

Journalism in 280 Characters: Examining Dominant Issues and Communicative Functions in the X Posts of Mainstream Journalists in Ghana

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Abstract

The increasing prevalence of social media platforms has significantly transformed contemporary journalistic practices, altering how journalists gather information, disseminate news, and engage with their audiences. This study investigates the activities of mainstream journalists on X (formerly Twitter) by analysing the primary issues they discuss and the communicative functions their posts perform. Utilising Agenda-Setting and the Hybrid Media System theories, the study employed a document analysis of 873 posts from four selected mainstream journalists on X. The findings indicate that journalists' posts predominantly focus on issues related to politics, economics, sports, and entertainment, with political and economic topics receiving substantial attention. Additionally, the study identified various communicative functions performed by journalists on the platform, including audience engagement, story promotion, content curation, personal branding, connection with sources, organisational promotion, advertising, and monitoring developments. Among these, audience engagement and story promotion were found to be the most prevalent functions. These results suggest that while X facilitates interaction between journalists and their audiences, allowing for hybrid roles beyond traditional reporting, it concurrently reinforces journalists' agenda-setting influence by enabling them to spotlight specific issues and direct public attention within networked communication environments. The study concludes that the use of X by journalists illustrates the ongoing integration of social media into professional journalism within a hybrid media ecosystem where traditional journalistic norms coexist with platform-driven communication practices.

Keywords

Journalists on X, Digital Journalism, Hybrid Media System, Communicative

1. Introduction

The rise of digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram has ushered in a significant transformation in global journalism, altering the processes of news production, distribution, and public engagement (Maurer & Nuernbergk, 2025). However, journalism on X in particular is increasingly performed within the constraints of 280 characters, where journalists must condense complex information into short and visible posts. This platform specific mode of communication shapes not only how news is produced but also how issues are prioritised and communicated to audiences in real time (Klinger & Svensson, 2015). However, journalists are required to adhere to the 280-character limit when reporting on X in particular. This forces them to distill complex facts into brief, easily readable paragraphs. This platform-specific communication method shapes not only the creation of news but also the prioritisation and real-time dissemination of information to audiences (Klinger & Svensson, 2015).

Social media has broadened opportunities for participatory communication, facilitating the democratisation of content creation and the dissemination of knowledge across societies (Agboola, 2014; Bruns, 2018). With millions of users worldwide relying on these platforms for information, discussion, and economic activity (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2021), they have become essential components of modern media ecosystems.

Despite initial skepticism and resistance from professionals, social media, particularly X, has gradually become normalised within mainstream journalistic practices (Molyneux & McGregor, 2022). Journalists increasingly depend on X to gather information, share news, monitor developments, engage with audiences, and establish professional credibility (Bruns, 2018). It is important to recognise that X is not a neutral communication platform; rather, it is shaped by specific features such as character limits, hashtags, retweets, threads, and algorithmic amplification. These characteristics affect the visibility of content, how users interact with it, and the distribution of journalistic materials. As a result, they influence both the prominence of certain issues and the communicative strategies that journalists use. Empirical studies predominantly from Western contexts demonstrate that X serves as a crucial platform for agenda-setting and public discourse (e.g. Barnard, 2016; Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018; Hedman, 2020; Bruns, 2018; Maurer & Nuernbergk, 2025; Molyneux & McGregor, 2022). However, journalists' utilisation of this platform often perpetuates existing power hierarchies through elite-centric interactions and practices reliant on the platform (Laor, 2022; Maurer & Nuernbergk, 2025). These dynamics raise broader epistemological questions concerning verification, credibility, and the distinctions between professional journalism and networked communication (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). The studies emphasise

the significance of X in journalistic practices, yet they frequently concentrate on Western settings. Additionally, they pay less attention to the common themes and communication functions seen in journalists' writings, instead emphasising particular techniques like sourcing and participation.

In Ghana, the emergence of digital platforms has similarly transformed journalistic routines and the influence of media. Ghana's comparatively high levels of press freedom, dynamic and diverse media ecosystem, and growing internet penetration make it an especially significant case within the Global South. Journalists' use of digital platforms like X is also influenced by structural issues including resource limitations, political parallelism, and changing professional standards. Generally, studies have examined how social media has transformed journalism in Ghana in the areas of newsgathering, sourcing, news reporting and news organisations' perception on the use of social media in journalism (Zakaria & Ofori-Birikorang, 2018). In relation to X as a platform, existing studies indicate that it plays an increasingly significant role in intermedia agenda-setting, civic discourse, and journalistic storytelling, especially concerning political and socioeconomic issues (Agyei, 2019; Nti, 2015). Recently, Adjin-Tettey & Etrue (2025) have highlighted how Ghanaian journalists and other stakeholders utilise data-driven practices on X to foster civic engagement and public debate, underscoring the platform's potential to mediate power dynamics and promote participatory discourse. The body of literature above suggests that the literature on journalism and X has focused on specific practices, such as data journalism or agenda-setting, rather than providing a comprehensive overview of mainstream journalists' daily activities on the platform. Furthermore, these studies never offer a methodical examination of the subjects that journalists prioritise or the communication roles that their posts perform over time.

Consequently, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding how professional journalists in Ghana engage with X in their routine journalistic practice. Specifically, there has been limited examination of the primary issues they emphasise and the communicative functions their posts perform on X. The present study fills two significant gaps in the literature: a conceptual gap concerning the scant information on communicative functions as a unit of analysis in the studies of digital journalism, and an empirical gap concerning the inadequate literature on the systematic analysis of journalists' posts on X. To address this gap, the present study explores the thematic focus and communicative functions of posts made by Ghanaian mainstream journalists on X, contributing to broader discussions on journalism, platform power, and the hybridisation of journalistic practices in the global south contexts. In this study, communicative functions indicate the roles that these posts play, whereas dominant issues refer to the thematic categories that appear most frequently in the journalists' posts, as determined by patterns of repetition and salience.

The study was guided by two main questions:

RQ1. What are the dominant issues found in the posts of the selected main-

stream journalists on X?

RQ2. What are the communicative functions performed by the posts of the selected mainstream journalists on X?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Journalism and X

A significant body of research indicates that X (formerly, Twitter) has emerged as a key platform in modern journalistic practice, transforming the ways in which journalists collect information, distribute news, build their professional identities, and interact with authority. The global literature reveals an extensive adoption of X by journalists, although the consequences of this adoption are still a topic of debate.

Research from the global north indicates that X has become an integral part of journalists' professional routines. [Laor \(2022\)](#) notes that around 75% of journalists in Western societies have an X account, highlighting the platform's significance in agenda-setting and public discourse. However, despite X's technological potential for promoting pluralism and openness, [Laor's \(2022\)](#) study of Israeli journalists uncovers a paradox: rather than fostering democratised debate, X primarily serves as an elite echo chamber dominated by journalists and politicians. While journalists continue to wield agenda setting power, the broader public is often marginalised, suggesting that the platform acts as a complementary extension of traditional media rather than a disruptive force. Concerns regarding elite dominance and the reproduction of hegemonic narratives have also emerged in critical analyses of X's role in journalism, where its use tends to reinforce existing power dynamics instead of challenging them.

The continuity of power is further exemplified by studies exploring how journalists incorporate X content into their news production. [Molyneux & McGregor \(2022\)](#) contend that journalists increasingly view tweets not only as sources that require verification but as legitimate content in their own right. Through their analysis of U.S. news stories that embed tweets, [Molyneux & McGregor \(2022\)](#) argue that journalists transfer a portion of their epistemic authority to X, thereby enhancing the platform's influence in shaping public discourse. [Ekström & Westlund \(2019\)](#) contextualise this phenomenon within broader epistemological concerns, asserting that journalism's increasing reliance on social media platforms raises fundamental questions regarding how knowledge claims are articulated, justified, and accepted. Their conceptualisation of "epistemologies of digital journalism" underscores how dependence on platforms like X makes it harder for journalists to make claims about truth, verification, and authority.

In addition to epistemic concerns, other studies have examined how X transforms journalistic norms and roles. Early research conducted by [Lasorsa et al \(2012\)](#) illustrates that journalists on X are increasingly persuaded to express personal opinions, which challenges the traditional norm of objectivity. They also selectively adopt practices related to transparency and accountability. However, this

negotiation of norms is not uniform: journalists affiliated with elite news organisations tend to be more cautious, preserving stronger gatekeeping roles and limiting engagement with non-elite participants. Similarly, the work of [Holton & Lewis \(2011\)](#) points out that journalists' use of humour on X correlates with opinion-sharing, personal disclosure, and interpersonal engagement. This suggests a shift towards more conversational and emotionally resonant communication, particularly among journalists from less prestigious outlets.

In furtherance, the platform's influence on branding and the construction of professional identity of journalists has also been a focal point of research. [Molyneux et al. \(2017\)](#) in their study establish that branding has become a standard aspect of journalists' X activity, taking place at individual, organisational, and institutional levels. While journalists primarily engage in both individual and organisational branding, this practice reveals tensions between authenticity and professionalism, as well as between self-promotion and loyalty to institutional values. Thus, X emerges as a dynamic space where journalistic identity is actively performed and negotiated, rather than passively represented.

Studies examining journalistic workflows underscore X's dual role as both a valuable resource and a source of risk. [Heravi & Harrower's \(2016\)](#) survey of Irish newsrooms indicates that journalists rely significantly on X for sourcing and breaking news, yet they express ongoing concerns regarding trust, verification, and the platform's unfiltered, fast-paced information environment. These insights resonate with [Ahmad's \(2010\)](#) ethnographic study of The Guardian, which depicts X as both a marketing and research tool that enhances traditional journalistic functions while becoming ingrained in hegemonic media discourse.

More recent large-scale studies illustrate how X use varies across different contexts. [Maurer & Nuenbergk's \(2025\)](#) analysis of nearly 10,000 tweets from German journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that these journalists played a crucial role in shaping public understanding of the crisis, often engaging closely with government officials and pro-government experts. Their findings suggest that X can serve as both a platform for watchdog journalism and a space for collaboration with political power, contingent on the specific issue and the journalists' orientation. Similarly, [Kapidzic et al. \(2022\)](#) demonstrate that the incorporation of tweets as sources in news articles aligns with established media logics, with tabloids more frequently citing non-elite voices, while quality media tends to privilege political and institutional actors.

In the Ghanaian context, scholarship is comparatively limited yet illuminating. [Nti's \(2015\)](#) study of Accra-based radio stations highlights that journalists primarily utilise social media, particularly X, for the timely dissemination of information, reaffirming its role as an extension of existing journalistic practices rather than as a transformative space. [Agyei's \(2019\)](#) exploration of intermedia agenda-setting further reveals X's increasing influence on online news agendas in Ghana, indicating a bidirectional relationship between social media and news websites. These findings imply that the platform occupies a central position within Ghana's evol-

ing hybrid media landscape, significantly affecting both news selection and circulation.

The literature further indicates that while X has become essential to journalistic practice, its democratic potential remains limited. Journalists utilise the platform for various purposes, including news dissemination, sourcing, branding, engagement, and agenda-setting; however, these practices often reinforce existing power structures, authority, and visibility. What remains underexplored, particularly in African contexts, is how individual journalists thematically frame issues and employ communicative functions on X over extended periods. This study seeks to address this gap by analysing the thematic patterns and communicative functions of mainstream Ghanaian journalists' posts on X, placing their practices within the larger discussions of hybridity, power, and journalistic authority.

2.2. Communicative Functions of Journalists' Activities on X

Extant research indicates that journalists' use of X encompasses a range of interconnected communicative functions that extend far beyond mere news dissemination, ultimately reshaping journalistic routines, norms, and professional identities. A fundamental role of this engagement is news sourcing and monitoring; journalists utilise X to track developing events, access statements from influential figures, and identify emerging issues in real time (Gehrke & Benetti, 2020). Bruns (2018) conceptualises this practice as part of journalists' ongoing monitoring of events, where X serves as a live news radar that enhances traditional newsgathering methods. However, this function also introduces increased risks of misinformation and pack journalism, necessitating careful verification and editorial judgment. A closely related function is content curation and story promotion. Journalists actively select, contextualise, and amplify news items through retweets, links, and commentary, thus guiding audience attention and reinforcing their agenda-setting power within networked publics (Barnard, 2016; Bruns, 2018). This curatorial role positions journalists as influential intermediaries who filter information flows while adapting to platform-driven logics of visibility and immediacy. Consequently, X becomes a pivotal space for promoting journalistic output and maintaining the relevance of news organisations in competitive media landscapes (Bruns, 2018).

Moreover, X enhances audience engagement and interaction, allowing journalists to solicit feedback, respond to users, and gauge public reactions through likes, comments, and replies (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018). While such engagement signals a commitment to openness and responsiveness, research indicates that it often coexists with enduring gatekeeping practices. This dynamic reflects a form of hybrid normalisation, where traditional professional norms are adapted rather than entirely abandoned (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018). Another communicative function of journalists' activities on X is establishing and sustaining connections with sources and professional networks. Journalists utilise the platform to maintain relationships with political figures, experts, and colleagues, thereby re-

enforcing their integration within elite information networks (Barnard, 2016; Bruns, 2018). These interactions play a significant role in the circulation and legitimisation of information while also influencing the parameters of journalistic authority.

Further studies have also emphasised that personal and professional branding are key aspects of journalists' use of X. Journalists strategically combine professional content with personal expression to cultivate authenticity, credibility, and uniqueness, aligning with social media principles that reward visibility and individual voice (Bruns, 2018; Hedman, 2020). These branding practices contribute to a hybrid journalistic identity where personal identity, professional standards, and platform characteristics intersect (Barnard, 2016).

The literature indicates that the communicative functions of journalists on X, such as monitoring developments, sourcing information, curating and promoting content, engaging audiences, connecting with sources, and branding, are intricately connected. These functions demonstrate how X reconfigures, rather than replaces, traditional journalistic roles within a hybrid media system shaped by platform power and participatory communication.

3. Theoretical Framework

Agenda setting theory

The foundational premise of Agenda-Setting Theory, first articulated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, posits that while the media may not dictate what people think, it significantly influences what issues they consider important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This theory highlights the media's powerful role in shaping public discourse by strategically emphasising certain topics, issues, and individuals over others through its coverage (Schmierbach et al., 2022). The process of salience transfer from the media agenda to the public agenda marks a pivotal shift in understanding the relationship between media and audiences, challenging views of limited media effects (Buturoiu et al., 2023). Subsequent research expanded this framework to introduce a "second level" of agenda-setting, suggesting that media not only influence audiences on what to think about but also shape how they perceive those issues by spotlighting specific attributes (Groshek & Groshek, 2013). This evolution encompasses a nuanced understanding of issue salience, which indicates that the prominence and frequency of issues in media content signal their importance to audiences (McCombs, 2005). By constructing the public agenda in this manner, the media directs attention toward certain social, political, or economic matters while relegating others to the background (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The rise of social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter), has further transformed the landscape of public discourse, prompting a reevaluation of established communication theories such as agenda-setting (Gilardi et al., 2021). Within this context, mainstream journalists who can be viewed as representatives of traditional media play a crucial role. Affiliated with established media organisations, these journalists select, frame, and disseminate news content,

thereby shaping the media agenda (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Their professional activities on platforms like X extend the agenda-setting function of their respective media organisations into digital spaces. By posting about a range of topics, including politics, economic developments, sports, and entertainment, journalists effectively reproduce and circulate the priorities of mainstream media within the social media environment. In this capacity, their posts act as extensions of institutional news agendas, making Agenda-Setting Theory an appropriate framework for analysing how the issues they highlight contribute to shaping public attention in the digital public sphere.

The Hybrid Media System

The contemporary media landscape is best understood not as a straightforward transition from old to new media, but rather as a system characterised by hybridity. Chadwick (2013, 2017) conceptualises this environment as a hybrid media system, where legacy media institutions, digital platforms, political actors, and citizens engage within dynamic and interdependent information flows. Hybridity encompasses not only technological convergence but also the coexistence and recombination of different media logics. Traditional journalistic norms such as gatekeeping, verification, and agenda-setting continue to endure, yet they are increasingly influenced by platform logics that emphasise speed, visibility, interactivity, and algorithmic amplification.

A key feature of the hybrid media system is the transformation of the information cycle. Instead of functioning through a linear, institutionally driven news cycle, contemporary political communication unfolds through a recursive and cross-platform circulation (Chadwick, 2013). News stories traverse various channels, moving between broadcast media, online news platforms, and social media sites like X. In this milieu, they are amplified, reframed, and contested before re-emerging in mainstream coverage. This iterative process results in what Chadwick refers to as news-making assemblages, temporary coalitions of journalists, political elites, citizens, and platforms that collaboratively shape public discourse.

In this framework, mainstream journalists maintain their institutional authority while navigating a more collaborative communicative landscape. Molyneux & McGregor (2022) contend that journalists are increasingly integrating tweets directly into news articles, recognising platform content as legitimate journalistic material. This practice results in a partial transfer of authority to social media platforms, while journalists reinforce their professional roles as curators and interpreters of information. Similarly, Bruns (2018) emphasises the participatory nature of digital environments, where “prosumers” processes blur the lines between content creators and audiences. However, this trend does not indicate a decline in professional journalism. Instead, highlights a process of hybrid normalisation in which journalists adapt the features of digital platforms to fit their established professional routines (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018).

The hybrid media system framework, originally developed through analyses of Western democracies, offers valuable insights that resonate strongly within Afri-

can media landscapes. In Ghana, traditional media institutions such as radio, television, and newspapers maintain significant influence, while digital platforms have emerged as crucial venues for political communication and journalistic practices. Social media, particularly X, plays an integral role in news sourcing, story promotion, and civic discourse (Adjin-Tettey & Etrue, 2025; Nti, 2015). The existing scholarship on the thematic priorities and communicative functions of posts by Ghanaian journalists is insufficient. Therefore, there is a need to apply the hybrid media system framework to investigate how professional journalists navigate authority, identity, and engagement within a media landscape characterised by the coexistence and interaction of legacy and digital logics.

4. Materials and Methods

The qualitative content analysis design was employed to explore the activities of mainstream journalists on X. This platform was selected because of its pivotal position in contemporary journalism, its real-time information flow, and its capacity to establish agendas, increase exposure, and captivate audiences (Hamad et al., 2016). This design approach aims to provide insights into the social environment of these journalists by examining their posts (texts) (Mayring, 2021). The wealth of data in textual form necessitates a thorough analysis of both manifest and latent meanings to effectively interpret the information (Treadwell & Davis, 2020). This methodology facilitated the robust identification of patterns and themes within the data. As a result, the issues highlighted in the X posts, along with the communicative functions these posts serve, were examined in this analysis. This qualitative design aligns with the interpretive nature inherent in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Relying solely on qualitative content analysis in this study is deliberate because it aligns with the objectives of this study, which seeks to examine the dominant themes in the X posts of the selected journalists as well as examine the communicative functions of the posts (Bowen, 2009). This position is in consonance with Creswell & Poth's (2018) postulation that methodological sufficiency, rather than multiplicity, should guide methodological decisions. This method allowed for the systematic examination of naturally occurring data without researcher-induced bias. In furtherance the use of posts from X is justified by Witzenberger & Pfeffer (2024)'s assertion that journalists' accounts on X have distinct characteristics, which, unlike anonymous or less credible sources, are tethered to established media outlets and adhere to professional ethical standards, thereby lending greater accountability and transparency to their online activities.

The study purposefully selected the X accounts of mainstream journalists who actively maintain their accounts on the X platform. Mainstream journalists refer to those working within established media organisations with significant audience reach and influence within the Ghanaian media landscape. These journalists utilise the platform for both professional and personal engagements. An examination of their accounts reveals consistent posting activity throughout the study period. The sample consists of four active journalists with verified accounts: @Serwaa_Ami-

here, @Manasseh_Azure, @berlamundi, and @UmaruSanda. These journalists were purposively selected to represent various genders, professional roles such as news anchors, editors and reporters and media platforms, including broadcast and digital journalism; as well as their high visibility and activity levels on X. These make them suitable cases for examining mainstream journalistic practices in digital environments. Print Journalism reporters were not included because of their inactivity on the X platform. While the sample size is relatively small, the selection prioritises depth of analysis and the examination of influential actors whose activities are indicative of broader professional practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Data were collected from the X handles of these selected professional journalists over a period of four months, from May to August 2025. This timeframe was determined based on considerations of data currency (Adjin-Tetteh & Etrue, 2025; Appiah-Adjei et al., 2025). The timeframe was chosen to capture regular journalistic activities over a sustained period, rather than just specific events that led to spikes in posting behaviour. The individual posts from the selected journalists served as the unit of analysis. In total, 873 tweets were retrieved from their accounts during the designated study period. Specifically, @Serwaa_Amihere contributed 428 tweets, followed by @Manasseh_Azure with 217 tweets, @berlamundi with 133 tweets, and @UmaruSanda with 95 tweets. Data were manually collected from the publicly accessible X accounts of selected journalists. The dataset included original tweets and retweets, while replies and deleted posts were excluded to ensure analytical consistency. In instances where tweets were part of a thread, each tweet was considered an individual unit of analysis (Hamad et al., 2016). The retrieved posts encompassed all original tweets and retweets, which were essential to the study as they examine the daily routines of journalists on social media. Excluding any activities from their accounts could have undermined the analysis and interpretations. The data were analysed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used as a method in qualitative content analysis to systematically identify patterns and categories within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each selected post was carefully reviewed and coded using a coding guide. The coding process incorporated both deductive and inductive methods. Initial categories were informed by existing literature on journalistic activities on social media, but were considered as analytical sensitising concepts rather than fixed themes. This approach facilitated the emergence of context-specific practices during the analysis. The coding scheme was meticulously refined throughout the analytical process, facilitated by continuous comparison across the dataset. The coding procedure comprised three distinct stages: open coding, which focused on identifying initial concepts and recurring patterns; axial coding, which involved the categorisation of related codes into more comprehensive themes; and selective coding, which further refined and consolidated the predominant themes and communicative functions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). This iterative refinement of the coding scheme ensured a robust and nuanced understanding of the data through ongoing comparative analyses. The study employed two main coding dimensions: issue cate-

gories and communicative functions. The issue categories were developed to capture the main topics that journalists focused on in their posts. Political issues included content related to governance, elections, political actors, and public administration, while economic issues covered financial matters, business activities, and economic policies such as inflation and fuel prices. Social issues were treated as a broad category that captures matters affecting everyday life and public welfare. Within this category, education, health, and legal issues were examined more closely as subcategories to provide deeper insight into these important areas. Personal posts referred to content where journalists shared aspects of their private lives or personal experiences. Sports and entertainment were combined into one category because they often overlap in media content, covering areas such as sporting events, arts, culture, and celebrities. In the same way, agriculture and energy were grouped together to capture issues related to farming, food production, power supply, and fuel. Religion covered posts that focused on faith, religious events, or expressions of belief. The communicative functions focused on what each post was doing. Some posts were mainly for sharing information, providing straightforward news or updates. Others were designed to engage audiences, for example by asking questions or inviting responses. Personal posts reflected the journalist's personal views or interpretations of issues. Promotional posts were used to draw attention to programmes, articles, or other media content. Personal branding posts helped journalists build their professional identity or visibility. Some posts were used for sourcing, where journalists sought information, clarification, or leads from the public. Finally, monitoring posts were those that provided real-time updates, especially during ongoing events.

The researcher paid close attention to the dominant issues or themes present in each post, as well as the communicative functions of these posts. Furthermore, reflective memo writing was utilised throughout the analysis to document analytical decisions and emerging interpretations (Mortelmans, 2024; Richards, 2020). These memos also functioned as a reflective instrument to improve analytical transparency and maintain consistency during the coding process. Regarding ethical considerations, the publicly available nature of the data negated the need for the researcher to obtain consent from account owners before conducting the analysis. Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were of paramount concern. The focus remained on adhering to professional standards and methodologies rather than scrutinizing personal characteristics, despite utilizing public accounts of verified journalists. Sensitive or potentially harmful information was intentionally avoided, and interpretations were framed in a way that aimed to minimize reputational damage. Every phase of data collection and analysis was guided by an ethical framework, acknowledging the limitations of complete anonymisation in the context of public accounts (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023). Furthermore, the selected journalists on the platform X were directly contacted by the author to inform them of the use of their posts in this study, reflecting a commitment to transparency and ethical engagement.

5. Findings and Discussion

Table 1. Total number of X posts within the period of study by the selected journalists.

Month	Total posts N (%)	@Manasseh_Azure N (%)	@UmaruSanda N (%)	@Serwaa_Amihere N (%)	@berlamundi N (%)
May	294 (33.7%)	106 (12.2%)	26 (3.0%)	119 (13.6%)	43 (4.9%)
June	184 (21.2%)	66 (7.6%)	23 (2.6%)	76 (8.7%)	19 (2.2%)
July	203 (23.3%)	25 (2.9%)	15 (1.7%)	129 (14.8%)	34 (3.9%)
August	190 (21.8%)	20 (2.3%)	29 (3.3%)	104 (11.9%)	37 (4.2%)
Total	873 (100%)	217 (24.9)	95 (10.9%)	428 (49%)	133 (15.2%)

(Source: the author).

Frequency of posts by the selected journalists on X

The first objective sought to examine the dominant issues found in the posts of the selected mainstream journalists. However, to provide a better appreciation of the activities of these mainstream journalists on X, the study sought to provide an overview of the frequency of tweets within the period of study. The table above establishes that the selected mainstream journalists posted 873 tweets within the four months period selected for this study. Out of this, @Serwaa_Amihere contributed 428 (49 percent), followed by @Manasseh_Azure with 217 (24.9%), @berlamundi with 133 (15.2%) and @UmaruSanda with 95 (10.9%) tweets. In terms of the monthly distribution of posts, the table shows that the selected journalists posted more tweets in the month of May 294 (33.7 percent). The month of July had 203 (23.3%) tweets, followed by August with 190 (21.8%) and June with 184 (21.2%) (Table 1).

5.1. Dominant Issues in the Posts of Selected Mainstream Journalists on X

Table 2. Dominant issues found in the posts of the selected mainstream journalists on X.

Dominant Issues	@Manasseh_Azure n (%)	@UmaruSanda n (%)	@Serwaa_Amihere n (%)	@berlamundi n (%)	Total n (%)
Politics	40 (4.6)	38 (4.3)	126 (14.4)	19 (2.2)	223 (25.5)
Religion	5 (0.6)	3 (0.4)	2 (0.2)	2 (0.2)	12 (1.4)
Economy	35 (4.0)	0 (0.0)	37 (4.2)	12 (1.4)	84 (9.6)
Social	86 (10)	32 (3.6)	98 (10.6)	32 (3.6)	247 (28)
Personal	36 (4.1)	20 (2.3)	90 (10.3)	68 (7.8)	214 (24.5)
Sports and Entertainment	15 (1.7)	3 (0.3)	51 (3.8)	0 (0.0)	69 (7.9)
Agriculture and Energy	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	24 (2.7)	0 (0.0)	24 (3)
Total	217	95	428	133	873 (100)

(Source: the author).

The study established that the dominant themes in the X posts of the selected

journalists were social issues, personal issues, political issues, economic issues, sports and entertainment, with agriculture and energy and religion as minor issues. **Table 2** is a frequency distribution table of the dominant issues that emerged from the content of posts from the selected journalists.

Social issues



Figure 1. Screenshots of social posts from selected journalists on X (1).



Figure 2. Screenshots of social posts from selected journalists on X (2).

From **Table 2**, the most dominant theme in the posts of the selected mainstream journalists was social issues, which constituted 28% (247) of the total posts (873). Out of this, @Serwaa_Amihere contributed the highest 10.6% (98), closely followed by @Manasseh_Azure 10% (86), with @berlamundi and @UmaruSanda having 3.6% (32) and 3.6% (31) respectively. The theme of social issues captured journalists' posts that focused on societal challenges affecting the welfare of citizens and access to public services. The key indicators that gave birth to this theme

were education, health and legal or justice-related posts. From the data, posts related to health were particularly prominent and often centred on developments within the healthcare and public health concerns. For instance, several posts reported on the government's resolution of strike action by nurses, updates on payment of nursing trainee allowances, and discussions about the increasing rates of sexually transmitted disease (STDS). Such posts typically provided updates on policy decisions, labour disputes within the health sector and emerging public health challenges, thereby drawing attention to issues that have direct implications for healthcare delivery and wellbeing of citizens. Posts addressing education highlighted developments affecting the educational sector including matters relating to student welfare and institutional policies. Although fewer in number compared to health related posts, these posts nonetheless reflected journalists' interest in issues affecting educational institutions and stakeholders within the sector. The legal and justice-related issues also featured prominently in the analysed posts. These posts often focused on law enforcement activities, court proceedings and issues relating to accountability and the rule of law. For example, some posts reported on the prosecution of a pastor for defrauding by false pretense, while others provided updates from the Office of the Special Prosecutor (OSP) on individuals who had been convicted in corruption-related cases. In addition, journalists shared posts about the arrest of public figures and ongoing legal proceedings involving then Chief Justice Gertrude Tokoonoo, highlighting the public significance of these cases. **Figures 1-4** are examples of such posts on X.

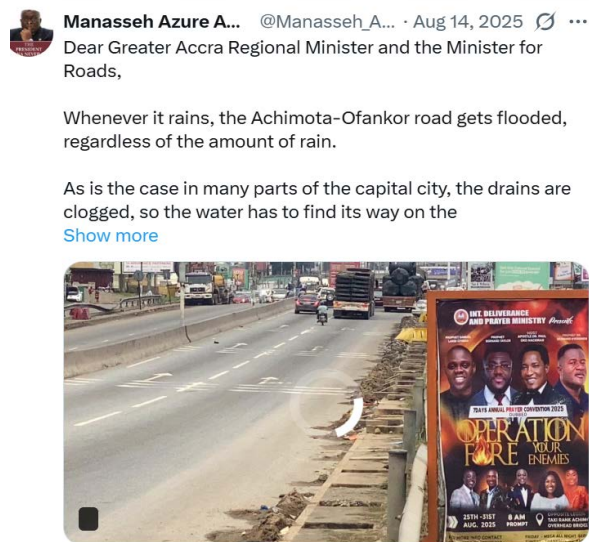


Figure 3. Screenshots of social posts from selected journalists on X (3).

The distribution of the findings highlights individual journalistic tendencies toward specific thematic engagement on X, suggesting that although social issues coverage is notable, certain journalists disproportionately drive this discourse. This finding is in consonance with existing arguments in literature which indicate

that X has become an integral part of journalistic routines, enabling rapid dissemination of news and the amplification of public interest social issues (Laor, 2022; Heravi & Harrower, 2016; Molyneux & McGregor, 2022). Consistent with McCombs & Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting theory, the prominence of social issues in the X posts of the selected journalists demonstrates how they highlight certain topics, shaping public attention and influencing discourse. The health and justice-related posts illustrate the platform's role in foregrounding issues with direct societal impact. This reinforces journalists' agenda-setting power in digital spaces.



Figure 4. Screenshots of social posts from selected journalists on X (4).

Political issues

The second dominant issue that emerged from the data is political issues, accounting for 223 (25.5%) of all posts. Out of this, @Serwaa_Amihere contributed 126 (14.4%), followed by @Manasseh_Azure 40 (4.6%), @UmaruSanda 38 (4.3%) and @berlamundi 19 (2.2%). From the dataset, journalists were using their X account to post election results and activities of the president. In one post by @Serwaa_Amihere, she posted that the NDC parliamentary candidate Ewurabena Aubynn has won the parliamentary elections at Ablekuma North Constituency with 34,090 vote. These are seen in Figures 5-8 below.



Figure 5. Screenshots of political posts from selected journalists on X (1).



Figure 6. Screenshots of political posts from selected journalists on X (2).

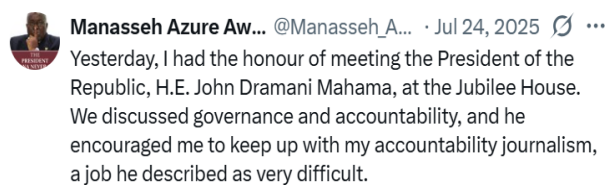


Figure 7. Screenshots of political posts from selected journalists on X (3).



Figure 8. Screenshots of political posts from selected journalists on X (4).

The prevalence of political content in the X posts of the selected journalists echo's Laor's (2022) findings, indicating that journalists continue to play a pivotal role in shaping political discourse on X, often engaging with elite sources rather than fostering broad-based citizen participation. Within the Ghanaian context, characterised by highly polarised and media-centric political communication, the focus of journalists on political issues further solidifies their position as essential intermediaries between political power and the public. This observation aligns with Agyei's (2019) assertion that X exerts a significant influence on news agendas and intermedia agenda-setting in Ghana. This aligns with the existing argument that positions political journalism as a key area in the agenda setting function of journalists. Thus, X has become a central platform for political communication, where journalists and citizens interact in real time, often bypassing traditional newsroom gatekeeping processes (Chadwick, 2017).

Personal issues

The third theme that emerged as a dominant issue in the posts of the selected journalists was personal content. This constituted 214 (24.5%) of the total posts, with @Serwaa_Amihere contributing 90 (10.3%), followed by @berlamundi 68 (7.8%), @Manasseh_Azure 36 (4.1%), and @UmaruSanda 20 (2.3%). These posts were distinct from those focused on direct news dissemination, sourcing, or institutional promotion. For example, on July 18th, @Serwaa_Amihere shared a photo of herself in a new dress. Likewise, on July 8th, @berlamundi posted an image accompanied by the caption “a letter to my innocent self.” Additionally, these journalists also provided updates to their followers about activities outside of work, including guest speaking invitations, travel experiences, and other engagements such as the movies they are watching. **Figures 9-12** below show examples of personal posts from the mainstream journalists.



Figure 9. Screenshots of personal posts from selected journalists on X (1).



Figure 10. Screenshots of personal posts from selected journalists on X (2).

This finding reflects the growing normalisation of personal disclosure and identity performance among journalists on social media platforms. Previous studies have shown that journalists increasingly blend professional and personal content on X as part of self-branding strategies that emphasise authenticity, relatability and visibility (Molyneux et al., 2017; Hedman, 2020). From the data journalist

posts reflected their emotions, personal identities and experiences. This pattern illustrates the hybridization of journalistic identity, where professional norms intersect with the dynamics of social media that prioritize personalization and audience engagement (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018). In alignment with Barnard's (2016) concept of a hybrid journalistic habitus, the personal posts of Ghanaian journalists indicate a departure from strict professional detachment towards a more individualised and performative approach to their journalistic presence on X.

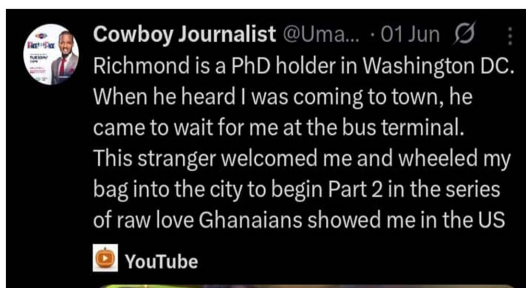


Figure 11. Screenshots of personal posts from selected journalists on X (3).

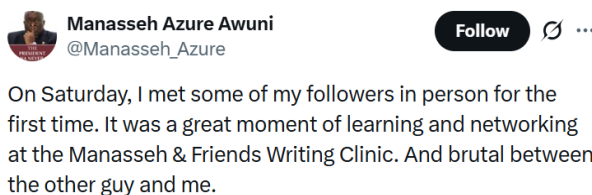


Figure 12. Screenshots of personal posts from selected journalists on X (4).

Economic issues

The fourth dominant theme that emerged from the data was economic. This issue accounted for 84 (9.6%) of the total posts 873. Out of this, @Serwaa_Amihere posts constituted 37 (4.2%), @Manasseh_Azure contributed 35 (4%) and @berlamundi contributed 12 (1.4%). Posts that revolved around issues such as financial developments, fiscal policies, and indicators of economic performance, with implications for citizens' livelihoods and the management of the global and national economy. Posts under this issue typically focus on developments that affect the cost of living, government revenue generation and the country's participation in global markets. Several posts centred on currency dynamics, particularly discussions of exchange rates and the value of the US dollar against other currencies. Such posts highlighted the fluctuation in the national currency and the potential implications for trade, inflation and purchasing power. Other posts focused on government fiscal measures, including the introduction of new levies on fuel. Some of the posts also provided an update on the reduction in the transport fares, reflecting how economic policies and fuel price adjustments directly affect everyday mobility and the cost of living of citizens. Additionally, other posts high-

lighted gold export earnings, underscoring the role of the extractive sector in national revenue generation and economic growth. **Figures 13-16** illustrate how these mainstream journalists contribute to the discourses on economic development on X.



Figure 13. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (1).

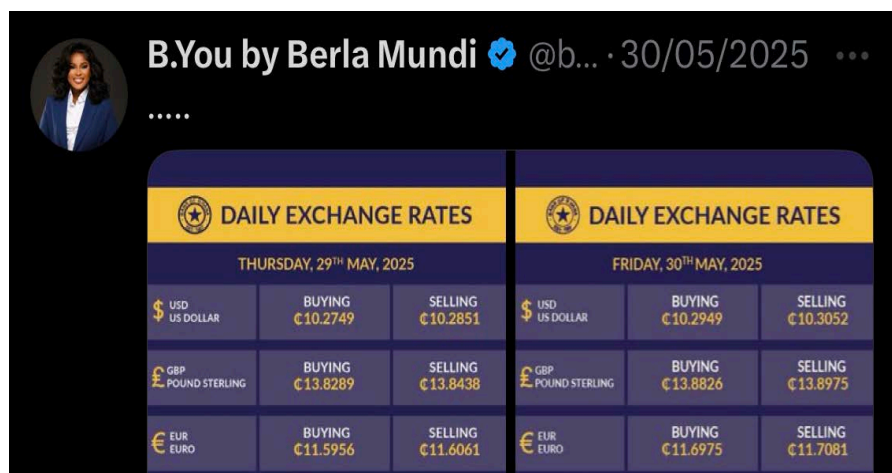


Figure 14. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (2).



Figure 15. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (3).



Figure 16. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (4).

The theme of economy in the posts of the selected journalists, although marginal as compared to other issues reflect the agenda setting role of journalism,

which suggests that the media shape public attention by prioritising certain issues. Thus, by posting about the economy on X, journalists direct public attention to matters affecting economic governance and citizens' financial well-being. This aligns with findings from existing studies showing that X has become integrated into journalistic routines as a platform for disseminating news and shaping public discourse regarding economic issues (Laor, 2022; Heravi & Harrower, 2016; Molyneux & McGregor, 2022).

Sports and Entertainment

Sports and entertainment have emerged as significant topics in the posts of the selected journalists on X. This theme contributed 69 (7.9%) to the total posts. From this, @Serwaa_Amihere had 51 (5.9%), @Manasseh_Azure had 15 (1.7%) and @UmaruSanda had 3 (0.3%). These posts highlight updates and commentary on major sporting events as well as developments in the creative and cultural industries. Examples of content in this category include the achievements of Al Nassr footballer Cristiano Ronaldo, updates on Ghana's female national team, the Black Queens, and announcements related to Ghana's entertainment sector. For instance, a post by @Manasseh_Azure noted the announcement of a stage play by renowned Ghanaian actor Adjetey Anang, while another post reported on the passing of celebrated highlife musician Daddy Lumba. Examples of these posts are seen in Figures 17-20.

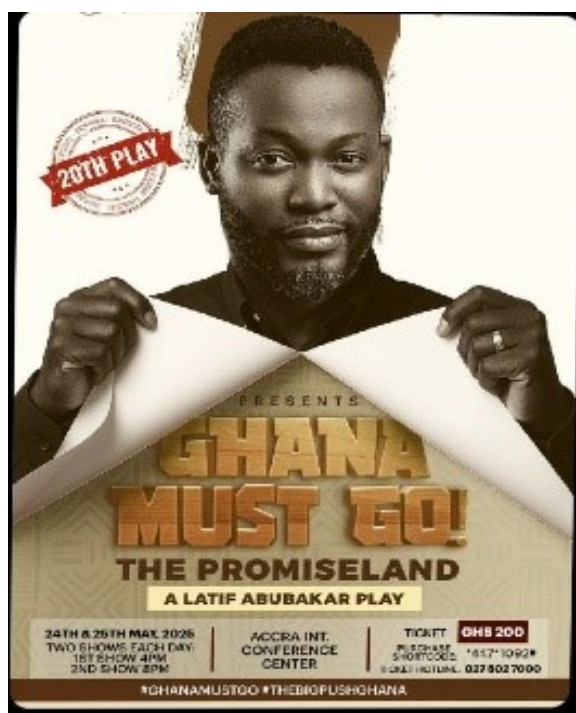


Figure 17. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (5).

These posts demonstrate how X has become a vital platform for Ghanaian journalists to keep their followers informed about entertainment and sporting events

that generate considerable public interest. The presence of sports and entertainment-related issues in the posts of the selected journalists suggests that journalists accord such issues some degree of prominence, as such news sometimes involves prominent personalities of public interest. Thus, by publicising these issues, journalists contribute to making them more visible in the online sphere (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Such a pattern mirrors broader findings in the literature that social media has been embedded in journalists' routines as a platform for news dissemination and public discourse (Sultan & Amir, 2025). It even extended to its use in relaying news about public figures and cultural events, consistent with research showing that posts on platforms such as Twitter increasingly function as substantive informational content within journalistic discourse (D'Ignazi et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings indicate that journalists' posts about sports and entertainment continue traditional agenda-setting practices in digital spaces, enabling them to spotlight issues that engage audiences beyond purely political or governance-related news.



Figure 18. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (6).



Figure 19. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (7).



Figure 20. Screenshots of economic posts from selected journalists on X (8).

Agriculture, Energy and Religion

In addition to the dominant issues such as social, personal, political, economic, sports, and entertainment, other minor issues emerged from the data, including religion, agriculture, and energy. These issues cumulatively accounted for 4.1% of the total posts. Posts under these, although less frequent, provide insight into the breadth of topics that journalists engage with. This reflects their efforts to address diverse societal concerns, extending beyond the most newsworthy issues. Agriculture-related posts primarily focused on government initiatives in the sector and on issues affecting food production and citizens' livelihoods. The energy-related posts also focused on issues related to fuel and electricity provision. Religious posts, by contrast, focused on religious events, announcements, or issues affecting faith communities. This reflects the social and cultural significance of religion in public life. Although these were minor issues identified in the data from the selected journalists, it also demonstrates the ability of journalists in prioritising and making issues visible. This reinforces the argument that journalists not only use their social media platforms to report major issues but also maintain public engagement with a broader range of societal topics (Laor, 2022; Molyneux & McGregor, 2022).

5.2. Communicative Functions Identified in the Posts of the Selected Mainstream Journalists on X

Table 3 presents the findings for RQ2 of this study, which sought to identify the communication function of posts by the selected mainstream journalists. The ta-

ble shows that among the identified communicative functions, audience engagement emerged as the most dominant, accounting for 254 (29.1%) of the total posts, 873. This was followed by promoting stories (200; 23%) and content curation (150; 17.2%) among the posts. Less frequent communicative functions included advertising (80; 9.2%), connecting with sources (70; 8%), personal branding (61; 7%), organisational promotion (44; 5%), and monitoring developments (14; 1.6%). The data further reveal notable differences in the communicative functions of posts by individual journalists. For instance, @Serwaa_Amihere, who had the highest number of posts, dominated in communicative functions such as promoting stories (15%), advertisements (6.1%), and connecting with sources (5.7%). This suggests a strong emphasis on content promotion, reflecting the promotional needs of broadcast journalists and programme visibility. In contrast, @Manasseh_Azure showed a relatively strong presence in audience engagement (10.2%) and content curation (9.2%). @UmaruSanda, although contributing fewer posts, recorded relatively higher levels in organisational promotion (2.7%) and personal branding (2.3%). Meanwhile, @berlamundi demonstrated notable activity in audience engagement (7.6 %) and promoting stories (4.1%). These findings suggest that journalists' use of X extends beyond simple news dissemination to include interactive communication, content promotion and professional identity construction. This highlights the platform's multifaceted role in contemporary journalistic practice. The differences in posting patterns among the four journalists can be linked to their professional roles, media affiliations, individual branding strategies, and gender dynamics. Journalists in broadcast roles tend to share more promotional and engagement-driven content, while those with investigative backgrounds focus more on information dissemination and issue-based reporting. Gender also appears to shape communication styles, with the two female journalists incorporating more personal branding, advertisement and audience engagement, while the two male journalists maintain a more issue-focused and formal tone. These patterns highlight how journalistic practice on X is shaped by organisational contexts, gender, and individual strategies within the Ghanaian media landscape.

Table 3. Communicative functions identified in the posts of the selected mainstream journalists on X.

Communicative Function	@Manasseh_Azure n (%)	@UmaruSanda n (%)	@Serwaa_Amihere n (%)	@berlamundi n (%)	Total n (%)
Advertisement	11 (1.3)	4 (0.5)	53 (6.1)	12 (1.4)	80 (9.2)
Personal branding	15 (1.7)	20 (2.3)	22 (2.5)	4 (0.5)	61 (7.0)
Audience engagement	89 (10.2)	6 (0.7)	93 (10.7)	66 (7.6)	254 (29.1)
Promoting stories	10 (1.2)	17 (2.0)	137 (15.8)	36 (4.1)	200 (23.0)
Connecting with sources	4 (0.5)	12 (1.4)	50 (5.7)	4 (0.5)	70 (8.0)
Content curation	80 (9.2)	10 (1.1)	60 (6.9)	0 (0.0)	150 (17.2)
Monitoring development	3 (0.3)	2 (0.2)	9 (1.0)	0 (0.0)	14 (1.6)
Organizational promotion	5 (0.6)	24 (2.7)	4 (0.5)	11 (1.3)	44 (5.0)
Total	217	95	428	133	873 (100)

Source: (the author).

Audience engagement

Audience engagement emerged as the most dominant communicative function, accounting for 254 (29.1%) of the total posts. Out of this, @Serwaa_Amihere 93 (10.7) closely followed by @Manasseh_Azure 89 (10.2), @berlamundi 66 (7.6) and @UmaruSanda with 6 (0.7%). The data show that journalists frequently interacted with their followers through conversational posts and comments, reflecting the platform's interactive affordances. Also, from the dataset the selected journalists engaged their followers by posing questions on their social media pages to elicit responses. For example, on May 23, 2025, @berlamundi asked her followers what the first thing they would buy would be if the exchange rate between the cedi and the US dollar reached 1 to 1. This question generated numerous responses. On July 26, @Manasseh_Azure prompted his followers to share their favorite Daddy Lumba song following the announcement of the legendary musician's passing. This post garnered significant engagement from his followers. Examples of the findings are seen in **Figures 21-24** below.



Figure 21. Screenshots of samples of audience engagement posts on X (1).



Figure 22. Screenshots of samples of audience engagement posts on X (2).

The findings above suggest that the journalists prioritise interactive communication on X, using the platform not only information sharing but also to actively connect with and involve their audiences. This is in consonance with previous

assertions that journalists cultivate relationships with audiences on social media and solicit feedback in real time (Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2018). However, while these interactions suggest greater openness and accessibility, they do not necessarily erode traditional gatekeeping structures. Instead, journalists selectively engage with audiences while retaining control over information flows. This interaction, within the hybrid media system, represents a blending of professional and participatory communication (Chadwick, 2017). Audiences can respond directly to journalists, yet journalists still play a central role in shaping which conversations gain visibility. Additionally, audience engagement may strengthen the agenda-setting process by fostering discussions around issues that journalists highlight (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Through this, journalists reinforce the salience of certain issues and sustain public attention on them.

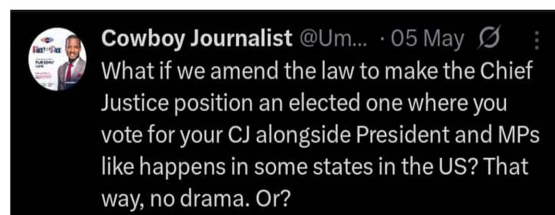


Figure 23. Screenshots of samples of audience engagement posts on X (3).



Figure 24. Screenshots of samples of audience engagement posts on X (4).

Promoting stories

Story promotion accounted for 23% of total posts, making it the second most prominent communicative function in the data. The dataset show that journalists shared links to articles, programmes, or broadcasts on their X. Out of this, @Serwaa_Amihere contributed 137 (15.8%), followed by @berlamundi 36 (4.1%), @UmaruSanda 17 (2%) and @Manasseh_Azure 10 (1.2%). **Figures 25-27**, and 28 illustrate how the selected journalists utilised the X platform to promote specific stories. For instance, on July 11, 2025, @berlamundi encouraged her followers to follow a story about the ongoing election in Ablekuma North. This election was intended to select a parliamentary candidate for the constituency after the Electoral Commission of Ghana announced a rerun for 19 outstanding polling stations. Additionally, on June 22, 2025, @Manasseh_Azure shared a link to a story about revelations from the Office of the Special Prosecutor regarding an ongoing corruption investigation. He invited his followers to read the article published on his website.



Figure 25. Screenshots of samples of promotion of stories posts (1).



Figure 26. Screenshots of samples of promotion of stories posts (2).



Figure 27. Screenshots of samples of promotion of stories posts (3).

The prominence of story promotion indicates that journalists in Ghana use X strategically to amplify their work and drive audience attention to the media content. This finding affirms Bruns's (2018) argument that social media function as distribution channels that extend the reach of journalistic work beyond traditional media outlets. Thus, through retweets, links, and commentary, journalists amplify their own stories and those produced by their organisations. This practice demonstrates how traditional news organisations continue to rely on digital platforms to disseminate content and maintain relevance. X functions as an intermediary space in which news is circulated, amplified, and discussed across networks (Chadwick,

2017). Story promotion plays a crucial role in highlighting the continuing importance of agenda-setting theory. When journalists consistently cover specific stories and topics, they direct the audience's attention to particular issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). This not only shapes what we see in the news but also influences how we perceive what truly matters in our world today.



Figure 28. Screenshots of samples of promotion of stories posts (4).

Content curation

Content curation accounted for 150 (17.2%) of the analysed posts from the selected journalists. Manasseh_Azure 80 (9.2%), @Serwaa_Amihere 60 (6.9%), @UmaruSanda 10 (1.1%). **Figure 29** and **Figure 30** show that one of the selected journalists, @Manasseh_Azure, retweeted posts from other accounts, urging his followers to engage with or pay attention to various developments. On August 25, 2025, he retweeted a post from @JCObioma, encouraging people to access a particular magazine to read a published story. Additionally, on July 12, 2025, @UmaruSanda shared a video and urged his followers to watch it and support the man featured in the video.



Figure 29. Screenshots of samples of posts on content curation on X (1).

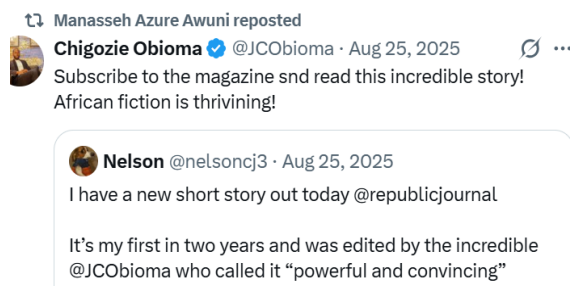


Figure 30. Screenshots of samples of posts on content curation on X (2).

The findings reveal that Journalists often play a crucial role in sifting through the overwhelming amount of information available on platforms like X. By re-tweeting, sharing commentary, and linking to stories, they help steer audiences toward specific narratives and discussions that matter. This approach resonates with Bruns' (2018) idea of journalists as curators of information in the increasingly connected media landscape. Rather than merely creating original pieces themselves, journalists are becoming adept at filtering and adding context to the wealth of information that's already available online. In today's hybrid media environment, content curation is an essential tool for journalists as they navigate the vast seas of digital content (Chadwick, 2017). In line with McCombs & Shaw (1972), highlighting particular posts or pressing issues influences which news topics gain visibility and traction. This practice highlights journalists as key players in shaping public discourse. Even when they share content from other sources, their decisions about what to amplify can significantly shape what captures the public's attention.

Advertisement

The theme of advertisement constituted 9.2% of the total posts by the selected journalists. From the total posts, @Serwaa_Amihere 53 (6.1%), @berlamundi 12 (1.4%), @Manasseh_Azure 11 (1.3%) and @UmaruSanda 4 (0.5%). Figures 31-34 illustrate how the selected journalists used their accounts to perform this function. For instance, @Serwaa_Amihere announced through a poster that she is now a brand ambassador for a particular company. Similarly, @UmaruSanda directed his followers to a fashion designer by indicating that the dress he was wearing in the attached image was designed by that company. Additionally, @berlamundi used her platform to endorse a mobile banking app from a specific bank, persuading her followers to utilize the bank's services.

The data revealed that journalists occasionally utilise the X accounts to promote commercial content or endorse products and services. While this function appears less dominant than others, such as audience engagement or story promotion, its presence reflects the increasing convergence among journalism, branding, and digital economies. The increasing interplay between journalism and commercial visibility on social media is evident in journalists' current practices. As noted by Hedman (2020), the lines between editorial content and promotional efforts have become less defined. In what we call the Hybrid Media System, journalists are

learning to adapt to the demands of various platforms that prioritise visibility, influence, and personal connections (Chadwick, 2017). For instance, the findings from this study illustrate that platforms such as X enable journalists to leverage their credibility and networks to promote their work, reflecting a shift in which traditional journalism intersects with entrepreneurial practices shaped by social media dynamics. While advertising may not traditionally shape the news agenda as we expect, it certainly reflects how journalists navigate a complex media landscape in which economic factors, platform visibility, and personal branding are closely linked. This shift underscores a broader change in how journalism is practised in our digital age.

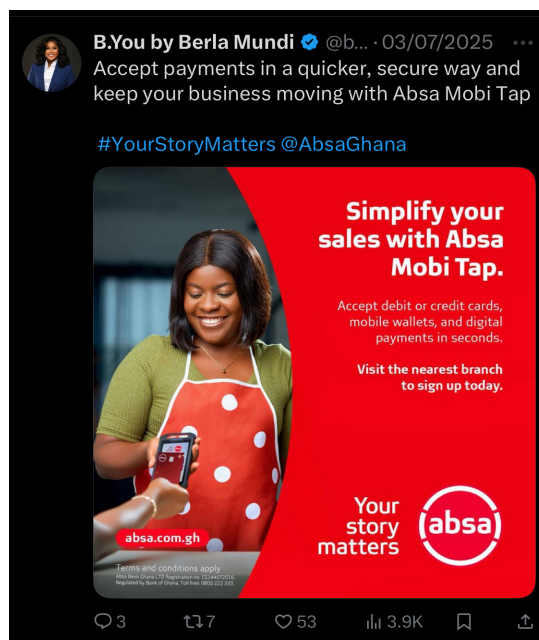


Figure 31. Screenshots of samples of advertisement posts on X (1).



Figure 32. Screenshots of samples of advertisement posts on X (2).



Figure 33. Screenshots of samples of advertisement posts on X (3).



Figure 34. Screenshots of samples of advertisement posts on X (4).

Connecting with sources

The analysed data revealed that 70 posts (8%), focused on how journalists connect with various sources. The posts included @Manasseh_Azure with 4 posts (0.5%), @UmaruSanda with 12 (1.4%), @Serwaa_Amihere with a substantial 50 (5.7%), and @berlamundi with 4 (0.5%). In Figures 35-38, it can be observed that @berlamundi and @Manasseh_Azure tagged accounts such as @amu_furry, @Wacare_K, @reakmadrid, @vinijr, and @afcbournemouth to draw their atten-

tion to the content of their tweets.



Figure 35. Screenshots of samples of X posts on connecting with sources (1).



Figure 36. Screenshots of samples of X posts on connecting with sources (2).

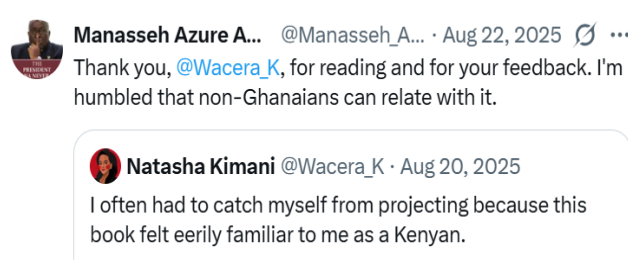


Figure 37. Screenshots of samples of X posts on connecting with sources (3).

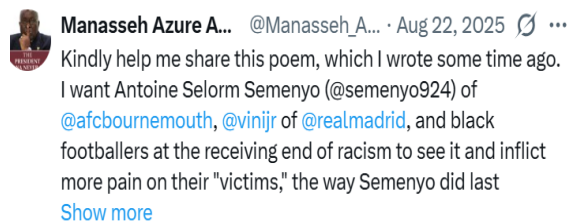


Figure 38. Screenshots of samples of X posts on connecting with sources (4).

The data indicate that journalists tagged other prominent accounts in some of their tweets and responded to tweets from various accounts. This showcased their interactions with political figures, experts, and other key information providers on social media platforms like X. This interaction underscores the important role social media plays in helping journalists build professional networks and share information. This aligns with findings from researchers such as Bruns (2018) and Barnard (2016), who have highlighted that journalists increasingly use these plat-

forms to foster relationships with their sources and monitor influential figures. Often, these exchanges happen openly, allowing journalists to engage directly with those who shape public discussions. In the context of the Hybrid Media System, these connections illustrate that elite networks remain vital to the spread of information (Chadwick, 2017). Although social media offers more opportunities for public involvement, journalists often find themselves working within these established power structures and expertise circles. From an agenda-setting angle, the importance of these source connections reveals how journalists depend on elite actors to shape their news agendas. The information these sources provide can significantly impact which topics receive attention in news coverage.

Organisational promotion

Organisational promotion accounted for 44 (5%), with @Manasseh_Azure contributing 5 (0.6%), @UmaruSanda 24 (2.7%), @Serwaa_Amihere 4 (0.5%), and @berlamund 11 (1.3%). These posts featured journalists sharing the programmes, initiatives, and activities from their respective media organisations. On **Figures 39-42** @berlamundi, who works with TV3 Ghana, retweeted stories shared by the organisation's official X account. Additionally, @Manasseh_Azure, who operates an online news portal at manassehazure.com, posted links to articles on the site to drive traffic. Other individuals, such as @UmaruSanda and @Serwaa_Amihere, who are affiliated with Channel One TV, Citi FM, and GHONE, respectively, have been promoting programs that will air on their respective platforms. For example, on August 26, 2025, @UmaruSanda shared a flyer for a show titled "Face to Face," which featured the Chairman of the ruling party, the National Democratic Congress, as the guest.

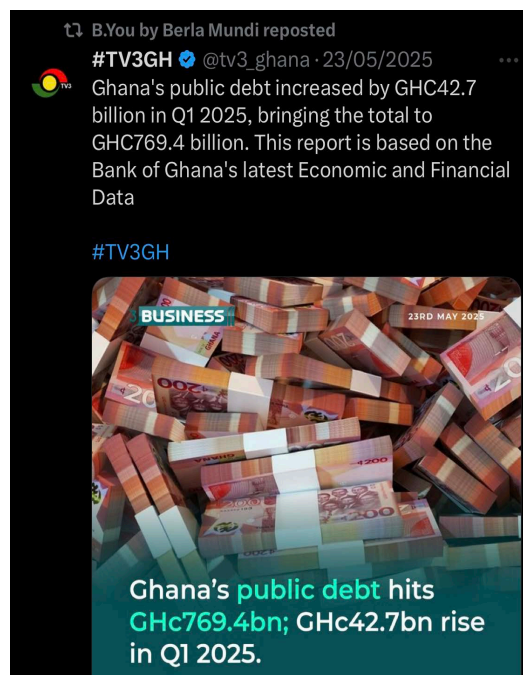


Figure 39. Screenshots of samples of X posts on organisational promotion (1).



Figure 40. Screenshots of samples of X posts on organisational promotion (2).



Figure 41. Screenshots of samples of X posts on organisational promotion (3).



Figure 42. Screenshots of samples of X posts on organisational promotion (4).

This trend highlights that journalists continue to strongly identify with their institutions, even as personal branding becomes more prevalent. While they certainly have individual voices, they also serve as representatives of their media organisations. By promoting their organisations' content, they not only bolster the credibility of these institutions but also enhance the visibility of their news outlets in the ever-evolving digital landscape. In the contemporary media environment, the relationship between individual journalists and traditional media institutions is significant. Social media enables them to express their personal views while fulfilling their roles as representatives of their organisations. From an agenda-setting perspective, promoting organisational content helps maintain the salience of stories produced by mainstream media. By guiding audiences toward this institutional content, journalists play a crucial role in preserving the influence of traditional media within the wider information ecosystem. The findings highlight that journalists use X not only to find content but also to shape their professional identity and connect with their audience through conversations about important issues (Lasorsa et al., 2012; Holton & Lewis, 2011; Molyneux et al., 2017). The fact that prominent journalists often focus on social issues supports Laor's (2022) point that X can become an echo chamber for the elite, in which public discourse is shaped by the topics these journalists choose to highlight. Overall, this study shows that journalists' activities on X play a significant role in agenda-setting, drawing attention to critical societal matters, and showcasing the evolving landscape of their professional identities and digital interactions.

Personal Branding

Personal branding accounted for 61 (7%) of posts, underscoring the importance of journalists' identity formation in today's digital landscape. @Manasseh_Azure 15 (1.7%), @UmaruSanda 20 (2.3%), @Serwaa_Amihere 22 (2.5%), @berlamundi 4 (0.5%). The data from **Figures 43-46** show that the selected journalists brand themselves by informing their followers about their expertise beyond their journalistic duties. For instance, @berlamundi posted a picture of herself on set, preparing to start a show on TV3. @Manasseh_Azure shared details about a writing clinic he and his colleagues organised in the northern region of Ghana. @UmaruSanda informed his followers that, in addition to his role as a broadcast journalist, he also moderates corporate events, encouraging those in need of such services to contact him. His post included an image of him receiving an award from the Ghana Armed Forces for excellence in moderation. Additionally, @Serwaa_Amihere reported that she was invited to serve as a guest speaker at an event organised by the Students' Representative Council of the University of Ghana.

The data revealed that journalists mix their professional insights with personal touches to seem more genuine and relatable on social media. This trend suggests that they are increasingly seen as individual media personalities rather than just representatives of their organisations, as noted in previous research (Bruns, 2018; Barnard, 2016; Hedman, 2020). In the context of the Hybrid Media System, personal branding reflects a shift toward a more personal form of journalistic author-

ity. Social media platforms like X tend to reward those who bring their personality to the forefront, making it easier for journalists to stand out and connect with their audiences. As a result, their perceived credibility is closely tied to their personal identity and online presence. From an agenda-setting standpoint, personal branding can also impact which issues gain visibility and credibility. When journalists establish strong personal brands, their posts can highlight specific topics and capture audience interest more effectively. In this way, personal branding plays a subtle yet significant role in shaping the agenda by amplifying journalists' voices within connected online communities.



Figure 43. Screenshots of samples of X posts on personal branding (1).

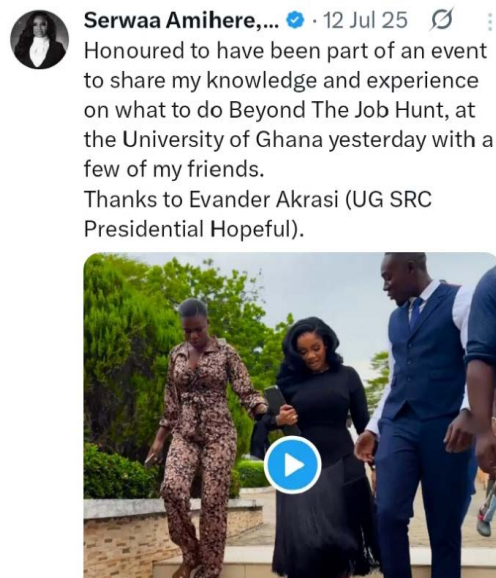


Figure 44. Screenshots of samples of X posts on personal branding (2).

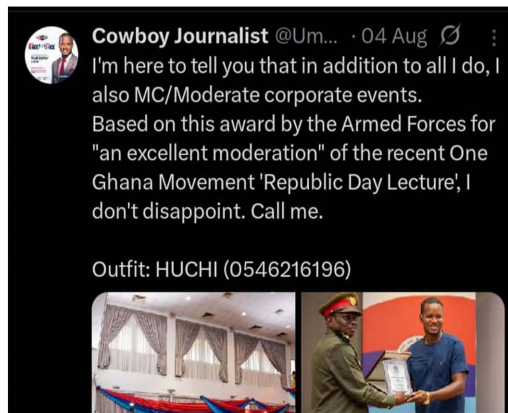


Figure 45. Screenshots of samples of X posts on personal branding (3).



Figure 46. Screenshots of samples of X posts on personal branding (4).

Monitoring Developments

Monitoring developments on social media might represent just a small slice of posts, only about 1.6%, but it plays a vital role in how journalists operate today. @Manasseh_Azuni 3 (0.3%), @UmaruSanda 2 (0.2%) and @Serwaa_Amihere with 9 (1%). X enables reporters to track breaking news, gauge public reactions, and pinpoint emerging issues as they unfold. The content of the sampled posts in **Figures 47-50** illustrate how these journalists monitor events, post updates, and engage with issues on their platforms. For example, on June 3, 2025, @UmaruSanda posted about the ongoing dispute between the Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO) and the New Patriotic Party's Ashanti Regional Chairman, commonly known as Chairman Wontumi. His post aimed to contribute to ongoing debates regarding the number of days Chairman Wontumi spent in EOCO custody. Similarly, on August 1, 2025, @Manasseh_Azuni posted updates on corruption-related issues being addressed by state agencies and prominent private

organisations in Ghana. One of his posts highlighted a comment made during a television program in which a member of parliament confessed to receiving money from the owner of a private company under investigation.

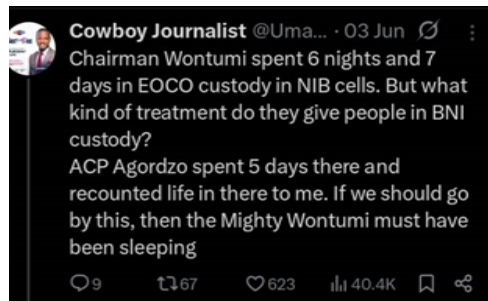


Figure 47. Screenshots of samples of X posts on monitoring development (1).

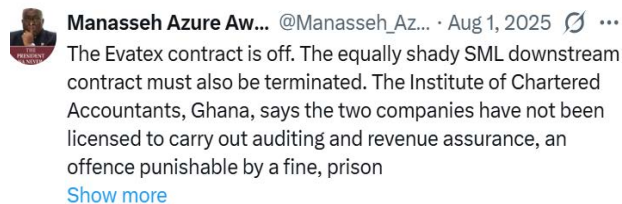


Figure 48. Screenshots of samples of X posts on monitoring development (2).



Figure 49. Screenshots of samples of X posts on monitoring development (3).



Figure 50. Screenshots of samples of X posts on monitoring development (4).

From the findings, these journalists monitor events and post updates, and start engagement around these issues on their platforms. This idea ties back to [Bruns \(2018\)](#) view of social media as a kind of “live news radar.” It provides journalists with a powerful tool to stay on top of ongoing events and identify early signs of potential news stories. Researchers emphasise that this approach enhances traditional newsgathering techniques. In our current Hybrid Media System, monitoring is part of how digital platforms have reshaped the initial stages of news gathering. Journalists have moved beyond relying solely on formal channels and traditional sources; they now monitor online conversations and posts by influential figures. Although monitoring may not stand out as prominently in the data, it plays a subtle yet significant role in shaping the news agenda. By identifying emerging issues through their observations, journalists help determine which topics eventually reach the forefront of the news cycle.

6. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

This study examined how mainstream journalists in Ghana engage on X, specifically focusing on the key issues in their posts and the communicative roles their posts play. The findings revealed that journalists are using X for much more than just sharing news; they are creating a dynamic communication space that blends professional, institutional, and interactive practices. The findings suggest that their posts mainly focus on political, economic, and socio-cultural topics, which mirrors the traditional priorities of journalism and highlights how relevant Agenda-Setting Theory still is in today’s digital landscape. Journalists significantly shape the online public conversation by emphasising important issues such as social developments and politics. While X offers a platform for a variety of voices, journalists are pivotal in guiding the digital news agenda. They take on multiple roles such as engaging with their audience, promoting stories, curating content, and building their personal brands. The importance of engagement and promotion stands out, as it shows how social media can enhance journalistic workflows and visibility. Through the lens of the Hybrid Media System, it becomes clear that journalists are adapting traditional methods to the fast-paced world of social me-

dia, balancing their role in agenda-setting with new functions.

However, there are some limitations to this study. The study only examined posts from a specific group of mainstream journalists on X, which could affect how widely the findings apply to the broader landscape of journalism. Journalists from different backgrounds might leverage social media in different ways. Additionally, the analysis focused solely on publicly available posts, which do not reveal the motivations or pressures that might shape how journalists behave online. The research also looked exclusively at X, leaving out other significant platforms like Facebook or Instagram, which could offer a more comprehensive picture of digital journalism.

Future research could build on these insights by including a broader range of journalists from diverse outlets and regions. Future studies could also employ other qualitative methods, like interviews or surveys, to provide richer insights into their motivations. Comparative studies across various platforms would also be beneficial in understanding how different features influence journalistic communications. Lastly, exploring how audiences respond to journalists' posts could clarify public engagement and its impact on the digital news agenda.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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