Covering Corruption: Frames of Broadsheets on the Philippine Government's Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) Scandal

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Abstract

This study is a content analysis of the three Philippine broadsheets (The Philippine Daily Inquirer, The Philippine Star and The Manila Bulletin) from August 3 to October 30, 2013 on how much prominence the broadsheets allot coverage to a corruption case known as the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) in the Philippines. The research considered the news presentation, journalistic standards, treatment, frequency of appearances and placement on the newspapers. The study also determined the relationship between these attributes via correlation. The researchers concluded that there is a regular pattern of reportage of the PDAF issue in the broadsheets. However, the observed relationships between the variables revealed some form of disparity between each of them.

Keywords: Framing, Philippine broadsheets, political communication, prominence of issues, content analysis

Introduction

Newspaper contributes a lot when it comes to distributing political information to the public. As one of the oldest media, newspapers have become not only one of many sources of everyday information but it also has the power to control the reader on what topic to deal with on a daily basis. Jan, Riaz, Siddiq and Saleem(2013) said that today's print media provides people with a wide array of information where thousands of news events happened simultaneously. With the plethora of news and information, the media reminds people which of these subjects should be the "prime issue" from the dozens of ongoing issues. Hence, Walter Lippman (n.d.) argued that people's dependence upon the press to provide them with information about certain matters is a result of limited opportunities for them to observe important events instantaneously.

Since the print media seems to have the power to dictate people on what issues should be deemed important, print media organizations shape their views about the world around the public media and frame their news coverage accordingly (Jan et al., 2013). This only means that print media organizations, particularly the journalists themselves, possess the power to decide which issues to be covered and which to be ignored. In addition to that, Saqib (2008) also argued that the way the audience perceivecertain news issue is shaped and refined in the way journalists frame their news stories. Mhango (2011) isquotingBroydeSharodewhoadmits that "truly objective stories do not really exist, every story is told through the eyes and ears of whoever is covering the story". Thus, this only means that framed news articles is a result of news framing techniques employed by journalists.

Biases in print media, particularly in newspaper broadsheets are highly inevitable since framing of news stories by journalists are always present. Goldberg (2001) argued that the major newspapers in the US are biased with a liberal political motive. This means that no matter how objective the newspapers construct their news, underlying intentions are still evident. Ahrens (2002) proved in his study that the editor of the *Washington Times* employ "story selection" to promote conservative views. It implies that newspaper outfits seem to possess the ability to filter its news before it became available to the public. Lastly, Kurtz (1996, as cited in Morris, 2007) argued that Bob Dole's presidential campaigns against Bill Clinton, particularly in *New York Times* "was stumbling because of the news media's

leftward tendencies". This seems to suggest that the media, when subjected to opposing issues, tends to favor one side to another.

Asian media also play a key role in shaping public views by influencing their understanding and perception of a certain agenda or topic (Otieno, Spada andRenkl,2013). Furthermore, the power of the print media has been continually growing, especially in the field of political communication (Chang Peng, Ibrahim, Ahmad & Chew Chee, 2012). The print media in particular, is still considered one of the important sources of news and information. In fact, in the study of Ahmad, Chang Peng,Mustaffa, Ibrahim, Wen Mabmud, and Dafrizal (2012), it claimed that 9 out of 10 Asians still obtain their news from newspapers. Hence, a newspaper is deliberately considered an important tool for the communication of government agenda, policies and other issues to the general public (Azian, Rahim, Hassan Basri&Hasim 2012). Consequently, it seems to be a reality that newspapers, in particular, serve as a medium in communicating public issues, especially politically-inclined matters.

Local researchers also say that the media defines what the public understands about the society and at the same time dictates them about "what is often perceived as controversial if not contentious issue" (Navarro, Panopio, Malayang, AmanoJr., 2011). Navarro and her colleagues also added that the print media serves as an important source of informal learning and at the same time gives it share on how will citizens provide their judgments about certain issues. In the Philippines, newspapers have been a rich source of news stories, and the newspaper industry is alive and well despite the rising costs of operations (Dayag, 2010). This is an important evolution to consider since the Philippine news media had been in "discreet mode" for a long period of time way back during the reign of Marcos dictatorship (Lambino II, 2004). However, it is sad to discover that most of the time, newspaper reportage here in the Philippines encounter difficulties in defining the fine line between real news stories and entertainment stories. Celdran (2001, as cited in Lambino, 2004) stated that these distinction should be redefined because it will "keep journalists from framing reality in the language of entertainment where war is adventure, crime is drama, politics is competitive sport, and where all of existence is reduced to spectacle."

Context of Current Research and Research Hypotheses

One of the many political corruption issues circulating here in the country today is the controversy about the misuse of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF). The Philippines' Department of Budget and Management (DBM) defined PDAF as "a lump-sum appropriation in the annual General Appropriations Act to fund the priority development programs and projects of the government". The history of PDAF can be dated back in 1922 when it was first introduced with the passing of the Public Works Act. Hence, the pork barrel system is a Western practice brought into the country by the United States. Moreover, the first pork barrel was legitimized under Public Works Act 3044 (Gamala, 2014).

Likewise, Gamala (2014) quoted G. Luis Igaya of the Institute for Popular Democracy that the pork barrel is a practice of the Congress to avert national funds into districts whether it is in the form of public works, social services or special projects. Gamala also suggested that PDAF, or popularly coined as pork barrel, has been alleged to become the center of debate because of its potential to be a source of massive corruption in government agencies.The PDAF scam erupted last July 12, 2013 when *Philippine Daily Inquirer* exposed the alleged multi-billion pork barrel scam where whistleblower BenhurLuy identified his previous employer Janet Lim Napoles as the mastermind behind the scam. Luy also exposed that at least 5 senators and 23 congressmen are involved, and they have been wrongly utilizing millions of pesos for ghost projects through their PDAF (Romulo, 2013).

The research focused on covering the months from August to October 2013 because it was the period when PDAF issue was unstoppably circulating through the news media, particularly in newspapers. It was also the time when PDAF was the most talked about topic in the Philippines.Thus, PDAF scam stimulated the attention of the entire Philippines, and it drew much attention from the media. It appears most of the time in TV news programs, it is the primary topic of social commentaries over the radio, and it stirred public forums over the internet. This study focused on how does the print media, particularly the three major broadsheets in the Philippines (*Philippine Star, Philippine Daily Inquirer and Manila Bulletin)* view the topic about the PDAF scam, and how they project their news accordingly to the public agenda.

Theoretical Background: Framing Theory

Framing Theory, as defined in Encyclopedia of Communication Research, is the process determining the parts or aspects of those issues that are important. Framing theory is deemed helpful by researchers in analyzing the imbalances and underlying power structures that mediate political issues (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009).

Moreover, framing theory is on a second level of agenda-setting in a way that it helps in building a "social reality" by "framing images of reality in a predictable and patterned way," (Scheufele, 1999, as cited in Scheufele& Tewksbury, 2007). It describes the media communication process in terms of media frames. Thus, framing theory is divided into two levels: (1) frame-building which takes place mainly in the common goal between journalists, elites and social movements, from which the outcome of it manifest in the text; and (2) frame-setting which refers to the interaction "between the media frames and individuals' prior knowledge and predispositions" (De Vreese, 2005).

In this study, the researchers used framing theory as newspapers possess the power to frame their news articles in order to shape the views of their readers. This means that the newspaper articles written by journalists are already considered as framed or packaged stories. Of the many issues circulating through all kinds of media, the researchers delved further as to how the three Philippine broadsheets frame their news articles specifically about PDAF.

Framing As a Tool by Journalists

Since the priority of the news items are already predetermined by media people, questions as to how journalists construct their news stories arises. In this particular study, the researchers focused on the process as to how journalists design their news articles according to: (1) style; and (2) journalistic standards.

News Presentation of Journalists

News presentation is how a certain news article was written, as can be generally classified into straight (hard) and feature (soft) news. Straight news is objective, only report on facts and its sole purpose is to inform. Feature news requires an extensive research and interpretation about the facts and its purpose is to inform and explain. When it comes to the impact to the public, Baum (2002, as cited in Lahva, 2009) said that hard news is more

powerful than the soft news when reporting about political issues. Hard news attributes important moments directly related to the public while soft news lacks the kind of drawing power. Moreover, when it comes to their effects on the prominence of an issue, hard news are generally placed in the front pages of the newspapers while soft news appear on the margins of the coverage or in the back pages of the newspaper (Allan, 1999; Gurevitch&Wollacot, 1982; Dor, 2014; Kitzinger 1998, as cited in Lahva, 2009). Moreover, these researchers also concluded that prominent issues are being written in hard news style, while less prominent issues are being written in soft news style. Another way of news presentation used by journalist is opinion news. Opinion news or editorial, is the judgment of the newspaper about one or more current issues and as the constructor of public opinion on current topics that are considered important (Gallur, et. al., as cited in Orosa et al., 2013). Therefore opinion news is purely subjective for it is based on the feelings and beliefs of the journalist or writer, compared to hard or soft news, where facts have basis. Hence, the researchers concluded that opinion news is the lowest form of writing news articles since it is biased, and the ideas stated merely comes from the writers themselves.

Hence, the researchers concluded that hard news is more effective than soft news and opinion news when reporting about political issues, which is in this study, the PDAF issue. In this study, the researchers coded the news presentation of journalists using the following codes: hard news as 3 (high), soft news as 2 (average) and, opinion news as 1(low).

H1a. Journalists from the three Philippine broadsheets use hard news more than soft and opinion news to achieve better framing of news articles about PDAF.

Journalistic Standards

The basic structure of a news article known as the inverted pyramid is still one of the journalistic standards widely used until today (Peha&Carlmichael, 2006). Peha&Carlmichael stated that in inverted pyramid, the most important facts appears at the top, in the first paragraph known as the lead, and then adding facts in descending order of importance. Pottker (2003) assumed in his study that there is a general belief that the inverted pyramid has already become a professional standard dating back to the American Civil War (1861-1865). Additionally, every news story written by journalists must answer the 5Ws and 1H (What, Where, When, Who, Why and How). Bell (1991, as cited in Clayman& Heritage, 2002)

strongly argued that news articles should answer the questions who, what, when and where in the lead story, and the why and how in the succeeding paragraphs of the article. Hence, Bell added that answering the 5Ws and 1H is obligatory, and it is a vital norm to follow in order to create a comprehensive and detailed news story.

Moreover, a study by Purba (2013) validates the previous study by arguing that journalists began to build her story by telling the reader about 'what happened' and 'who are involved' and followed by the rest of rhetorical pattern. She added these two questions are not stand alone because the information needs to be delivered in full explanation as a quality of a good writing, which is in this case, news. The researchers in this study will evaluate if the 5Ws and 1H were present in every PDAF news article to be content analyzed. In this study, news articles were coded as: (1) 5, if the articles answered all the 5W's and 1H; (2) 4, if the articles answered four of the 5W's and 1H; (3) 3 if the articles answered three of the 5W's and 1H; (4) 2, if the articles answered two of the 5W's and 1H; and (5) 1, if the articles answered only one of the 5W's and 1H.

H1b. The higher the adherence to the 5Ws and 1H of the journalists from the three Philippine broadsheets, the better is the framing of the news articles about PDAF.

News articles as framed stories of issues

Several prior studies have proven that news articles are in fact, framed or packaged, in accordance to the journalists' decision of what ideas and concepts to include, and what to not. A study by Jan et al., (2013) focus on the coverage of opinion pages of *Daily News* and *The Dawn* about Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). Results indicate that *Daily News* gave huge coverage to PTI as compare to *The Dawn*.

On local context, Amores and Capistrano (2012) content analysed *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *Philippine Star's* coverage of the Reproductive Health Bill from 2008-2010 and results show that both broadsheets framed their reporting mainly on clashing views between the two institutions (church and state). Grbeša (2012) also content analysed the newspaper coverage of Milan Bandić and Ivo Josipović in the Presidential Elections in Croatia in 2010. Results show that Josipović was framed as suitable for the position, honest and decent and as the likely winner while on the other hand, Bandić was framed predominantly as dishonest,

unsuitable and the loser. This most likely suggests that Josipović's victory for the president's position that time was highly influenced by these biased coverage.

Positive and Negative Framing

Determining whether a news article is positively, neutrally or negatively framed (treatment of news articles) can have a significant effect on the prominence given to a particular issue. Block & Keller (1995, as cited in Wood, 2011) suggested that positive and negative frames are two distinct modes of representing the same information. For example, "positive frames present the positive consequences of adherence to the message recommendations (e.g. 'If you quit smoking, you reduce the risk of developing lung cancer'), while negative frames describe the negative consequences of non-adherence (e.g. 'If you don't quit smoking, you increase the risk of developing lung cancer)" (Block & Keller, 1995 as cited in Wood, 2011).

In this particular study, the researchers considered a news article as: (1) *very positive* when there are exceedingly favorable statements, descriptions, and/or implications about PDAF; (2) *positive* when there are generally more favorable statements, descriptions, and/or implications for PDAF; (3) *neutral* if there is merely a listing of events that give neither positive nor negative implications about PDAF; (4) *negative* when the article is generally critical of the PDAF issue; and (5) *very negative* when the criticisms are extremely negative for the PDAF issue.Since Block & Keller (1995, as cited in Wood, 2011) also said that negative frames are more effective than positive frames (when subjects are paying high attention on the issue), and neutral frames meddles between the two (50% positive, 50% negative), the researchers derived a coding that sets very negative frames as (5); negative frames as (4); neutral frames as (3); positive frames as (2); and very positive frames as (1).

H2. The more negative the framing of news articles about PDAF, the more prominent is the issue.

Prominence of Newspaper Issues

In some sense, framed news articles by the broadsheets affect the prominence of the media organization. Prominence of elements in the news influences the prominence of those elements among the public (McCombs and Caroll, 2003). Hence, broadsheets discreetly communicate a host of cues about the prominence of certain issues on their daily agenda - the

lead story on page one, front page versus inside page, the size of the headline, and even the length of a story all communicate information about the salience of the various objects on the news agenda. (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, as cited in McCombs and Caroll, 2003). Once the prominence cues from broadsheets are already established, the readers use these cues in order to decide which issues are of most value to them.

News prominence is often misguided by this role played by the news organizations. A study by Cohen & Shoemaker (2006, as mentioned in Shoemaker, 2006) covered a disconnect between what people think is newsworthy (what they "think") and how prominently newspapers display news stories (what people should "think about"). They found a huge difference between what people think are newsworthy, and what the news organizations portray as news. Furthermore, Shoemaker (2006) also stated that prominence of a story can be operationalized as its quantity (in increments of space and time) weighted by its placement within the medium, which will be adapted in this study.

Frequency of Appearance of Articles

How frequent an issue appears in the newspapers is one of the cues to be measured in order to determine how much prominence is given to a certain topic or matter (which is in this study, the PDAF controversy). A study by McCombs and Carroll (2003) stated that for all the news media, frequency of appearance of an issue (say for example, in broadsheets) day after day is the most powerful message of all about its prominence.

H3. The higher the frequency of appearance of PDAF issues in the three Philippine broadsheets, the more prominent is the issue.

Placement of Articles

The positioning of news articles also plays a vital role in measuring news prominence. Outing (2009) found a common pattern in his study with regards to readers' eye movement. He said that the eyes most often fixated first in the upper left of the page, then hovered in that area before going left to right. That is why newspaper organizations employ the inverted S or Z-pattern (Gildersleeve, 2014) in positioning their news, where they put the most important stories at the top left and the least important ones at the bottom right in order to project the level of importance given to a story.

The Z-Pattern Layout
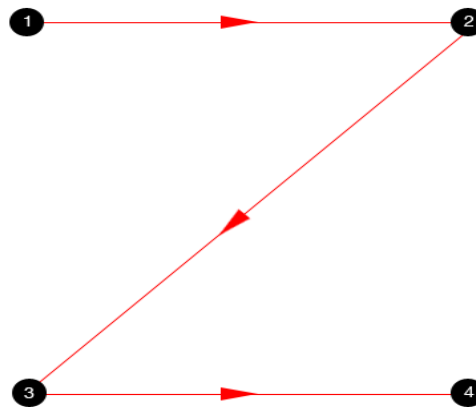
In this model, the readers' eye movement starts from the upper-left most of the newspaper (number 1) moving horizontally to the upper right most of the newspaper (number 2) then moving diagonally left to the lower-left most (number 3), then finishing to the lower-left most location of the paper (number 4). This kind of pattern is used not only in newspaper layouting but also in advertising and webpage layouts. Any kind of storytelling, specifically in news stories, must take this pattern in full consideration. In this particular study, the researchers measured the prominence of a news story with regards to page positioning using the following codes: (1) lower left/right, below the fold as 1; (2) center, below the fold as 2; (3) center, above the fold as 3; and (4) upper left/right, above the fold as 4. This coding will be done because there is an apparent belief that the most prominent news articles are placed on the upper left or right (above the fold) of the newspaper while the least prominent ones are placed below the fold.

H4. The higher the placement of PDAF issues on the upper left or right fold of the three Philippine broadsheets, the more prominent is the issue.

Objectives

Generally, the researchers wanted to answer: *How have the three daily newspapers in the Philippines covered the Priority Assistance Development Fund (PDAF) from the August to October 2013?*

Specifically, the researchers aimed to:

1. determine how the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star and Manila Bulletin reported their news about PDAF;

2. identify the different frames that were used by the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star and Manila Bulletin;

3. describe whether Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star, and Manila Bulletin have given prominence to the issue of PDAF with regards to the frequency of its appearances; and

4. determine whether Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star, and Manila Bulletin have given prominence to the issue of PDAF with regards to its placement on the broadsheets

Research Simulacrum
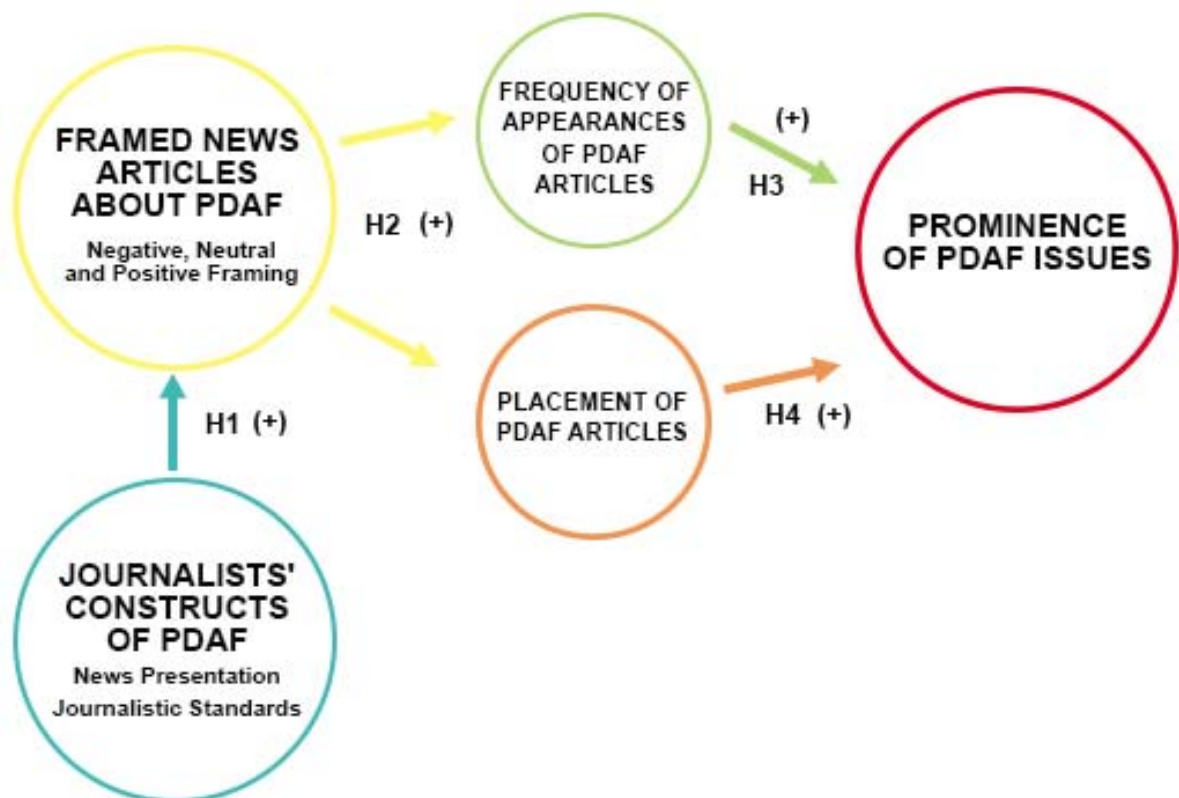
Methods

Research Design

The study used a quantitative approach. More specifically, the study is descriptive and explanatory because it wanted to identify how the three broadsheets reported about the PDAF issue and the relationships of some journalistic variables.

Research Data

The researchers conducted a content analysis of selected news articles for three broadsheets in the Philippines (Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star and Manila Bulletin) from August 3 to October 30, 2013. The study required three coders to evaluate the data.

Sample and Sampling Technique

For the news articles, the research used the random stratified sampling technique to gather data from the three broadsheets (Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star, Manila Bulletin). The articles were selected with an interval time frame of three days (Every 3rd, 6th, 9th… 30th) from August to October 2013. This means that from the three broadsheet, thirty issues were selected (30 issues x 3 broadsheets = 90 articles overall). The articles from each issue were also randomly selected.

Instrumentation

Content analysis is defined as a research technique for measuring the objective, systematic quantitative description of communication content (Amores, 2012). It has been used most frequently for research problems in which the questions can be answered directly from a description of the attributes of content (Holsti, n.d.). Thus, this method also aims to quantify media content through coding. Hence, content analysis is the most applicable method to perform with regards to evaluation of attributes of newspaper articles. Code sheets and code books were used.

Data Gathering and Interpretation

The journalists' constructs were divided into two parts. The first part was the News Presentation that was divided into three codes: (a) *Hard news* as 3 (b) *Soft news* as 2; and (c) *Opinion news* as 1. The second part was the Journalistic Standards wherein the adherence of the writer or journalists in answering the 5Ws and 1H (Who, What, Where, When, Why and

How) was measured. The second part was the Framed News Articles wherein the treatment of the news articles was evaluated. The treatment was divided into five codes: (a) *very negative* as 5; (b) *negative* as 4; (c) *neutral* as 3; (d) *positive* as 2; and (e) *very positive* as 1.The last part was the Prominence of News Articles where it is further divided into two parts. The first part is the Placement of News Articles where it was divided into 4 codes: (a) 4, when the article is placed in the upper left/right, above the fold of the newspaper; (b) 3, when the article is placed in the center, above the fold; (c) 2, when the article is placed in the center, below the fold; and (d) 1, when the article is placed in the lower left/right, below the fold. The second part is the frequency of appearances wherein the total number of occurrences of the PDAF-related articles will be tabulated.The 90 randomly selected articles were content analyzed thoroughly for one month stories concerning the PDAF issue were tallied according to the categories mentioned above: News Presentation, Journalistic Standards, Treatment, Frequency of Appearances and its Placement.

Table 1. Scale for descriptive interpretation

VARIABLES	QUALITATIVEINTERPRETATION	RANGE	
News Presentation	Opinion News	1.00	1.66
	Soft News	1.67	2.33
	Hard News	2.34	3.00
Journalistic Standards	Answers 1 W&H question	1.00	1.79
	Answers 2 W&H questions	1.80	2.59
	Answers 3 W&H questions	2.60	3.39
	Answers 4 W&H questions	3.40	4.19
	Answers all 5Ws&1H questions	4.20	5.00
Treatment	Very Positive	1.00	1.79
	Positive	1.80	2.59
	Neutral	2.60	3.39
	Negative	3.40	4.19
	Very Negative	4.20	5.00
Placement of News Articles	Lower left or right, below the fold	1.00	1.74
	Center, below the fold	1.75	2.49

	Center, above the fold	2.50	3.24
	Upper left or right, above the fold	3.25	4.00

For the descriptive interpretation of the data, the mean rating and standard deviation were computed in order to compare and measure the distribution of the tabulated data to each of the variables. Hence, a scale was made to infer the computed mean and standard deviation.

The table above shows the scale that the researchers used to interpret the mean ratings of the collected data. The variables and its respective qualitative equivalents were listed side by side with its numerical representation.For the inferential interpretation of the data, the researchers analyzed relationships between the research variables. In comparison, the descriptive interpretation merely compared and measured the tabulated results as a whole. On the other hand, the inferential analysis of the data further discussed the effects of one research variable to the other, and how, in general, these variables affect the prominence of the issue. Thus, the researchers applied the formula for correlation in order to determine the effect of one variable to another.

Table 2. Correlation formula

SIGN	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION	MAGNITUDE	QUALITATIVE INTERPRETATION
Positive	as one variable increases, the other also increases	**Near to 1**	Strong Correlation
Negative	as one variable decreases, the other increases	**Near to 0.5**	Moderate
		Near to 0	Weak

The table above shows the analyses for the correlation formula used by the researchers to get the inferential relationship of each variable. Thus, if the numerical product resulted to positive, the interpretation will be as one variable increases, the other also increases, and vice versa. While for the negative, as one variable decreases, the other increases. With regards to its magnitude, or the degree of correlation, if the product is near to 1, the variables have strong correlation, if the product is near to 0.5, the variables have moderate correlation, and if the product is near to 0, the variables have weak correlation.

Furthermore, the researchers also computed for the inter-coder reliability or the agreement between the coders using the Holsti formula (Holsti, 1969):

$$R = \frac{3M}{N1+N2+N3}$$

Where:

R= Reliability

M= number of coding decisions on which the two coders agree

N1, N2 & N3= the total number of coding decisions by the three coders, respectively

Study Limitations

The researchers struggled in finding a political expert who will be the third coder of this study. The researchers set qualifications for the third coder, hence, he/she must either be (1) a newspaper journalist or writer or columnist; or (2) politically inclined or has training in politics; or (3) teaches politics or political science or political communication. To avoid bias and favored results, the researchers tend not to resort to people connected to the three broadsheets. Another limitation is the expertise of the coders. The results of the study will be much firmer if there will be more than one expert coder who will analyze the data. Lastly, time constraint was also considered a study limitation because the time of the researchers was not dedicated to the study alone.

Results

Frequency of Appearances

A total of 90 articles were content analysed using the code sheet with its respective code book. For the News Presentation (Variable 1), 83% of the articles were classified as hard news, while the remaining 17% were coded as soft and opinion news. As per the Journalistic Standards, (Variable 2) 47% or almost half of the articles answers all 5Ws and 1H. Hence, 38% answers 4 questions which is also close to the highest scale. No articles were classified as to answering only one question from the 5Ws and 1H. Moreover, for the Treatment (Variable 3), half of the majority or 52% were classified as very negative while 120 articles were coded as negative. The remaining 21 articles were coded, respectively: 29 articles for neutral, 10 articles for positive, and 2 articles for very positive. And lastly, for the Placement of Articles (Variable 4), 68% or almost one-third of the articles were placed on the upper left

or right portion of the newspaper, 14% were placed on the center above the fold, and the remaining 17% were placed on the lower fold of the newspaper.

Descriptive Data Interpretation

One of the objectives of this study is to find out how the three Philippine broadsheets have reported the PDAF issue. Hence, the descriptive data interpretation level shows how each of these broadsheets presented PDAF in terms of news presentation, journalistic standards, treatment and placement. Likewise, it will also show how the three broadsheets reported PDAF in a general tone.

Table 3. Summary of Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Philippine Daily Inquirer, Philippine Star and Manila Bulletin

Variables	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Equivalent
News Presentation	2.77	0.54	Hard News
Journalistic Standards	4.3	0.77	Answers all 5Ws and 1H
Treatment	4.28	0.85	Very Negative
Placement	3.42	0.89	Upper Left or Right

The table above shows the summary of the mean ratings and standard deviations of the three broadsheets. Hence, it can be observed that the three broadsheets reported their news articles about PDAF as hard news in general by garnering a mean rating 2.77 out of 3. Similarly, the three broadsheets also adhere to answering all of the journalistic standards or 5Ws or 1H with the mean rating of 4.3 out of 5. Moreover, the three broadsheets framed their news articles as very negative with the mean rating of 4.28 out of 5. And lastly, the three broadsheets placed most of their PDAF articles on the upper left or right above the fold of the newspaper with the mean rating of 3.42 out of 4.

Inferential Data Interpretation

The study wanted to find out the relationships between the named variables. Moreover, it wanted to find out if one variable has a significant effect to the other. Furthermore, it sought to know how much that affects the prominence of the news articles. Therefore, for the inferential data interpretation, the researchers determined the relationship between the variables, and how each of them affects the other. Hence, this will measure if the degree of correlation between the variables is strong, moderate or weak.

Table 4. Summary of Correlation between the research variables

Variables		Correlation Coefficient	Sign	Magnitude
Journalists' Constructs *(News Presentation & Journalistic Standards)*	**Framed News Articles** *(Treatment)*	-0.93	Negative	Strong Correlation
Journalists' Constructs *(News Presentation & Journalistic Standards)* **Framed News Articles** *(Treatment)*	**Frequency of Appearances**	0.61	Positive	Moderate Correlation
Journalists' Constructs *(News Presentation & Journalistic Standards)* **Framed News Articles** *(Treatment)*	**Placement of News Articles**	-0.61	Negative	Moderate Correlation

The table above summarizes the correlation between the research variables. The results showed that the relationships between the variables will eventually lead to the prominence of the issue.

Relationship of Journalists' Constructs to Framed News Articles

One of the objectives of this study is to find out whether higher news presentation and journalistic standards will eventually result to higher treatment to achieve prominence of the issue.Table 7 shows that journalists' constructs (news presentation and journalistic standards) and framed news articles (treatment) have a strong correlation with a correlation coefficient of -0.93. Since the coefficient is negative, the result seems to imply that the increase in journalists' constructs led to the decrease intreatment.The resultalso seems toreveal that journalists' constructs and framed news articles have moderate correlation with the frequency of appearances of PDAF issues with a correlation coefficient of 0.61. Likewise, the increase in journalists' constructs and treatment led also to the increase in frequency of appearances, since the coefficient is positive.Furthermore, the results also inferred that the relationship of journalists' constructs and framed news articles (treatment) to the placement of its articles have a moderate correlation. Hence, the coefficient resulted to -0.61, which is negative. This seems to imply that the increase in journalists' constructs and treatment led to the decrease in placement of news articles.

Frequency of Appearances to Prominence of the Issue

The study's third hypothesis states that thehigher the frequency of appearance of PDAF issues in the three Philippine broadsheets, the more prominent is the issue. Hence, it was discussed previously in this paper that PDAF issues were mostly reported as hard news with a mean rating of 83%. Likewise, almost half of the news articles answered the 5Ws and 1H with a mean rating of 47%. Hence, the three broadsheets framed their PDAF articles as very negative, with a percentage of 48%. And lastly, 68% or almost three-fourth of the news articles was placed on the upper left or right, above the fold of the newspapers.

Placement of News Articles to Prominence of the Issue

The study's fourth hypothesis states that the higher the placement of PDAF issues on the upper left or right fold of the three Philippine broadsheets, the more prominent is the issue.

Referring to Table 6, which contains the summary of mean ratings and standard deviations of the three broadsheets, it was shown that most of the PDAF articles were placed on the upper left or right, above the fold of the newspapers by getting a mean rating of 3.42 out of 4. Furthermore, in order to achieve more reliable results, the researchers also computed the inter-coder reliability or agreement between the coders.

Table 5. Inter-coder reliability for News Presentation

Code	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Reliability	Percentage
	F	*F*	*F*		
Opinion News	5	5	5	1.00	100%
Soft News	7	13	9	0.72	72%
Hard News	78	72	76	0.96	96%

The table above shows the summary for the inter-coder reliability of news presentation. All three coders agreed that there are five articles that presented their news as opinion. 72% or almost a third level of agreement was achieved for the soft news and 96% reliability resulted to 96% agreement.

Table 6. Inter-coder reliability for journalistic standards

Code	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Reliability	Percentage
	F	*F*	*F*		
Answers 1Q	0	0	0	0	0%
Answers 2Qs	2	2	1	0.6	60%
Answers 3 Qs	9	11	14	0.79	79%
Answers 4Qs	31	31	38	0.93	93%
Answers all	48	46	37	0.85	84%

Table 6 shows the inter-coder reliability for journalistic standards. No published news articles that answers only one question from the 5Ws and 1H so the reliability resulted to zero. 60% and 79% agreement between the coders were achieved for answering only 2 questions and 3 questions, respectively. Likewise, 93% or total agreement was achieved for answering 4

questions, and 84% agreement was the result for answering the 5 questions from the 5Ws and 1H.

Table 7. Inter-coder reliability for treatment

Code	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Reliability	Percentage
	F	*F*	*F*		
Very Positive	0	2	0	0	0%
Positive	4	2	4	0.6	60%
Neutral	12	9	8	0.83	83%
Negative	35	29	35	0.89	89%
Very Negative	39	48	43	0.9	90%

The table shows the inter-coder reliability for treatment. Only two published articles (according to coder 2) were published for the very positive tone, which resulted to zero reliability. 60% reliability was achieved for the positive treatment. 83% and 89% reliability was the result for the neutral and negative treatment, respectively. 90% agreement was achieved for the very negative treatment.

Table 8. Inter-coder reliability for placement of news articles

Code	Coder 1	Coder 2	Coder 3	Reliability	Percentage
	F	*F*	*F*		
Lower left/right, below the fold	7	7	7	1.00	100%
Center, below the fold	9	9	9	1.00	100%
Center, above the fold	13	13	13	1.00	100%
Upper left or right, Above the fold	61	61	61	1.00	100%

Table 8 shows the inter-coder reliability for the placement of news articles. It can be seen that for all the 90 articles, the three coders agreed that 7 articles are placed on the lower left/right, below the fold portion of the newspaper, 9 articles are placed on the center, below the fold portion, 13 articles on the center, above the fold portion and 61 articles on the upper left or right above the fold portion.

Expert Validation: Voices from the Journalists

Results of the interview revealed that journalists' from the three broadsheets offered mixed views about the subject PDAF. The three journalists agreed that PDAF issue is a prominent issue because it "involves public interest" and that it is "timely and talked about most of the time." Hence, the three journalists also agreed that PDAF should be mostly written as objective but highlighted the requirement that "it should be based on facts" and journalists should "contain your [their] emotions when writing about a sensitive issue like this, if you [they] have claims, [they have to] make sure to back them with appropriate data."

Furthermore, Mr.Maragay and Mr.Samaniego said it depends on the news presentation with regards to its placement on the newspaper. Mr.Samaniego said that when the news articles are editorialised, then it should be on the opinion section. Meanwhile, Ms.Carvajal asserted that PDAF articles should be placed on the front page of the newspaper "because it is the part of the newspaper where it attract[s] most attention from the readers." Lastly, Mr.Samaniego and Mr.Maragay clearly asserted that negative news about PDAF have a greater impact on them. Mr.Samaniego even said that no news back then was written rather than negative. On the other hand, Mr.Carvajal chose not to disclose any opinion about the impact of PDAF's news treatment.

Discussion

Framing of News Articles by the Three Broadsheets

De Vreese (2005) strongly asserted that framing theory is divided into two levels: (1) frame-building, which is an agreement between journalists', elites and social movements on what issues should be published on the newspaper; (2) frame-setting, which refers to the interplay between the reader and the produced written article. This seems to run parallel to this study, wherein the three broadsheets have reported PDAF with suchdegree of prioritization wherein

the issue always appear on the most visible part of the newspaper,which would stimulate and affect the views of the people into thinking that PDAF is indeed, a prominent issue.

This study also supports the earlier statement ofScheufele's (1999, as cited in Scheufele& Tewksbury, 2007) that framing news articles builds a social reality in a predictable and patterned way. Hence, in relation to this study, the social reality equates to the PDAF issue, and the three broadsheets framed it with an observable pattern. It can be recalled that the results revealed that the three broadsheets gathered relatively the same level of news presentation (hard news), journalistic standards (answers all 5Ws and 1H), treatment (very negative), and placement (upper left or right). Therefore, the three broadsheets presented their PDAF-related articles in a foreseeable manner, following a certain pattern.

Moreover, Jan et al. (2013) also claim that print media organizations possess the power to frame their news articles, dictate people on what issues should be deemed important and shape the views of the readers. Saqib (2008) argued that the way the journalists present their news stories can shape and refine how the audience perceive a certain new issue. The study supports the previous assertions of Jan and his co-researchers and Saqib in a way that the three Philippine broadsheets frame PDAF as an important issue, and they dictate the readers on their views about PDAF.

This study also confirms the findings of Navarro et al (2011) in their study about print media reportage of agricultural biotechnology in the Philippines that the media, particularly newspaper outfits, dictates the audience of "what is often perceived as controversial if not contentious issue." Hence, although the three broadsheets framed PDAF as a controversialissue for the months of August, September and October, the degree of prominence of PDAF degrades when a new issue that has greater impact is exposed to the public. The researchers observed that the number of PDAF-related articles is at its peak on the month of August, especially on the last week when the Million People March Against Pork Barrel was held in Luneta, the Philippines. It lasted until the second week of September when several rallies in different parts of the Philippines became repercussions of the original Million People March. After that, the gradual decrease of published articles about PDAF was obviously seen among the three broadsheets.

Based on the critical analysis of the researchers during the data gathering process, it was observed that the three broadsheets' reportage of the PDAF articles differ with the consistency of the number of issues published on the covered months of this study. Hence, Philippine Daily Inquirer has constantly published more PDAF articles than Philippine Star and Manila Bulletin on a day-to-day basis. Unlike the two broadsheets, they tend to publish more PDAF articles than usual on days when more controversial PDAF-related news is exposed to the public. This is evident during the days of the Million People March against Pork Barrel, when Janet Napoles surrendered to President Aquino III, and the whistle-blower BenhurLuy's unexpected testimony against Janet Napoles. It can be inferred that although the three broadsheets published PDAF articles on a daily basis, the level of its appearances differ from each other.In terms of news presentation and treatment, the mean rating of the two variables revealed that the three broadsheets universally reported PDAF as hard news, and framed them as very negative. Thus, Baum (2002, as cited in Lahva, 2009) described hard news as objective, only report on facts and its sole purpose is to inform. However, the results showed that the dominant framing employed by the three broadsheets is very negative. This seemed to reveal that the three broadsheets craft their PDAF articles as hard news or objective, but it tends to undermine the hidden motive of the broadsheets which is to dictate the readers that PDAF should be projected as a negative issue.

In terms of the treatment and placement, it was already declared that most of the PDAF issues were framed as very negative, thus the placement of majority of the PDAF articles were placed on the upper left or right above the fold of the newspaper. Hence, the researchers infer that PDAF articles, which are predominantly framed as very negative, are placed on the portion of the newspaper (upper left or right) where it captures most attention of the readers. Thus, this seemed to imply that the three broadsheets wanted to heighten the reputation of PDAF as a controversial issue.The researchers also observed a pattern that most PDAF articles that are presented as hard news are placed on the upper left or right portion, and mostly on the front pages of the newspaper. One general factor that the researchers consider is period of time. Hence, this study analysed the three broadsheets' PDAF coverage from August to October 2013, which is the period when PDAF just erupted, and it was the most debated topic in the Philippines that stirred the attention of the readers. Likewise, several researchers (Allan, 1999; Gurevitch & Wollacot, 1982; Dor, 2014; Kitzinger 1998, as cited in Lahva, 2009) argued that hard news are generally placed on the front pages of the

newspapers. Therefore, it can be inferred that journalists tend to craft their news as hard news or objective so that it can mostly appear on the front page of the newspapers.

One of the objectives of this study is to find out how the three broadsheets reported their news articles about PDAF. Hence, with the analysis of the PDAF articles' news presentation, it was revealed that these broadsheets reported PDAF as hard news predominantly to achieve better framing. Therefore, this support the study of Baum (2002, as cited in Lahva, 2009) when it asserted that hard news presentation is more powerful than soft or opinion news when reporting about politically-inclined issues.Moreover, the results also showed that the broadsheets generally adhered in answering all the 5Ws and 1H. This clearly upholds to the earlier claim of Bell (1991, as cited in Clayman& Heritage, 2002) that complying with the 5Ws and 1H is a vital norm in order to achieve a more comprehensive news article, thus resulting to better framing. This study also validates the claims of Block and Keller (1995, as cited in Wood, 2011) when it asserted that negative framing is more effective than positive framing when reporting about political issues. Hence, in this study, the results showed that the three broadsheets framed most of their PDAF articles as very negative. This means that PDI, PS and MB seemed aware that presenting their PDAF-related articles negatively will eventually result to higher prominence.

This research also upholds the earlier findings of McCombs and Carroll (2003) that frequency of appearance of an issue is the most important determinant of its prominence. For this study, it was observed that PDAF-related articles were being published on a day-to-day basis, with strong compliance to the highest scales provided for this research's variables. This means that PDAF is considered as a prominent issue by the three broadsheets.Outing (2009) also runs parallel with this research when it argued that the eyes are most often fixated first in the upper left of the page, then remained in that area before following a pattern from left to right. Moreover, this can be supported by the claim of Gildersleeve (2014) that newspaper organizations often employ the inverted S or Z-pattern in positioning their news, where they put the most important stories at the top left and least important ones at the bottom right to project the level of prominence given to a certain issue. In this study, PDI, PS and MB placed majority of their PDAF articles on the upper left or right portion of the newspaper to provide higher prominence, which clearly authenticates the claims of Gildersleeve and Outing.

Guided by the framing theory, and based on the researchers' findings, the news media seems to frame their news in accordance to the degree of prominence of the issue during a specific period of time. Hence, PDAF was negatively framed by the three broadsheets because its prominence was as its peak during the months covered, and it gradually digress because another prominent issue was exposed to the public. Moreover, even though the news media seems to make it appear that news are reported in an objective manner, the results still show that majority of them were treated as negative. This implies that the three broadsheets cannot undermine the possibility that their own views will be mixed with the stories they make. This also seems to infer that newsmakers cannot move away from framing their supposedly neutral stories into positive or negative ones. Hence, in the case of PDAF, it was majorly framed as a negative issue by the three broadsheets.Through the analysis of the PDAF articles' News Presentation, Journalistic Standards, Treatment, Frequency of Appearances and Placement of News Articles, it seemed evident that the three Philippine broadsheets gave prominence to the PDAF issue. Moreover, the three broadsheets generally reported PDAF as hard news, adhered in answering all the 5Ws and 1H, framed their news as very negative, and placed their PDAF articles on the upper left or right portion of their respective newspapers. It clearly revealed that the three broadsheets gave high prominence to the PDAF issue.

However, when the relationships between the variables were observed, there is quite disparity found in each of them. It was mentioned that the three broadsheets gave prominence to PDAF by reporting most of its articles as hard news to achieve better framing of the issue. Hence, the results revealed that news presentation and treatment have a strong correlation, which means that the relationship between these two variables is very high.Likewise, the results also revealed that the journalists' constructs (news presentation and journalistic standards) and framed news articles (treatment) has only a moderate correlation with the frequency of appearances. The results also showed a positive correlation which implies that when the journalists' constructs and treatment is higher, PDAF articles' appearances will also go higher.Moreover, results further showed that the journalists' constructs and framed news articles also have a moderate effect or correlation with the placement of articles. The coefficient revealed a negative result which implies that when the first two variables increase, the second variable will decrease.

The PDAF issue is, in retrospect, a timely topic to discuss for research. The researchers realized that even though there are several preceding studies that analyzed the content of politically-inclined matters, there is still no particular research that is focused on studying news content related to PDAF.Thus, this study aims to expound the knowledge of people about issues linked to PDAF.Another important contribution is its in-depth data interpretation wherein it does not focus on the descriptive level of evaluating the results. It does not only aims to compare and contrast the tabulated data, but it also revealed the relationships between the research variables, and how it can affect one another.Hence, this paper can be a future reference for researches related to politics, or studies that employed content analysis as their research design.

Recommendations

The researchers propose that in future related studies, the corresponding coders who will evaluate the newspapers should be deeply knowledgeable about politically-inclined matters to ensure more sturdy and credible results.The researchers also recommendallotting a longer time frame in conducting the study, especially during the data gathering period. In that way, results can be further verified and be more established.Moreover, the research can be further expanded by adding more variables that would determine the prominence of PDAF issues.And lastly, instead on focusing on content alone, future researchers can also perform a focus group discussion with journalists from the three broadsheets to directly know how they package or write their PDAF stories.

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