 2008	Maybe It’s Me, Says Labuan MP – ACA Graft Probe: Top Sabah Politician Goes Public to ‘Clear My Good Name’
14	14 August 2008	Its Arif Versus Anwar – BN Names its Man for Battle of Permatang Pauh
15	15 August 2008	Friends and Foes – Battle of Permatang Pauh: Arif Shah Has No Qualms about Taking on His Former Political Mentor Anwar Ibrahim
16	16 August 2008	Bound for Glory – Gold or Silver? It’s RM 1m Or RM 300, 000 for Chong Wei
17	17 August 2008	Battle for Permatang Pauh – 3 in the Race
18	18 August 2008	Violence Condemned – Attacks on Press Photographers Covering Permatang Pauh by-Election
19	19 August 2008	RM 1 Million Syabu Theft Case ‘Solved’
20	20 August 2008	One Year On – And Killer Still Walks Among Us – Nurin’s Family Suing Police
21	21 August 2008	Money in the Bag – And Sexual Favours, too, ACA Nabs Two PKR Executive Councillors and Four Others

22	22 August 2008	Rail Bad! - PM Takes a Morning Rush Hour Ride on the KTM Komuter and LRT to Gauge Quality of Service and is None too Pleased with What He Sees
23	23 August 2008	Fill Up for Less - Fuel Prices Down Effective Today
24	24 August 2008	Exco Duo to Face the Rap
25	25 August 2008	Permatang Pauh by-Election - Najib Warns: Opposition Pact is Fragile, Anwar's 'Has Become a Tool for DAP'
26	26 August 2008	Five Face 16 Graft Charges
27	27 August 2008	It's Anwar as Expected - PKR Leader Makes His Way Back to Parliament
28	28 August 2008	Smashed! - Pay-for-Clearance Rackets - ACA Nabs 28 Puspakom Officers, 19 Runners in Biggest Swoop Ever. More Arrest Expected. Tens of Thousands of Vehicles Approved as Roadworthy by these Officers Now Face Recall for Re-Inspection
29	29 August 2008	Graft in Puspakom - How the ACA Cracked it Wide Open
30	30 August 2008	What's in it for You - Budget 2009. Allocation: RM207.9b, Operating Expenditure: RM154.2b, Development Expenditure: RM53.7b, Deficit: 4.8% of GDP
31	31 August 2008	We Shall Overcome - PM Calls on Malaysians to Unite Against All Foes and Challenges