

'Tabloidization' and the Internet Age

Julia Lefkowitz, Pembroke College
Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford

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Abstract

Claims asserting a decline in journalistic values are not new, dating back to the rise of the penny press in the 1830s. With the ascendance of the Internet, however, such claims have proliferated. These assertions, often referenced as a so-called 'tabloidization,' have frequently cited an ascension of tabloid values and content, and/or a decline in the values and content traditionally characteristic of 'quality' newspapers. The scholarship, however, lacks longitudinal empirical data from before and during the Internet era which supports, refutes, or modifies these allegations, a lacuna which is particularly problematic in view of the pivotal role of journalism in upholding democracy.

This thesis intervenes methodologically and theoretically in the literature, investigating a possible 'tabloidization' of tabloid and 'quality' British newspapers between 1968 and 2016. 'Tabloidization' is defined as the convergence of 'quality' newspapers towards 'soft' news content, and the journalistic values of sensationalism and personalization seen as traditionally characteristic of tabloid newspapers. In line with the relevant literature, economic, technological, and cultural factors are assessed as potential agents of these possible shifts. Methodologically, change and continuity in journalistic values and content are examined through application of corpus linguistic and content analytic methods, with a composite tabloidization measure generated to account for changes across values and content.

Findings show that between 1968 and 2016, a tabloidization of newspapers has not occurred. In particular, while tabloid elements have increased between 1968 and the end of the 20th century, in the wake of the Internet's ascendance, tabloid characteristics have declined, and 'quality' elements have augmented. The identified shifts in journalistic values and content indicate that newspapers have maintained and even increased their public service function, marking an intervention to media and journalism scholarship lamenting a disintegration of journalism in the public interest ostensibly connected to the Internet's ascension. Recent changes in newspapers can be understood as a means for reassurance, rather than despair, for those concerned by a putative decline in 'quality' journalism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Historically, the ascension of new technologies has been met with halcyon narratives of the past. This phenomenon has occurred in a broad range of fields including material culture (Sennett 2008; Thomas 2008), politics (Thompson 1995, 2000), and the arts, for example, music (Reynolds 2011) and cinema (Leitch 2018).

Journalism has not been immune from this trend. With the ascension of the Internet, claims of a putative decline in journalistic values and content have proliferated in media scholarship as well as in popular commentary. Such claims are particularly significant and merit attention in view of journalism's fundamental role in upholding democracy, as articulated through Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere (1960). Without a robust, free press, the argument asserts, citizens may not receive information that is crucial to their meaningful engagement with the polity, which poses a pivotal threat to the preservation of democracy (Habermas 1960; Thompson 1995; Sparks 1998; Conboy 2004; Lundt and Livingstone 2013).

Yet despite the abundance of claims asserting a recent erosion of journalistic values and a decline in public service-oriented content (e.g. Sampson 1996; Patterson 2000; Bennett 2012), a longitudinal, textually-based study has yet to investigate such declarations on the basis of empirical data. In particular, while intuitive assumptions alleging increases in the prevalence of 'soft' news stories and of elements of sensationalism and personalization in news coverage abound, such claims lack quantitative, longitudinal, textual support (Sampson 1996; Bromley 1998; Barnett 1998; Uribe and Gunter 2004; Bird 2009; Serazio 2009; Rowe

2011). These declarations - positing an ascension of tabloid values and content, and a decline in the values and content seen as traditionally characteristic of 'quality' news publications - are key components of 'tabloidization' debates. 'Tabloidization' is a crucial and oft-referenced term, debates concerning which are at the nexus of key topics in media and journalism studies, such as the role of news media in society, the changing nature of the mass media, and the impacts of the rise of new information communication technologies on the polity.

It is a central objective of this thesis to address the empirical gap in the literature, whereby a recent 'tabloidization' of newspapers has been asserted without the requisite supporting data, in the form of a robust, longitudinal, textually-based study. This objective, and the project's additional aims, as well as its structure, will be introduced in the thesis' first chapter. The chapter will also introduce the key journalism concepts core to the dissertation's interests and objectives: these are namely journalistic values, the Habermasian concept of the public sphere and journalism in the public interest, and 'tabloidization.' Subsections dedicated to each of these conceptualizations will furthermore expound why a possible 'tabloidization' of newspapers is a matter of significance to individuals living in democratic societies, and to the future of democracies more broadly.

1.2. Thesis: Aims and Structure

1.2a. Aims

The dissertation's findings contribute to 3 broader fields: journalism, media linguistics, and Internet studies. To summarize, the thesis' findings show an increase in tabloid values and a decline in 'quality' values between the thesis' starting point in 1968, through to the launch of the newspapers' online editions at the end of the 20th century/beginning of the 21st century,

and a reversal of this trend during the second half of the project's time period. While introduced at this point in the manuscript in order to provide the reader with context, the implications of these findings specific to the arenas of journalism, media linguistics, and Internet studies, will be expounded in greater detail through the thesis' conclusions chapter in particular.

With regard to journalism, the dissertation provides an empirical and conceptual intervention to the body of 'tabloidization' literature, assessing whether or not, and if so, the extent to which, a 'tabloidization' of newspapers has occurred in the past 48 years. The project also evaluates the role of putative causal factors of 'tabloidization,' drawing namely from technological, economic, and cultural arenas. Examining longitudinal findings, the thesis interprets the implications of change and continuity in journalistic values and content with regards to the democratic function of the press, detailing the consequences of identified shifts for the polity. In addition, the dissertation produces an original composite tabloidization measure, consisting of a composite 'quality' elements and composite tabloid elements calculation, each reflecting the relative salience of tabloid and 'quality' characteristics at a given juncture in time for each of the newspapers subject to analysis. Drawing from these considerations the dissertation's conclusions chapter offers recommendations for news outlets, identifying approaches which may assist these organizations in obtaining financial sustainability while producing news that is in the public interest, or serves to uphold a robust democracy.

In terms of media linguistics, the dissertation is the first study to conduct a longitudinal corpus linguistic analysis of a large body of journalistic texts to the end of determining possible change and continuity in journalistic values. The thesis also yields a novel corpus of newspaper texts, 'British Newspapers: 1968 – 2016,' comprised of news articles from major

legacy tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers, as well as a prominent digital native publication. Accordingly, the dissertation provides original data revealing the linguistic contours, and longitudinal shifts therein, of British newspaper discourse, in addition to bestowing a novel resource for future media linguistics scholarship.

With regards to Internet studies, the thesis provides extensive data shedding light on the putative impact of the Internet’s ascendance on the journalistic values and content of legacy newspapers. In line with ‘tabloidization’ claims, recent scholarship and media commentary (e.g. Reinardy 2010, 2013) often base assumptions of the Internet’s ostensibly negative impact on journalistic coverage on intuition rather than empirical data. Thus, the thesis provides data that is significant to understanding the implications for the polity of journalism in the Internet era.

1.2b. Structure

The thesis is structured in order to detail with clarity the key theoretical frameworks and to provide context and rationale for the study’s methods and subsequent results. In this chapter’s following subsections, the key journalism concepts of particular pertinence to this thesis are introduced and expounded; these concepts are journalistic values, the Habermasian public sphere framework and the adjunct conceptualization of public interest journalism, and ‘tabloidization.’ This discussion foregrounds the theoretical frameworks proffered in the thesis’ following chapter.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theory pertinent to the 3 arenas from which the putative causal factors draw: these are the economic, technological, and cultural. Drawing from the literature review, the chapter subsequently delineates a novel theoretical framework through which to understand the ‘tabloidization’ process, accounting for the

possible impact(s) of the Internet's ascendance. The first subsection of the chapter discusses the project's research question and hypotheses, explaining how the former is positioned to assess the thesis' principal objective: to produce an empirically-based verdict of whether or not a 'tabloidization' of British newspapers has occurred in the wake of the Internet's ascendance. This section also explores how, in supporting the dissertation's research question and on the basis of empirical data, each of the hypotheses are positioned to determine the agency of the putative causal factors of 'tabloidization.'

In the third chapter, an overview of the dissertation's methods is proffered alongside the relevant journalism, media, and media linguistics literature, contextualizing the thesis' methods with regards to the pertinent methodological studies. Rationale for the selection of the thesis' methods, corpus linguistics and content analysis, are posited, with each method expounded. The ways and contexts in which each method is applied in the thesis are explained, with descriptions of the dissertation's sampling approaches also detailed. The thesis' fourth chapter provides historical and organizational information specific to the 5 news outlets subject to examination and an overview of social change in Britain contemporaneous to the thesis' timeframe. The background information regarding each of the news publications provides the reader both with rationale for the selection of each of the publications for analysis and serves to familiarize the reader with key events, developments, and dynamics specific to each outlet. The chapter's penultimate section discussing key social change taking place in Britain during the thesis' 1968 – 2016 timeframe similarly aims to provide the reader with key context pertinent to the 3 findings chapters, which follow.

Data and findings from the thesis' data collection are presented and discussed in chapters 5 through 7. Each chapter provides detailed information and context on the developments or events central to the data points subject to analysis (this sampling approach

is discussed in depth across Chapter two and Chapter 3). Chapters 5, 6, and 7 conclude with a summary of the findings specific to each chapter; an examination and discussion of results which integrates the thesis' theoretical frameworks is situated in the project's concluding chapter. The formats of chapters 5, 6, and 7 mirror one another, with data and findings addressed from the earliest to latest dates examined. Data and findings are divided across chapters in view of the quantity of data and analysis entailed. However, and as suggested through Chapter two, as well as through the findings chapters, different groupings of putative causal factors are examined within each of these chapters. Temporally, these periods can be described in terms of a first, pre-Internet era, a second period wherein the Internet is relatively novel and in its early stages, and a third, Web 3.0 period, wherein data generated online is used to create "new meaning" in new ways (Barassi and Treré 2012, 1272).

In Chapter 8, the thesis' final chapter, change and continuity between the 1968 and 2016 data points are discussed, with the thesis' research question and hypotheses re-approached, and responses to each generated in view of the entirety of the thesis' data. Subsequently, the dissertation's theoretical framework for tabloidization is revisited, with an empirically-informed overview of the process of tabloidization detailed. Final subsections of the thesis interpret the consequences of the project's findings for the public sphere and for democracy, and with regard to the future of legacy newspapers. Recommendations which outline strategies for news organizations to obtain economic sustainability while producing journalism that upholds newspapers' public interest function are proposed, followed by the dissertation's concluding remarks.

As context pertaining to the thesis' objectives and structure have been proffered, providing some orientation for the reader regarding the dissertation's interests, aims, and

approaches, this chapter will now proceed to explore and discuss the journalism concepts core to the project.

1.3. Key Journalism Concepts and Why 'Tabloidization' Matters

1.3a. Journalistic Values

In order to more precisely clarify the thesis' conceptualization of 'tabloidization' and to expound its significance in the context of democratic societies, it is necessary to first proffer a definition for journalistic values. Sometimes referred to as news values, newspaper values, or journalism values, journalistic values have been conceptualized in varying ways across the scholarship. This thesis takes the view that journalistic values can usefully be understood as comprising a broader journalism ideology, drawing principally from work by Schudson (2001) and Deuze (2005). In line with this conceptualization of journalistic values, it is possible that the ideology of journalism is changing in the wake of the Internet's ascendance; this is a notion which will be assessed in the dissertation's conclusion chapter in line with the thesis' findings.

Ideology has been viewed as a core facet of journalism's professionalization, during the 20th century (Schudson 2001; Deuze 2004, 2005a, 2005b). In this line of thought, journalism's ideology is comprised of ideals and values through which journalists orient themselves towards their work and make decisions which inform their reporting (Schudson 2001; Deuze 2005a, 2005b). Herein, the journalistic ideals listed in the literature are: objectivity, subjectivity, independence, fair play, neutrality, and balance (e.g. Schudson 2001; Hampton 2008; Sambrook 2012; Riordan 2014; Steensen 2017; Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2017). As noted by Deuze (2005a), conceptualizations of journalism as an ideology meaningfully

distinguish the field from a “literary genre” or a “complex social system,” for example (Deuze 2005a, 444). Taking the association between journalistic ideology and journalism’s professionalization a step further, it is possible that a recent putative shift in journalistic values could be linked with a “de-professionalization” of journalism associated with the rise and widespread use of the Internet (Witschge and Nygren 2009, 55). This is a possibility which will also be addressed in consideration of the thesis’ findings.

The influence of individual, cultural, and organizational values on journalistic values has also been discussed in the literature (Gans 1979; Vaill 1992). The scholarship asserts a distinction between the values upheld by individual journalists and journalistic values whereby the latter are broadly common constituents of the occupation as a whole and, as previously mentioned, fundamental to understandings of journalism as a professional occupation (Gans 1979; Vaill 1992; Deuze 2005a). This separation of individual and journalistic values, and the ability of each to remain distinct from one another, is a point which deserves greater examination in the literature, particularly in view of the ascension of ‘non-professional’ individuals exogenous to the traditional parameters of the journalistic profession, such as bloggers, who are publishing news online.

By contrast, cultural and organizational values are depicted as superseding the impact of an individual journalist’s values and of formatively shaping journalistic values more broadly. This is depicted as occurring in line with audience demographic considerations, whereby the values upheld by a news organization in a given city or town should align with the information needs of its citizens (Vaill 1992; Deuze 2005). These assertions are resonant of field theory, wherein culture and news organizations can also be viewed as core facets of the journalistic field (Benson 1998), particularly if news organizations are viewed as operating in terms of

economic goals. As will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, this thesis contends that economic as well as technological factors can impact on journalistic values.

Drawing from the work of Galtung and Ruge (1965), Vaill (1992) and Deuze (2005), journalistic values should in the context of this dissertation be understood as the ideals or standards according to which journalists make decisions and define themselves as professionals, and which comprise journalistic ideology. Further, this thesis posits that journalistic ideology is constituted of the configuration of journalistic values upheld by a specific news outlet or type of news publication, such as tabloid or 'quality' newspapers. Accordingly, this dissertation also assesses longitudinal change and continuity in journalistic ideology, and the possibility of a fundamental change in journalistic ideology in association with the rise and widespread use of the Internet.

Particularly in the context of journalism ideology, journalistic values can also be understood to exist on a continuum, whereby at a specific news outlet, or type of news outlet – tabloid or 'quality', for example - any one value may be prioritized more or less than another value. For example, while a specific tabloid publication may give greater prominence to sensationalism than to 'information-orientation,' it can still uphold both values within its ideology. Similarly, a 'quality' newspaper may prioritize 'information-orientation' above sensationalism or personalization, upholding all 3 values in its ideology. Accordingly, a news article on any given topic may, and is in fact likely to, contain elements of multiple journalistic values.

Table 1.1a. 'Quality' and Tabloid Journalistic Values

Value	Type of Newspaper	Literature Reference(s)
Objectivity	'Quality'	e.g. Tuchman 1972; Schudson 1978, 2001
Truth	'Quality'	e.g. Hampton 2008
Fair play	'Quality'	e.g. Hampton 2008
Impartiality	'Quality'	e.g. Sambrook 2012
Balance	'Quality'	e.g. Boykoff and Boykoff 2004
Independence	'Quality'	e.g. Hampton 2008
Accuracy	'Quality'	e.g. Sambrook 2012
'Information-orientation'	'Quality'	e.g. Lefkowitz 2018
Literary Value	'Quality'	e.g. Chalaby 1996
Personalization	Tabloid	e.g. Esser 1999; Skovsgaard 2014; Conboy 2015
Sensationalism	Tabloid	e.g. Esser 1999; Skovsgaard 2014; Conboy 2006
Subjectivity	Tabloid	e.g. Steensen 2017
Emotionalism	Tabloid	e.g. MacDonald 2000

Examples of journalistic values identified by media scholarship include truth, objectivity, fair play, neutrality, impartiality, balance, accuracy, independence, partisanship, literary value, emotionalism, personalization and sensationalism (e.g. Tuchman 1972; Schudson 1978, 2000; Streckfuss 1990; Donsbach and Klett 1993; Esser 1998; MacDonald 2000; Benson 2002; Boykoff and Boykoff 2004; Hampton 2008; Conboy 2004, 2011; Sambrook 2012; Lefkowitz 2013; Skovsgaard 2014). An important consideration are distinctions in the journalistic values across national and media system contexts, as well as across 'quality' and tabloid newspapers, as has been discussed by the literature.

Numerous scholarship has identified differences in journalistic values across national and media system contexts (e.g. Chalaby 1996; Esser 1999; Sagay 2002; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Benson and Hallin 2007; Hampton 2008; Benson et al. 2013; Christin 2020). Cross-national journalistic value distinctions have been attributed to differences across historical contexts (Anderson 1983; Chalaby 1996), cultural values (Sagay 2002; Hampton 2008), legal systems (Esser 1999; Sagay 2002), economic models (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Benson and Hallin 2007), and political systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Benson and Hallin 2007). While

cross-national differences in journalistic values are beyond the purview of this thesis, particularly in view of the role of complex, intertwining historical factors, some of which originate from centuries into the past, it is worth noting the journalistic values which the literature has identified as distinctive of the British context.

In the British arena, the values associated with 'quality' newspapers have often been referred to as truth, fairness, and independence (Chalaby 1996; Hampton 2008; Conboy 2011). While the British context has been categorized as a part of the North American or liberal model by Hallin and Mancini (2004), these authors as well as scholars such as Chalaby (1996) have also conveyed distinctions between the values upheld by 'quality' newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. The principal difference pertains to the value of objectivity, which has been depicted as a core value in American journalism (Tuchman 1972; Schudson 1978, 2001; Cotter 2010; Sambrook 2012) and has not been seen as salient in the UK context, where journalism is to a larger extent characterized by partisanship (Chalaby 1996; Hampton 2008; Sambrook 2012). Interestingly, such cross-national studies tend to not interpret differences in journalistic values in terms of journalistic ideology; as will be discussed shortly, conceptualizations of journalistic ideology, however, have been applied in comparisons of tabloid and 'quality' journalistic values.

Further, it can be noted that while values identified as characteristic of 'quality' news publications tend to vary on a nation by nation or media system by media system basis, those values identified as characteristic of tabloids tend to remain the same across national contexts. This inconsistency in the literature could be seen to suggest greater homology between the journalistic ideology upheld by 'quality' and tabloid journalists, than between 'quality' journalists across the spectrum of national contexts. So while journalistic ideology may be most vulnerable to shifts in journalistic values at the level of national forces, within

the arena of tabloid newspapers, journalistic values are depicted as the most resilient from such potential change.

With regard to the topic of homology versus distinctions between tabloid and 'quality' newspaper values, while a plethora of scholarship has often depicted 'quality' and tabloid journalism values as dichotomous to one another (Sparks 1998, 2000; Harrington 2008), numerous studies have also underscored the notion of adherence to a common journalism ideology. Such scholarship applies an understanding of ideology that is slightly different from the one upheld by this thesis (Bird 1990; Rhoufari 2000; Deuze 2005b). With regard to the former type of depictions, Sparks (1998), for example, references a "dichotomization" (8) of tabloid and 'quality' journalistic values in the UK over the course of the 20th century. This assertion, however, is mentioned without reference to supporting empirical data. Harrington (2008), drawing from the 'tabloidization' literature, depicts the binary distinctions that have been associated with 'popular' and 'quality' newspapers respectively. While not explicitly engaging with conceptualizations of journalistic values or ideology, implied are drastically differing journalistic values across the two publication types; it would not be possible for the publication types to uphold the same or similar proportional configurations of journalistic values and differ in such numerous respects.

Certain scholarship, namely that which engages more theoretically with conceptualizations of journalistic values, depicts similarities in the journalistic ideologies upheld by journalists and editors at tabloid and 'quality' news outlets. Deuze (2005b), for example, argues that tabloid journalists adhere to similar ideals as other journalists, in terms of "servicing the public" (878). In this same line of thought, Rhoufari (2000), states that tabloid journalists and editors "proclaim their attachment to the professional values which define the journalistic ideal" (163). Both scholars, in their respective research, also identify an overriding

emphasis on commercial concerns in the tabloid context as an important point of distinction from 'quality' newspaper journalists, and yield supporting data findings through ethnographic methods. Rhoufari (2000), also incorporating references to the Bourdieusian journalistic field, further stresses the role of competition on tabloid journalists, whereby rivalry between other publications and, in particular, other tabloid titles, supersedes the journalistic ideals and values upheld in common with 'quality' journalists. Thus, despite the "most singular" (Rhoufari 2000, 172), predominant force of economic factors in the tabloid context, tabloid and 'quality' journalists are depicted as sharing certain core professional values.

It is also important to note the discursive constitution of journalistic values, particularly in view of this dissertation's linguistic methods. The capacity of journalistic discourse to express and reify journalistic ideology has been shown by Van Dijk (2009), and is a concept which has been supported by numerous other journalism and media linguistics scholarship (Fowler 1991; Deuze 2005b; Cotter 2010; Bednarek and Caple 2012). In line with journalistic values, and through its representation of journalistic values, the language appearing in journalism texts is a function of the decisions made by journalists, employed by specific news outlets and within national and media system contexts (Cotter 2010; Bednarek and Caple 2012).

Further, journalistic values are not only represented through linguistic markers, but through the broader topics which are the focus of news coverage, or journalistic discourse. This is to say that just as journalists make decisions regarding the language of their reporting, decisions are made regarding subjects and types of news coverage published. For example, a news outlet which prioritizes sensationalism may not only commonly deploy linguistic indices of sensationalism – such as various types of adjectives and adverbs – it may also choose to publish more stories on sensational topics such as sex scandals. Accordingly, and as discussed

in greater detail in Chapter 3, this thesis assesses both the proportional configurations of linguistic indices of journalistic values deployed and the topics covered within and across news publications, both synchronically and longitudinally.

The potential consequences of the configuration of this language and topics in representing the journalistic values upheld by news organizations are of particular significance in view the democracy-enhancing function of journalism, or journalism in the public interest.

1.3b. Habermas and Journalism in the Public Interest

The democratic function of newspapers is often referenced by media, journalism, and tabloidization scholarship (Habermas 1962; Thompson 1995; Örnebring and Jonsson 2004; Conboy 2004, 2011). This putative role of the press is commonly explained through Habermas' (1962) conceptualization of the ideal bourgeois public sphere (e.g. Thompson 1995; Örnebring and Jonsson 2004; Conboy 2004, 2011). The Habermasian public sphere model is a particularly useful theoretical framework through which to understand the role of the press in upholding democracy, and accordingly, as noted by the scholarship, Habermas' has been prominently cited in the media and journalism literature (Lunt and Livingstone 2013).

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Habermas argues that the emergence of mercantile capitalism along with changing institutional forms of political power created the conditions necessary for the rise of a new, ideal public sphere in early modern Europe. Particular importance is attributed to the role of the periodical press, which is ascribed with the capacity to inform members of the public sphere, who engage in the critical rational debate that is crucial to democratic processes. As Thompson notes, at the

time of its conception, the ideal public sphere had a transformative effect on “the institutional form of modern states” (1995, 70), which were prior to this juncture controlled by an opaque, aristocratic, ruling elite.

In line with the ideal Habermasian public sphere model, journalism in the public interest has been seen as that which stands to provide citizens with information that is crucial to their participation in democracy, or is in the public interest. While this thesis acknowledges that journalistic elements, such as sensationalism, may also be present in a specific article, or news publication, for example, that journalism in the public interest should feature a predominant focus on information that ultimately serves to enhance the polity. For example, coverage of the revelations of Edward Snowden can be identified as ‘democratic journalism’ in that public knowledge of government surveillance practices is crucial to the protection of citizens’ democratic rights with regard to privacy and government abuse of power. While articles on this topic may have also included less ‘information-oriented’ elements, the salutary contributions of the coverage to democracy outweigh such features. Further, it can be noted that although the necessary changes to government surveillance policies have not been legislated at the time of writing, as a result of the public debates which ensued after the revelations, governments have been forced to publicly respond to the matter, which still remains a salient theme in public debates.

The duration of the ideal public sphere depicted by Habermas, however, was brief: in line with Frankfurt school critiques, Habermas laments what he describes as the ‘refeudalization’ of the public sphere resulting from the rise of global capitalism. The pervasive and corrosive effects of capitalism led to, the argument suggests, the emergence of a mass, commoditized media which has, in essence, failed to successfully inform and engage members of democratic societies (Habermas 1962). Habermas in particular laments the

forces of advertising and public relations which he sees as increasingly colonizing media discourse. More broadly, while newspaper stories which can be said to serve little or no public service function are by no means a new phenomenon, first proliferating through the rise of the penny press in America (Schudson 1978), a recent surge in and variegation of such articles (Rantanen 2012) linking with recent technological innovations and adjunct shifts in the newspaper industry's business models has been widely referenced by media scholarship and commentary, and has also been acknowledged by Habermas himself (2004).¹

The ideal public sphere framework has also been criticized on several accounts, a number of which subsequently identify journalism in the public interest in different terms. A common subject of criticism is the exclusion of non-white, non-male, and uneducated demographics from the model. Feminist scholars, for example, note the absence of women and the lauded reign of rationality, whereby features such as emotionalism are marginalized (Connell 1991; Fraser 1992; Mouffe 1999). Journalism in the public interest has in this vein been understood as that which stands to engage and represent readers other than those constituting the traditional mainstream public sphere (MacDonald 2000; Örnebring and Jonsson 2004; Örnebring 2006). For example, a human interest story on a homeless man living in London which is run in the *Daily Mirror* may help to draw attention to homelessness in cities across the country; emotionalism can in this context, as well as in others, be shown to serve as a powerful journalistic value through which audience attention and action can be mobilized to enhance democracy. Relating this example to the thesis' conceptualization of journalism ideology and journalistic values, while the article's focus on homelessness stands

¹ As this thesis will discuss in greater detail, this shift should and has also been attributed to factors both adjunct and beyond mere technological innovations and economic shifts, namely in the realm of cultural factors, such as the changes in the dynamics and salience of popular culture (Conboy 2002, 2004).

to draw public awareness to and help fix the socio-political issue of homelessness, emotionalism, perhaps in the form of personalization, is also represented through the article, and in such a way that might more effectively bolster the text's potential democracy-enhancing capacity.

Numerous critiques of Habermas's work have proffered alternative models that are less normatively-oriented, and a plethora of more recent research accounts for more recent developments which stand to impact on the traditional public sphere framework. With regard to the public sphere model's normativity, and resonating strands of MacDonald's critique of Habermas (2000), Örnebring and Jonsson (2004) argue that, since its inception, the tabloid press have had and often realize a capacity to enhance an alternative public sphere populated by demographics marginalized by the Habermasian model. Örnebring and Jonsson's work is supported through a historical methodology, which is complemented by Örnebring's (2006) comparison of two popular journalism campaigns from the 19th century, highlighting differences in the framing and mode of address deployed across the reporting. This body of scholarship is an important indicator of the potential salutary impacts of tabloid newspapers and tabloid journalism values through identification of their emancipatory potential; it is possible that tabloid publications and tabloid ideologies have never been as detrimental to democracy as assumed by much of the literature.

In the body of public sphere scholarship that accounts for the Internet's ascendance, Barton (2005), for example, argues that blogs, wikis, and discussion boards are contemporary counterparts of early modern era British coffee houses, which housed the critical rational debate core to the public sphere's emergence. In underscoring the public sphere's discursive component, Dahlgren (2005) identifies numerous "Net-based" public spheres (153) and notes both the salutary potential to enhance democracy and the hazardous potential for

fragmentation latent in each. As exemplified by events such as the Arab Spring and the spate of online misinformation in the run-up to the 2016 US presidential election, it is worth acknowledging the democracy-enhancing as well as the democracy-eroding capacities of information dispersed through the Internet.

Accordingly, drawing from the Habermasian model and in view of its identified shortcomings, journalism in the public interest can be understood as that which stands to inform citizens so that they are equipped to meaningfully engage in key democratic processes. This thesis accepts critiques of the Habermasian public sphere's exclusionary elements, and agrees with scholarship citing limitations pertaining to its singular, bourgeoisie, and male-centric orientation. Thus, for example, in line with feminist critiques of the Habermasian public sphere, information in the public interest need not be strictly factual; it must rather serve an end of protecting or enhancing democracy and democratic rights of citizens from across the demographics spectrum. This is to say that tabloid values, such as personalization or sensationalism, can in certain contexts, contribute positively to journalism in the public interest. Accordingly, this dissertation adheres to a more pluralistic, up-to-date conceptualization of the Habermasian model, while simultaneously assessing possible reconfigurations of journalistic values and content which may indicate fundamental shifts in journalism ideology and in the type of information being represented through newspapers. The thesis' conceptualization of the public sphere is revisited and further enhanced in chapter two, 'Theorizing Putative Causes of Tabloidization.'

As the democracy-enhancing capacity of journalism has been established, conveying the stakes of a rise in journalism ideology that does not prioritize this function, the topic and potential implications of 'tabloidization' can be meaningfully examined. The following subsection draws from the pertinent scholarship in discussing conceptualizations of

‘tabloidization,’ ‘tabloidization’ debates, the theoretical frameworks which have been proffered for ‘tabloidization,’ and finally proposing a novel definition for ‘tabloidization.’

1.3c. Tabloidization

As acknowledged by media literature (e.g. Esser 1999; Bird 2000, 2008; Sparks 1998, 2000; Uribe and Gunter 2004; Clark 2013; Magin and Stark 2014; Magin 2017), ‘tabloidization’ has served as an umbrella term through which media scholars have conveyed a spectrum of assumptions and opinions. While the term was first recorded by lexicographers in 1991 (Esser 1999), the spread of tabloid characteristics into ‘quality’ news outlets long pre-dates the 1990s (Esser 1999; Schudson 2000; Sparks 2000; Conboy 2011; Skovsgaard 2014). Recent references to the phenomenon by media scholars and commentators, however, reflect recent debates regarding the changing nature of mass media, the role of journalism in democratic societies, and shifting conceptualizations of the public sphere.

‘Tabloidization’ has often been understood in terms of a reconfiguration of the journalistic values and content traditionally seen as characteristic of tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers respectively (Bromley 1998; Esser 1999; Magin and Stark 2000; Sparks 2000; Bird 2008, 2009; Wang 2012; Skovsgaard 2014; Magin 2017). In line with this thesis’ conceptualization of journalistic ideology, this can also be viewed as a shift in journalistic ideology at ‘quality’ newspapers, whereby tabloid values have become increasingly prominent ideological components.

Scholarship often identifies sensationalism and personalization as the journalistic values characteristic of tabloid publications ‘tabloidization’ (e.g. Bromley 1998; Conboy 2011; Skovsgaard 2014). For example, in his study of Danish tabloid and non-tabloid journalistic values in the context of ‘tabloidization,’ Skovsgaard (2014) contrasts the sensationalism and

personalization seen as characteristic of tabloid journalism with the “public service norm” upheld by journalists at ‘quality’ news outlets. In his history of journalism in Britain, Conboy (2011) references recent “political, cultural and technological changes” whereby the “sensationalism and personalization of the popular press” have “infected the whole news media market” (Conboy 2011, 117). Bromley (1998) also underscores the diachronic nature of a recent ‘tabloidization,’ contending that beginning in the 1990s, the ‘quality’ press came to incorporate the “sensationalism” which it had criticized within the tabloid press and which had been “associated almost exclusively” (30) with tabloids in the earlier part of the 20th century, a notion which corroborates depictions of ‘tabloidization’ as a process (e.g. Esser 1999; Uribe and Gunter 2004; Bird 2009).

In line with the sensationalism and personalization depicted as the journalistic values associated with ‘tabloidization,’ scandal and entertainment-centric topics are associated with the content component of ‘tabloidization’ (Kurtz 1993; Franklin 1997; Bromley 1998; Esser 1999; Magin and Stark 2000; Sparks 2000; Conboy 2004, 2011; Wang 2012; Bastos 2017). Esser (1999), for example, identifies “entertainment” “sleaze” and “scandal” (305) as elements of the “spill-over” (305) of tabloid characteristics, and Bird (2009) states, “Celebrity news and gossip are seen to be crowding out serious news, and human interest stories receive more coverage than important international events” (41 – 42). Similarly, Conboy (2011) identifies putative increases in “news about celebrities, entertainment, lifestyle features” and “personal issues” (117) as a core element of recent ‘tabloidization’ debates.

As suggested, ‘tabloidization’ is often depicted as a spill-over of tabloid values and content into ‘quality’ press (Franklin 1997; Bromley 1998; Esser 2008; Sparks 2000; Baker 2006; Rowe 2011; Skovsgaard 2014; Magin 2017). Words such as “infected” (Conboy 2011, 117) and “contaminated” (Connell 1998, 12; Esser 1999, 293) are deployed, connoting

perceived negative implications of the ostensible shifts. Certain scholarship even describes critical reactions to ‘tabloidization’ of ‘quality’ news as a “moral panic” in its own right (e.g. MacDonald 2000; Sparks 2000; Örnebring and Jonsson 2007; Conboy 2011; Rowe 2011). Across the mediums cited in the relevant debates, ‘tabloidization’ is principally represented as a phenomenon which affects ‘quality’ press (Franklin 1997; Connell 1998; Esser 1999; Magin and Stark 2000; Skovsgaard 2014). However, several studies identify a recent ascendance of tabloid values and content within tabloids themselves (Magin and Stark 2000; Uribe and Gunter 2004). Suggested is the importance of subjecting both tabloid and ‘quality’ outlets to methodological examination.

‘Tabloidization’ debates often discuss the broadcast medium and have touched on news magazines and radio as well. In the U.S., for example, the ascendance of tabloid characteristics is frequently identified within the emergence of tabloid news shows, such as Rupert Murdoch’s *Current Affairs* (Connell 1998; Bird 2000). However, literature on ‘tabloidization’ in the British context focuses predominantly on newspapers, and a relatively large body of literature identifies or alludes to the ‘tabloidization’ of ‘quality’ British news publications (e.g. Sampson 1996; Franklin 1997; Barnett 1998; McLachlan and Golding 2000; Sparks 2000; Conboy 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011). This can be linked to the historical popularity of tabloids in Britain (Esser 1999; Conboy 2006). In political-economic terms, the success of UK tabloids has to a substantial extent been attributed to the early commercialisation of the country’s newspaper industry: whereas government subsidies still provided substantial funding for U.S. newspapers, for example, British advertisers poured money into Britain’s highly commercialized newspaper arena (Esser 1999). Yet despite the particular popularity of tabloids and references to ‘tabloidization’ in the British context, research on the topic is

notably devoid of empirical data (Sparks 1998, 2000; Magin and Stark 2000; Wang 2012; Magin 2017).

In terms of theoretical effects, media literature depicts the ascendance of tabloid journalistic values and content as adjunct to a decline in 'quality' journalistic values such as objectivity and truth, as well as in coverage of political and, more broadly, 'serious' news topics (e.g. Franklin 1997; Barnett 1998; Esser 1999; Sparks 1998; Brookes 2000; Carter and Allan 2000; Sparks 2000; Baker 2006; Rao and Johal 2006; Bird 2008, 2009; Conboy 2004, 2011; Magin and Stark 2010; Bastos 2017). As Sparks states, "... it is claimed that the serious press either adopts outright the standards of the tabloid press or indulges in what some call 'tabloid laundering'" (2000, 3). While scholarship attributes varying amounts of agency to the 'quality' press with regards to their possible role in putative 'tabloidization' processes, perceived changes in 'quality' journalistic values are also represented in terms of a simplification of news (Baker 2006; Rao and Johal 2006; Rowe 2011; Bennett 2012; Magin 2017) whereby complex events and phenomena are reported without sufficient regard for facts and/or nuance. Numerous scholars reference a decline in 'serious' news content, such as Franklin (1997), for example, who identifies parliamentary coverage as "a thing of the past" (1997, 233) across newspaper types. Through a diachronic quantitative content analysis, MacLachlan and Golding (2000) also find precipitous drops in political news coverage in 'quality' British newspapers. Corroborating other recent research, MacLachlan and Golding (2000) also identify an increasing prevalence of scandal, human interest, and entertainment stories (Lull and Hinerman 1997; Thompson 2000; Apostolidis and Williams 2004; Juntunen and Välvirronen 2010; Entman 2012).

Another frequent topic of discussion are shifts in the character of political affairs coverage. Often depicted is an increase in personalization whereby emphasis on the

personalities and private lives of political figures in effect marginalizes political issues and context (e.g. Esser 1999; Thompson 1995, 2000; Sparks 1998; Baum 2003; Apostolidis and Williams 2004; Rao and Johal 2006; Bennett 2012; Entman 2012; Juntunen and Valiveronen 2010; Stayner 2013; Umbricht and Esser 2016). Hereby, scholars often directly or indirectly condemn ‘personalization’ and more broadly, ‘tabloidization,’ as a means through which information that is critical to meaningful citizen engagement in democratic processes is neglected (e.g. Sparks 1998, 2000; Conboy 2004, 2011; Rowe 2011; Bennett 2012). In line with this logic, and resonating the Habermasian public sphere framework, ‘tabloidization’ is viewed by some as a threat to democracy (e.g. Franklin 1997; Thompson 1997; Sparks 2000; Prior 2003; Conboy 2011; Bennett 2012).

Conversely, numerous media scholars, often evoking critiques of the traditional Habermasian public sphere model, identify virtues in the ascendance of tabloid characteristics. Bas and Grabe (2015), for example, illustrate the capacity of “emotion-provoking personalization” (159) to enhance audiences’ memory retention of news stories, in effect narrowing the knowledge gaps between audiences of lower and higher education levels. In a case study of British television news programs, MacDonald (2000) depicts putative increases in personalization as a welcome remedy to the restrictive, male-oriented rationalism and objectivity previously seen as characteristic of the ‘quality’ press. A cross-national newspaper comparison conducted by Umbricht and Esser (2016) similarly notes the ability of sensationalism and personalization to garner the attention of members of the public who have previously refrained from consuming political affairs news. As noted by Sparks (1998), scholarly perceptions of the possible effects of an ostensible recent ‘tabloidization’ tend to dichotomize into camps of those in favour and those against the phenomenon.

This thesis views a polarization of views on ‘tabloidization’ as problematic for two principal reasons. The first is that the body of scholarship lacks proper empirical evidence which shows the full textual dynamics of the process. For example, while certain studies attest to an increase in ‘soft’ news stories (e.g McLachlan and Golding 2000), such studies do not address the possibility that the journalistic values at play in these stories might be more public service, or ‘information-oriented,’ than before an ascendance of this type of content took place. If the full form of a ‘tabloidization’ of newspapers is unknown, it is particularly imprudent to label the phenomenon with polarized value-added judgments. Secondly, dichotomized views fail to acknowledge the nuance inherently manifest in the complex fabric of journalistic output. For example, it is highly unlikely that an increased prevalence of tabloid content would be unaccompanied by any form of growth in ‘quality’ journalistic language or content. Through its examination of journalistic values and content across both tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers, this dissertation will produce an empirical depiction and theoretical assessment of ‘tabloidization’ that is based on an extensive body of evidence and conceptual grounding in the relevant literature.

Several journalism and media scholars propose or indirectly suggest a theoretical framework through which to conceptualize ‘tabloidization.’ Esser’s comparative analysis of the press in the U.K., Germany, and the U.S. is perhaps the most often referenced example of such research (1999). Applying a historical perspective and identifying differences across legal regulations and market preferences, Esser references data indicative of an increase in political scandal, entertainment, and human interest stories, and a decline in Parliamentary and political coverage in British ‘quality’ newspapers, in particular towards the end of the 20th century. In Esser’s article, technological factors are addressed solely in terms of the relevant (national) legal frameworks, and competition is the only economic factor acknowledged; thus,

Esser's approach contrasts with that of this thesis, the latter of which acknowledges a broader cross-section of developments, including more recent ones, treating technological and economic factors as more robust putative causal factors of 'tabloidization.' This dissertation also draws from more recent pertinent research (e.g. Levy and Nielsen 2010; Skovsgaard 2014; Petre 2015; Newman et al. 2016; Levy et al. 2017; Magin 2017).

In an examination of a possible 'tabloidization' of political campaign coverage in Austrian and German newspapers, Magin (2017) identifies 3 possible drivers of 'tabloidization' drawing from the arenas of media and technology. Underscoring the significant role of competition in 'tabloidization' processes, tabloids, commercial television, and the Internet are identified as the 3 drivers of tabloidization. These putative factors are broad, eliding the role of more specific mechanisms pertinent to each, such as, for example, the possible impact of social-sharing features embedded in online versions. Simultaneously and in line with the limitations of Esser's approach, numerous putative causal factors which draw from the economic and cultural arenas are neglected altogether.

The causes of 'tabloidization' identified in the relevant media and journalism literature which this dissertation treats as putative causal factors of the process are discussed in detail in the thesis' following chapter. Possible agents of 'tabloidization' are also addressed through the dissertation's hypotheses, which are also introduced and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. At this juncture, drawing from the above discussions of the literature pertinent to 'tabloidization,' working definition for 'tabloidization' is proposed, which also serves heuristic purposes for this dissertation. Accordingly:

Tabloidization is the convergence of 'quality' newspapers towards the entertainment-oriented content, and sensationalist and personalized journalistic values characteristic of tabloid newspapers.

While other journalistic values, namely subjectivity and emotionalism, have been associated by certain literature with tabloids, personalization and sensationalism have most often been identified by the relevant literature as characteristic of tabloids (Skovsgaard 2014). Further, and as conveyed through the definitions of each below, personalization and sensationalism are less nebulous and more specific values which are neatly operationalizable linguistically. Drawing from the relevant scholarship (e.g. Bromley 1998; Conboy 2011; Skovsgaard 2014), sensationalism and personalization are defined as follows:

Sensationalism can be understood as the journalistic deployment of content and language that stands to provoke sensory and emotional reactions from readers as a result of emphasis placed on drama, magnitude, salaciousness, and/or the unexpected.

Personalization can be understood as journalistic focus on an individual or entity representative of a larger theme or topic, whereby emphasis on the personal and/or emotional often supersedes the emphasis on fact or public affairs-oriented information.

Accordingly, this thesis will measure change and/or continuity in the presence of personalization and sensationalism in British tabloid and 'quality' newspapers, and in the

2014 – 2016 segment of the dissertation’s corpus, apply the same measures of examination to a digital native news publication. Personalization and sensationalism are operationalized linguistically, with linguistic proxies of each value assessed through a corpus linguistic analysis.

In order to examine possible shifts in the values depicted as traditionally characteristic of ‘quality’ newspapers in the British context, the term ‘information-orientation’ is used in place of said values in view of operationalizability. Truth and impartiality, for example, would require intensive qualitative analysis wherein features such as agency and metaphor could be examined in depth. By contrast, *‘information-orientation’ is a term which captures the quantitatively operationalizable components of the multiple values depicted as traditionally characteristic of ‘quality’ British newspapers.* As with personalization and sensationalism, linguistic markers of ‘information-orientation’ are identified and assessed within and across each of the new outlets subject to examination, both synchronically and longitudinally.

The final subsection of this chapter summarizes the conceptualizations discussed thus far in order to situate each within the context of the thesis’ theoretical framework and methodology, which are posited in greater detail in the thesis’ following two chapters. This concluding subsection also introduces the thesis’ next chapter, which focuses on the dissertation’s theoretical framework in greater detail.

1.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the thesis and provided an overview of its aims and structure, focusing on conceptualizations central to the project’s interest in journalism theory and research. Polysemous terms in the literature, namely journalistic values, journalism in the

public interest, and tabloidization, have been reviewed with definitions proffered for each. Contextualization of the pertinent literature and definitions serving heuristic purposes for each of these terms enables progression to the thesis' more specific points of interest, with regards to possible a tabloidization of journalism and potential agents of such shifts.

The following chapter examines the putative causal factors of tabloidization, which, drawing from the relevant scholarship, can be understood to stem from 3 arenas: the economic, technological, and cultural. From a review of the journalism and media literature pertinent to each arena, a novel theoretical framework for processes of tabloidization is proposed. The chapter concludes by situating the project's research question and hypotheses within this framework.

Chapter 2: Theorizing Putative Causes of Tabloidization

2.1. Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis introduced the dissertation's aims and overall structure, and provided an overview of the key journalism concepts of relevance to the dissertation, namely journalistic values, the Habermasian public sphere and journalism in the public interest, and tabloidization. This chapter focuses on the putative causal factors of tabloidization which are examined through the thesis' research question, ***To what extent have news outlets tabloidized in the past 48 years, and what explains variation in the extent of tabloidization across these news outlets ?*** The project's research question and hypotheses assess possible causal forces which draw from 3 thematic arenas: the economic, technological, and cultural.

Before discussing the possible causal factors in these fields, the thesis' research question and hypotheses are introduced. Hereafter, an overview of newspaper ownership models is provided in order to orient the reader before potential economic mechanisms are discussed at length. Subsequently, starting with the economic arena and possible economic factors of tabloidization, a history of key developments and events, and an overview of the theoretical considerations relevant to each thematic set of putative factors are discussed. References to the pertinent hypotheses are integrated within each of these subsections in order to highlight the ways in which the agency of the pertinent putative causal force will be tested in the thesis. Related to this, in each of these subsections – with the exception of the 'historical trajectory' ones - references to suggested mechanisms impacting on journalistic values and content are also underscored so as to clarify the rationale for the formulation and selection of each hypothesis.

A following section of the chapter provides an overview of cultural frameworks pertinent to the process(es) of tabloidization. The cultural frameworks discussed draw from several camps of scholarship, namely, critical theory, cultural studies, and media studies. Of relevance to this thesis is the possible notion of an emergence of a postmodern cultural context characterized by global corporations, declining public trust in institutions, and an erosion of facts and truth. While such shifts cannot be operationalized, this notion will be referenced in the theoretical interpretation of the longitudinal changes identified through the thesis' methods, which are discussed in the dissertation's final chapter. Incorporating the role(s) of putative economic and technological factors, as well as cultural ones, the penultimate section of this chapter will propose a novel framework for the process of tabloidization.

2.2. Thesis Research Question and Hypotheses

As referenced in the thesis' 'Introduction' chapter, the primary empirical objective of this dissertation is to determine whether or not a recent tabloidization of newspapers has occurred, in the British context. In particular, while academic literature and media commentary often associate the ascendance of the Internet with an augmentation in tabloid values and content, such claims lack empirical support. Accordingly, this thesis examines a large body of newspaper texts before and after the rise the Internet, in order to examine and contextualize possible shifts in journalistic values and content.

Despite assumptions of a tabloidization of newspapers as a function of the Internet's ascendance, this dissertation also acknowledges and investigates the possibility of a reconfiguration of journalistic values and content pre-dating the Internet era. Accordingly,

the thesis' timeframe commences in 1968 in order to capture the possible impact of an event which has often been depicted as a major development in the recent history of British journalism and of a possible 'tabloidization' of British newspapers (Tunstall 1996; Rooney 2000, 2014; Marr 2004; Conboy 2004, 2006, 2011): Rupert Murdoch's relaunch of the *Sun* in 1969. The dissertation's time period ends in 2016, 48 years later, as this was the most recent full year of data available before the project's data collection was initiated, and analysis of textual data ending with this year enabled an assessment of several years within the Web 3.0 era (a concept which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 7 and 8). Further, rather than a precise mirroring of change and continuity seen across newspapers, the author also anticipated the type and degree of potential change and continuity across the newspapers to vary. These broader aims and interests are reflected in the project's research question:

RQ: To what extent have news outlets tabloidized in the last 48 years, and what explains variation in the extent of tabloidization between these outlets?

As suggested, the extent and type of variation observed across the news publications is an arena of interest to this project. In particular, such distinctions stand to shed light on the role of different causal agents of tabloidization. Drawing from the scholarship, and as discussed in this chapter's subsequent subsections, putative causal factors of tabloidization are reflected in the dissertation's hypotheses. This thesis tests 4 hypotheses:

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.

In addition to their relevance to the body of literature, these hypotheses have been identified on the basis of their operationalizability; each can be tested through the quantitative, linguistic and content analytic methods applied in this thesis. While additional causal factors could be identified, these are the most pertinent ones which can be examined against empirical, textual data.

Before the literature and history relevant to the putative causal factors are discussed, the following subsection of this chapter provides an overview of newspaper ownership models, which is particularly relevant to H1. This subsection facilitates understanding of the company and business structures which are pertinent to H1, and which are subsequently subject to discussion.

2.3. Newspaper Ownership Models

In the context of this thesis, the form of newspaper ownership is treated as important particularly in view of putative effects on the performance, behaviour, and content of newspaper outlets (Picard and van Weezel 2008; Baum and Zhokov 2019). Within the body of media ownership literature, Picard and van Weezel (2008) usefully identify 4 types of media ownership: *private*, *public*, *foundation or not-for-profit*, and *employee*. Government ownership is also briefly recognized as a form of media ownership and will be discussed in

this subsection as well. Private, public and foundation ownership models are of particular relevance to this dissertation.

Private ownership exists when individuals, a family, or private corporation, own the rights of a newspaper company. *Public* ownership derives capital through the stock-market sales of company shares, and aligns with the concept of “shareholder primacy,” whereby corporations are seen to work best when they focus on revenues, profits, and returns on investment (Vaidhyanathan 2018). *Foundation or not-for-profit* ownership varies on a case-by-case basis, the most well-known of which in the U.K. is the *Guardian*, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this subsection and in Chapter 4. In the *employee* model, employees own all company shares. While this model has gained popularity in the U.S., only one U.K. newspaper, the *West Highland Free Press*, upholds this form of ownership.

In terms of journalistic standards, private ownership is identified by Picard and van Weezel (2008) as the most salutary business model as newspapers under this model tend to receive sufficient financial support without the pressures of profit maximization. This suggests a lack of substantial or persistent pressure to, in the case of ‘quality’ newspapers, focus more on obtaining higher advertising revenues and/or cost-cutting measures such as redundancies, and in the case of tabloids, focus more on growing circulation figures and/or similar cost-cutting considerations. With regards to publicly-traded newspapers, the scholarship recognizes a tendency towards emphasis on short-term profits, in view of fiducial duties to maximize stock value for shareholders (Picard and van Weezel 2008). Through this relational depiction of the two types of business models, suggested is a process applying to publicly-traded newspapers whereby greater financial pressure and fewer resources result in an ascension of journalistic values and content that do not align with democracy-enhancing journalistic standards, or could, instead, take the form of tabloid values and content.

Moreso than private ownership, the foundation model, particularly in the case of the *Guardian*, allows for minimal encumbrance on ‘quality’ journalistic values, or pursuit of public interest ideals. The foundation model of the *Guardian* takes the form of a trust, which was founded in 1936, as a means to ensure editorial independence from commercial or political forces (Singer and Ashman 2009; Rusbridger 2018). The Scott Trust has been funded by other revenue-generating members and properties of the Guardian Media Group, as well as by investment funds, the finances of which are overseen by the Trust’s advisory board (Rusbridger 2018). The economic success of the foundation model undergirding the *Guardian* has, however, been challenged, in particular, with the rise of online news and adjunct declines in advertising revenues. The 2008 – 2011 crisis, which impacted on both tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers, compounded the publication’s financial difficulties: for the period between 2009/2010 and 2015/2016, annual losses were £26 million, £27 million, £37 million, £28 million, £23 million, and £34 million.² In 2018, however, for the first time since 1998, the *Guardian* recorded an operating profit, a development which has been attributed to a combination of digital and print incomes, redundancies, and cost-cutting yielded through the print edition’s switch from Berliner to tabloid format (Rajan 2019).³ Thus, the foundation model does not equate to an absence of financial pressures, but rather entails enhanced financial support dedicated to maintaining the newspaper’s mission and values.

At the operational level, however, it should be noted that substantial variation exists within the foundation or not-for-profit category. In contrast to the *Guardian*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, based in Utah, USA, is registered with the federal government as a not-for profit

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-48111464>

³ The *Guardian*’s ownership structure and business model are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, which includes overviews of the 5 news outlets that are examined in the thesis.

entity, exempting the newspaper from taxes. The pursuant business model of the organization is complex, involving the creation of two not-for-profit organizations, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and the Utah Journalism Foundation, the latter of which serves to support regional news organizations, including the *Salt Lake Tribune*. In terms of content, the newspaper is restricted to the publication of news stories that accord with the “educational purposes” section of the federal tax code under which the company has registered (Schmidt 2019); this has raised questions about the type and number of non-‘hard’ news stories that may fall under the code’s remit. Further, in addition to tax relief, a substantial element of the newspaper’s funding relies on fundraising and grants. As more newspapers, particularly in the US, switch to not-profit business models (Schmidt 2019), the feasibility of this structure stands as an area of interest to media economics research and the sustainability of newspapers into the future on a broader scale.

Significant variation also arises across the many examples of government ownership, in particular with regard to the nation and form of governance upheld therein. For example, in China, all “general interest newspapers” (Qin et al. 2018, 2443) are owned and supervised by Chinese Communist Party Committees whereby the publications are not only censored, but often act as disseminators of government propaganda. By contrast, in the UK, the BBC is state-owned and funded through license fees and advertising. While accountable to the government, the BBC’s independence from government interference is also ensured through a Royal Charter, which mandates the BBC’s commitment to impartiality. Thus, the type of financial and editorial pressures, and further, the type of content and journalistic values characteristic of government-owned newspapers, vary fundamentally.

In the case of private and public companies, variation can also exist across news organizations owned by different individuals, groups, or institutions (Skovaag 2014; Baum and

Zhokov 2019). Within the ownership private model, for example, the incentives of the individual owner(s) may vary in line with the prioritization of different political, civic, charitable, or economic motives (Picard and van Weezel 2008; Skovaag 2014). Accordingly, owners placing more emphasis on economic gain are likely to have newspapers wherein stronger and possibly more forms of financial pressure arise in the newsroom and impact on journalistic values and content. In fact, and as noted by the literature, before the recent surge in publicly-traded newspaper ownership, private ownership of newspapers was often vilified in view of the perceived “self-interest” of the owners and putative low quality of privately-owned publications (Picard and van Weezel 2008). Underscored is the importance of assessing ownership dynamics on a news organization by news organization basis.

Despite variation across specific newspapers and news media conglomerates, the literature broadly depicts the publicly-listed ownership model as the most susceptible to shifts in journalistic values and content. These changes can typically be understood to fit the description of a tabloidization. Possible longitudinal shifts in journalistic values and content of the newspapers will be discussed in view of the different newspaper ownership models in the relevant results chapters, as well as the thesis’ final conclusions chapter.

Another key takeaway from the relevant media ownership model scholarship, and as directly attested to in numerous cases, is a connection between greater financial pressure and newspaper content and values that are more commercialized and less public service-oriented, a process that is tested through *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*. Economic approaches to media theory and more broadly, literature which discusses economic dynamics with regard to journalistic values and content also portray a similar relationship.

2.4. Economic Factors

Journalism and media scholarship has often conceptualized tabloidization as a function of economic forces (e.g. Sampson 1996; Bromley 1998; Sparks 1998; Esser 1999; Peterson 2000; Sparks 2000a, 200b; Rao and Johal 2006; Zhu 2011; Wang 2012; Bird 2009; Magin and Stark 2014; Skovsgaard 2014; Magin 2017). Claims asserting an association between economic pressures and a decline in journalistic values date back to the 1830s. Historical claims merit discussion particularly in view of similarities regarding present day discourse wherein financial stress is perceived as a key causal factor in a tabloidization of newspapers.

2.4a. Historical Trajectory: Key Events and Developments Pertinent to Putative Economic Factors

The rise of the Penny Press in the 1830s have been identified as “the beginnings” (Esser 1999, 294) of tabloidization. Herein, U.S. newspapers costing one penny emerged as competitors to the traditional 6-penny papers. Penny Press publications such as the *Illustrated Daily News* in the U.S., and the *Daily Mirror* and the *News of the World* in the UK, featured “scandals, crime, celebrities and gossip” (Esser 1999, 294), and faced “charges of sensationalism” (Schudson 1987, 23) from their traditional 6-penny counterparts.

In the UK, a continuing ‘Americanization’ of the press followed the brief heyday of Yellow Journalism in the 1890s (Conboy 2004; Wiener 1996). As competition augmented, crime, entertainment and sports content increased, political stories became more sparse, with the presentation becoming more colourful (Conboy 2004, 2011). With reference to these shifts, British newspapers are depicted as becoming, “therefore more profitable” (Conboy 2011, 16). As will be discussed in more detail in the following Subsection 2.4b., the source(s)

of increased profits have not been explicitly identified; implied is a process whereby certain tabloid elements subsequently increase circulation and/or advertising figures.

With the rise of radio broadcasting in the 1920s, between the 1920s and 1940s, U.S. advertisers moved their checkbooks from tabloids to radio. This was due to both the nascent commercialism of the latter and the shift of audiences from tabloid newspapers to radio during the 1930s⁴ (Picard 1998). By contrast, in the U.K., advertisers continued to buy ad space from tabloids as radio was from its inception a public service broadcasting medium (Picard 1998; Esser 1999). Further, this broader political-economic media context contributed to the increased competition seen in the British newspaper industry during the first half of the 20th century.

Between the first and second world wars, U.K. press ownership consolidated, giving rise to an “era of press barons” which coincided with shifts in the circulation figures and predominant content of newspapers (Curran and Seaton 2003). From 1920 to 1939, circulation of the national dailies increased from 5.4 million to 10.6 million (Curran and Seaton 2003, 40), and as newspaper circulation augmented, so did “concentration, competition and entertainment in print media” (Conboy 2004, 176). Conboy depicts this era as the beginnings of the “massification in newspaper and other news media formats” (2004, 177) whereby lower classes and a broader range of demographics were courted through less high-minded content. A tabloidization in the form of a blurring between ‘quality’ and popular newspapers is, accordingly, attributed to a context of heightened competition and adjunct financial pressure.

⁴ The causal factors of audiences’ shift from tabloids to radio is a matter meriting further research, which is outside of this thesis’ scope.

During the 1960s and 1970s, research identifies a divergence, rather a blurring, between tabloid and 'quality' newspaper content. As ad agencies in search of elite demographics increasingly limited placement of ad content to 'quality' newspapers, advertisers seeking out more mainstream demographics increasingly valued the wide circulation of popular newspapers (Conboy 2004). Scholarship associates this emphasis on circulation figures with a 'popularizing' of tabloid content, in the form of a decline in public affairs coverage and an increase in leisure and entertainment content in tabloid newspapers (Rooney 1998, 2000).

The premiership of Margaret Thatcher (1979 – 1990), and the free market ideals pursued under the Thatcher government has been associated with a conglomeration of the British newspaper industry (King 1998; McKnight 2003; Conboy 2004). The Thatcher administration enacted deregulation measures and passed legislation limiting the ability of trade unions to protest, enabling the Wapping Revolution, a turning point for British Journalism (e.g. Conboy 2004; McKnight 2003). Wapping, which is discussed in detail in the thesis' second results chapter, resulted in thousands of layoffs, a streamlining of the news production process, and a literal surge in colourful newspaper content (McKnight 2003; Wolffe 2008).

In the 1980s and 1990s, a proliferation of forums for news media content, in particular, the rise of new television and radio stations, magazines, and weekly and alternative newspapers, occurred, which has been associated with declines in newspaper advertising rates and an increase in tabloid content (Picard 2008). Starting in the late 1990s, the Internet started to gain mainstream traction, and alongside the spread of satellite and cable television, and the rise of free daily newspapers in many urban locations, advertising

increasingly moved away from legacy newspapers and towards the online context (Levy and Nielsen 2010).

In roughly the past decade, the traditional newspaper business model has approached crisis, and this has often been attributed to the emergence of the Internet (e.g. McChesney 2016). Crucially, ad placements have shifted away from newspapers and onto search engines and major social media networks whose algorithms and broad exposure maximize reach to target demographics (McChesney 2016). This shift has in particular impacted classified advertising, which was once a significant source of ad revenues for newspapers (Picard 2008). This broader relocation of advertisements has posed notable challenges for 'quality' newspapers, which have historically generated up to 3 quarters of their income from advertising (Murdock and Golding 1973). The decline in hard copy sales, associated with the cornucopia of free news and information available online, has been more impactful on tabloid newspapers, which historically derived roughly two thirds of their income from physical newspaper sales (Murdock and Golding 1973). In the wake of the Internet's ascendance, media and academic commentary have claimed an adjunct augmentation in tabloid or popular newspaper content within and across legacy newspapers.

Although certain news organizations, such as the *Guardian* and the *Times*, have recently improved their financial standing, more generally, newspaper organizations have yet to identify a means through which to compensate for these losses in today's increasingly online news ecosystem (e.g. Picard 2015; McChesney 2016). It is important to note that effects of recent economic pressures can be seen to vary on a news organization to news organization basis (Boczkowski 2004, 2009); as reflected in the thesis' research question, one aim of this dissertation is to assess the extent to which such impacts may vary.

2.4b. Economic Factors in the Literature

This subsection focuses on specific factors and adjunct shifts in the economics arena which have been depicted as impacting on journalistic values and content by the pertinent literature. These economic factors are significant in view of their relevance to the thesis' first hypothesis, *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*. The mechanisms and shifts discussed in this subsection pertain to conglomeration, competition, advertising revenues, proliferation of information choices and sources for consumers, and stresses and pressures in the newsroom.

Conglomeration has been directly and indirectly identified with shifts in news content (e.g. Murdock and Golding 1973; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Tunstall 1996; Fu 2003; Conboy 2004, 2011). The literature often links conglomeration with increased competition between news outlets and/or as resulting in a homogenization of content (Murdock and Golding 1973; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Rooney 2000, 2004; Conboy 2004, 2011). Conglomeration, competition, and homogenization of content are in turn often associated with an ascension of tabloid content and values (Franklin 1997; Rooney 2000, 2004; Conboy 2004, 2011). In the UK in particular, the notion of conglomeration has often been discussed with regard to the period between 1965 and 1995 when, "there was a comprehensive rearrangement of national newspapers into a smaller number of more formidable competing groups" (Tunstall 1996, 35). Referencing this period, Rooney (2000, 2004) and Herman and Chomsky (1998) each assert a subsequent omission of controversial stories in favour of "light," leisure, and entertainment-oriented content, which cater more to a "buying mood" (ibid, 17). These claims resonate those of a tabloidization debates wherein 'soft' news stories are said to supplant 'hard' news coverage. The commercial elements of these specific claims further implicate attempts at an augmentation of advertising revenues in effect leading to a

tabloidization of content. Advertising revenues and shifts regarding the advertising incomes for legacy newspaper are discussed later in this subsection.

Claims regarding a homogenization of newspaper content associated with increased conglomeration and/or competition often echo those constituting tabloidization debates. Golding and Murdock, for example, identify an augmentation of leisure content, and cite a homogenization of non-leisure content, the latter of which is described as “increasingly moderate, apolitical, [and] entertainment-oriented” (1973, 227). Baum and Zhukov (2012) depict a homogenization of non-leisure newspaper content, in a study that aims to identify effects in terms of “scope, focus, and diversity” across newspapers with the same owners, across countries with varying degrees of press freedoms. Interestingly, in democratic societies, economic forces are shown to have both constraining and liberating impacts on news content, however, the former is depicted as more consistent and forceful.

In line with the ambiguity identified by Baum and Zhukov (2012), it should be noted that certain literature suggests that augmented concentration of media ownership has an effect of media content diversification. Skovaag (2014), for example conducts a content analysis which shows a differentiation of non-leisure content, particularly in the online editions of legacy newspapers. In his theoretical overview of the ways in which Structure-Conduct-Performance (SCP) should be applied in media industry analyses, Fu (2003) conceptualizes how conglomeration may lead to diversification of content at specific news conglomerates and news publications therein, arguing that when there is not a wide range of news media outlets in a news media market, specific news media companies and/or news outlets therein will produce a wider selection of content in an attempt to capture mass and niche markets. There is, however, less empirical data supporting the notion of a diversification of content as an effect of increased conglomeration than supporting the notion of a

subsequent homogenization of content. In particular, the dissertation will intervene in this discourse through a longitudinal content analysis assessing possible changes in the configuration of 'hard' news, 'soft' news, and 'general' news in tabloid and 'quality' newspapers, contributing original empirical evidence towards this debate.

The implications of a homogenization versus a differentiation of content are significant and can be understood in terms of reconceptualizations of the Habermasian public sphere, whereby a broader range of topics pertinent to a broader range of demographics is seen as salutary to the polity. A narrowing or constraining of content, particularly with regard to 'hard' news stories, may be seen as hazardous to meaningful engagement in democratic processes.

It is notable that the pertinent literature focuses on perceived changes in the configuration of 'hard' and/or 'soft' news resulting from increased conglomeration and competition in the newspaper industry. Possible shifts in journalistic values have largely been neglected from examination in the pertinent context. Through assessment of H1 at specific juncture in the history of British journalism, for example, before and after Rupert Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun*, the thesis' operationalization and examination of possible change in journalistic values will help to bridge this gap in the scholarship.

Another economic factor depicted by the literature as impacting on journalistic output are recent declines in advertising revenues. While shifts in advertising revenues are not examined through a hypothesis, it is important to note certain changes in the economic ecology of journalism that have in particular occurred in the wake of the Internet's ascendance. As noted by Picard, while "financing journalism has always been" a struggle (2018, 3), and despite historical ebbs and flows in the advertising market, recent changes, and in particular the emergence of the Internet, has led to a decline in advertising revenues for

newspapers. For example, between 2007 and 2017, in the UK, newspaper advertising spending dropped from £4,625 million to £1,432 million (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport 2018), with growth in digital ad sales amounting to a mere £487 million (ibid 2018).

Proliferation of information choices has also been a core cause of economic shifts in the journalism market (Picard 2010, 2018). Since the 1990s in particular, digital, social, and mobile media have proliferated (Van Aelst et al. 2017), with recent scholarship often referencing the emergence of a “high-choice” media context (Picard 2010, 2018; Van Aelst et al. 2017; Hameleers and van der Meer 2019). Expansion in the number and range of cable channels, the emergence of satellite television, free print newspapers, and free online news content have posed fundamental challenges to legacy news media. As discussed in Chapter 4 of the dissertation, in addition to charging for print copies, many quality publications continue to charge fees for online access. Within this shifted media ecology, as of 2016, only an estimated 10 to 15 percent of news consumers in most countries reported a willingness to pay for digital/mobile news (Newman et al. 2016).

In addition to impacts stemming from the market level, a spate of literature acknowledges the effects of recent economic malaise at the newsroom level, typically depicting an association between economic pressures and a decline in journalistic standards (Bockoswki 2004; Picard 2010; Reinardy 2013). For example, Picard (2010) lists, “financial pressures, reductions in bureaus and published editions, reorganizations, cost-cutting and staff reductions” as agents whereby “efficiency and effectiveness have become primary objectives” (Picard 2010, 33). Reinardy (2013) similarly identifies recent “personnel cuts, wage freezes and new additional responsibilities” (Reinardy 2013, 9) as changes which make journalists more prone to emotional stress which subsequently impacts the quality of their

work product, potentially rendering articles that are less ‘information-oriented’ and more tabloid-like. Picard (2013) connects the “growing malaise in news organizations” with a subsequent decline in public service journalism more explicitly, stating “Overall there is a high level of frustration that aspirations to practice meaningful and socially beneficial journalism are being thwarted” (33). The depiction of stress at the newsroom level and the production of ‘quality’ journalism as incompatible would seem to imply that the latter requires journalistic focus as well as time and organizational support, and that when these resources are not available, journalists divert to tabloid-like journalism. Unpacking this notion further, it is implied that ‘information-oriented’ journalism requires more time and effort from journalists and is likely to appeal to a narrower range of readers, while the journalistic values seen as most traditionally characteristic of tabloid journalism, sensationalism and personalization, involve less time and effort from journalists, and may appeal to a broader range of readers. These assumptions are addressed in view of the dissertation’s findings in the dissertation’s final chapter.

Thus, while this cause and effect scenario of recent finance-related newsroom pressures on journalistic values has not, to the best of the authors’ knowledge, been proven through empirical work, it is a relationship of interest to this thesis and will be addressed through *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*, in particular with regards to data points before and after the Wapping Revolution and those from the 21st century. Existing studies which examine newsroom level dynamics will also be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter within the context of the journalists’ and editors’ adaptation of new technologies.

2.4c. Economic Approaches in the Literature: Towards a Theoretical Framework for Tabloidization

This subsection explores economic approaches to media and journalism outside of and beyond a historical narrative context, which will contribute to the thesis' novel theoretical framework for tabloidization. It can be noted that relevant scholarship – specific not just to tabloidization and economic factors, but to journalism and economic factors more broadly - lacks a body of theoretical approaches informed by both economists, and journalism and communications scholars (as suggested by Picard 2006). This is a lacuna that merits attention particularly in view of recent shifts in the economic ecology of journalism and adjunct concerns regarding the economic sustainability of newspapers.

A framework which has been adopted in numerous theoretically-based media economics studies is the structure-conduct-performance (SCP) model (Albarran 1988; Gomery 1989; Fu 2003; Mierzewska and Hollifield 2006; Magin and Stark 2014). Drawn from industrial organization economic scholarship, in the context of media studies, broadly speaking, SCP acknowledges market and organizational structures (macro level), media company conduct or behaviour (meso level), and media performance and/or coverage (micro level). As noted by scholars such as Fu (2003), significant variation, however, can be detected across applications and understandings of the model's 3 constituent levels (e.g. Fu 2003). Further, while certain SCP literature assumes a one-way flow of effects, from the macro to the micro level of the model (e.g. Magin and Stark 2014), other scholarship addresses a multi-directional flow of effects (Fu 2003).

Broadly speaking, according to SCP literature, market structure is a function of numerous factors such as the number and size of competitors, the cost of entry into an industry, and the heterogeneity of the product (Gomery 1989; Tan 2016). With regard to the

U.S. media industry, Gomery, for example, identifies "... the number and size of the corporations involved in an industry, the impact of barriers to entry to possible new competitors, the effects of horizontal and vertical integration, and the consequences of conglomerate ownership" (1989, 45).

The market conduct level, or meso-level, pertains to the ways in which the individual news organization or news organizations as a collective react(s) to or behave(s) towards the industry or towards individual competitors within the industry (Gomery 1989; Mierzejewska and Hollifield 2006; Tan 2016). Across the scholarship, different market structures, for example, a monopoly versus an oligopoly-structured market, are understood to produce differing influences on individual news outlets, for instance, in terms of the extent to and ways in which a publication might attempt to differentiate itself from the competition. While certain scholarship stresses the outward-facing orientation of the market strategy level (Tan 2016), other SCP literature incorporate intra-organizational dynamics (Gomery 1989). For example, Gomery (1989) discusses the adoption of new technologies and technological innovation as factors at the market strategy level (Gomery 1989). Such pivotal differences in conceptualizations of the market conduct level highlight problematic inconsistencies in applications of the SCP model.

The SCP model in turn posits the impact of a media organization's conduct on its performance. In the context of media literature, the performance level is perhaps the most fraught strata of the framework (Fu 2003). Performance has often been understood in the pertinent research in terms of the news media's public service function, which has been seen as embedded in social rather than economic performance; hereby, performance level analysis can be interpreted as at odds with the economic focus of the SCP framework. Of direct

pertinence is the extent to which consumer demand exists for journalism in the public interest (Fu 2003).

The SCP framework has been applied to tabloidization research by Magin and Stark (2014) in a study that merits discussion in view of its pertinence to this thesis. Magin and Stark use the model to evaluate the impact of “commercialization and digitization” (2014, 1) on the performance, or “topic, focus, visual style and verbal style” (2014, 1) of newspaper content in Austrian and German newspapers. It is this author’s view that Magin and Stark’s conceptualization of each strata within the SCP framework omits several key considerations, which this thesis will assess.

For example, Magin and Stark (2014) do not define market structure, instead depicting it as a function of commercial pressures which originate exogenous to news organizations and which stand to influence the self-perception and performance of said news organizations. Further, while the authors state that the “market share of tabloids” (2014, 580) are the market structure mechanism of interest, the relevant structures in Austria and Germany are discussed in general, comparative terms. At the market conduct level, the study references public statements issued by the publications of interest which reflect their respective self-perceptions, such as, for example, mission statements. Social media, newsroom level stresses and/or pressures, and organizational self-branding are altogether neglected from mention. At the performance, or tabloidization, level, the authors conduct a quantitative content analysis, assessing the (synchronic) performance of the newspapers subject to examination.

The study’s results indicate a moderate to weak relationship between market structure, market conduct, and 3 indicators of performance - the article’s visual style, focus, and verbal style - the latter two of which will be assessed through this thesis’ content and

corpus linguistic analysis.⁵ Although the relationship between tabloidization and market structure is found to be slightly stronger than that of tabloidization and market conduct, the authors acknowledge that substantial market similarities between the two countries may be attributed for a failure to find a stronger relationship between tabloidization and market structure in particular. This thesis' examination of one country precludes the possibility of a shortcoming that hedges the validity of the Magin and Stark's findings, underscoring an advantage of a study that focuses on one national context.

Field theory, although drawing from the arena of sociology, is another framework which focuses on economic factors as predominant forces impacting on journalism. Benson (1998) usefully adapts Bourdieu's field theory (1984) to the context of journalism, expounding a conceptualization of journalism as a field. According to field theory, society is divided into numerous semi-autonomous fields which are shaped by opposing forces mirroring those which structure society at large. The principal opposing forces are economic and cultural power, and at the current moment in history, according to Bourdieu and Benson, "economic capital dominates cultural capital" (1998, 465).

In this context, Bourdieu and scholars such as Benson identify journalism as a field. Within this field, a further differentiation is made between small and large producers: the former, catering to niche audiences, as exemplified through a "small literary journal" (1998, 466), and the latter directed at general audiences, as exemplified through mass media. Large

⁵ By contrast, however, this thesis sees the sensational, "personal reporting" and "impersonal reporting" as proxies of journalistic values rather than strictly as elements of a 'style dimension' (Magin and Stark 2014, 3). As referenced in the thesis' introductory chapter, journalism and sociolinguistic theories posit the ideological, or value-laden role of language in the newspaper register.

producers, such as national tabloid and 'quality' newspapers, are thus seen to be situated more proximately to the economic power pole.

With regard the notion of tabloidization, in the French context, Benson (1998) references an ostensible blurring of the tabloid and 'quality' distinction since the 1970s. The nation-specific point is made that in France, "serious" journalism acquired more political power over the course the second World War in view of the premium placed on accuracy by politicians and by audiences. The "excesses of the popular press" (1998, 470) were "vetoed" (1998, 470), with serious journalism gravitating towards a predominant position close to the pole of economic, as well as political capital.

It can be noted that such a phenomenon contrasts with the historical trajectory of the journalistic field's configuration in Britain. Principally, tabloid newspapers have and continue to occupy a position of superior economic power in relation to 'quality' newspapers. This may relate to sources of financial funding: historically, French newspapers have received government subsidies while British newspapers have largely been reliant on advertising and circulation for income. Further, with regard to coverage of the Second World War, in the UK, the left-wing tabloid the *Mirror*, for example, produced well-respected and well-consumed reporting. Differences in the power of tabloid versus 'quality' newspapers may also pertain to the more complex topic of taste, or the Bourdieusian concept of the *habitus*, of audiences and their constituent demographics. Such distinctions underscore the number of complex independent variables that cross-national research can incur, and further supports this thesis' focus on one national context.

Although field theory can be a useful framework through which to conceptualize the dynamics of journalistic production, in the current historical era in particular, the theory has several limitations. First, the theory does not acknowledge the (putative) roles of technology.

While this thesis acknowledges the important potential role of economic and cultural forces, particularly in view of changes in the production of newspapers and other shifts connected to the ascension of the Internet, technological factors are also of tantamount interest. Second, field theory poses challenges with regards to operationalization, such as with a longitudinal mapping of change and continuity in the field across newspapers and time periods. The author is also unaware of any studies which have applied field theory to a study of tabloidization or shifts in journalistic values and/or content.

In addition to SCP and field theory, another set of theoretical approaches pertinent to economic factors are media systems frameworks. Akin to SCP approaches, media systems theories also tend to account for technological as well as social elements. Media systems approaches, however, are most often applied in cross-national or cross-system analyses (Hardy 2012), and indeed, the usefulness of this framework in comparative contexts has been established through numerous studies (e.g. Hallin and Mancini 2004; Benson et al. 2012). Most broadly, media systems approaches examine, “media systems as a set of institutions and practices that interact with one another, and shape one another” (Seethaler 2017).

Two principal strands of media systems approaches have been identified in the literature: “normative-critical” ones which tend to be older, and “analytical” ones which tend to be newer (Seethaler 2017). In the wake of the Cold War and the rise of global capitalism, analytical approaches have become the predominant form of media systems research (Seethaler 2017). While media systems theory initially focused largely on the impact of political and social values in shaping media institutions (Seethaler 2017), the circumstances giving rise to analytical approaches saw increased attention dedicated to economic forces, as well as technological and legal ones.

Distinctive characteristics of the now predominant analytical approach are reflected in the media systems framework most often referenced in the recent literature, that posited by Hallin and Mancini (2004). Herein, Hallin and Mancini (2004) identify 3 principal types of media systems, the “liberal” model of which the United States is the most representative, the “polarized pluralist” model seen as exemplified by France, and the “democratic corporatist” model viewed as characteristic of Denmark. Although the 3 models are titled to reflect the political-economic context of each respective system, Hallin and Mancini’s framework addresses the role of certain legal and technological factors therein. While this model has been criticized and supplemented on numerous accounts, for example, in view of its Western-centricity, these 3 types of systems are widely referenced in media and journalism literature (e.g. Benson et al. 2012; Nielsen 2013).

To the best of this author’s knowledge, a systems theory or media systems framework has not been applied to a study of tabloidization. Further, in addition to macro level considerations, such as the dynamics between newspaper organizations within the same market system, this thesis is interested in more micro level factors, such as the ways in which specific news outlets adopt certain new technologies. Hallin and Mancini, for example, posit a homogenizing effect of digital technologies on news media content, neglecting examination of specific technological factors, such as the role of interactivity, for example (2004). Moreover, the ways in which a media systems approach could facilitate a micro level analysis are unclear.

The thesis’ theoretical framework will account for the potential causal factors present at the market structure, organization, and newsroom levels, and also integrate the concept of the journalistic field into the proposed tabloidization process. The dissertation will also examine

the key economic mechanisms discussed in this subsection principally through corpus linguistic and content analytic data. Accordingly, H1 will be applied to assess longitudinal and also synchronic trends across the 'quality' and tabloid newspapers subject to analysis.

2.5. Technological Factors

Since the rise of the penny press, scholars and media commentators have associated putative declines in journalistic standards with technological developments (Esser 1999; Boczkowski 2004a; Tsui 2009; Conboy 2010; Magin and Stark 2014). As suggested through the following discussions of the scholarship, these considerations are particularly relevant to *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*, and also pertinent to *H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization*, and *H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization*. As indicated through the above references to competition and newsroom pressures, overlap can arise between technological and economic factors and hereby, certain mechanisms and processes discussed in the following subsections pertain to both technological and economic forces.

The following subsections follow a slightly different structure than the one applied in Section 2.4. in which economic factors were discussed: a historical overview is integrated with references to the key technological factors identified by the literature, with a final subsection expounding the relevant theories of technology with regard to journalism and changes in the journalism ecosystem.

2.5a. Historical Trajectory: Key Events and Developments Pertinent to Putative Technological Factors

Certain scholarship explains the rise of the Penny Press through technological approaches (Schudson 1978; Esser 1999). Schudson, for example, identifies the invention of the steam press, improvements in paper manufacturing, and the development of railroads and telegraphic communications as “necessary preconditions” (1978, 31) for the emergence of mass circulation newspapers. Schudson’s perspective, however, is one of soft determinism, as he cites social, economic, and political shifts as key agents, even offering a critique of technological determinism, noting that while the rise of the penny press was enabled by technological agents “... it did not make them [mass circulation newspapers] necessary or inevitable” (Schudson 1978, 35 in Boczkowski 2004, 2010). Underscored is the role of agency at the news organization and individual journalist and/or editor level.

During the 20th century, the development of numerous new technologies stood to impact on journalism. Scholarship attributes several shifts in newspaper journalism to the emergence of broadcast journalism, first through the medium of radio, starting in the 1920s. Conboy (2011) suggests a subsequent flourishing of partisan and popular speech in print journalism which, in contrast to the broadcast medium, remained unconstrained by public service and impartiality mandates.

The ascendance of television, starting in the 1950s, has been linked to a decline in tabloid newspaper sales (Belson 1965; Seymour-Ure 1991, 1996), and a rise of television and entertainment-centric content (Rooney 2000, 2004; Conboy and Steel 2008), despite variation across tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers as well as on a publication-to-publication basis (Belson 1965). In response to increased competition for advertising posed by the rise of television, Conboy and Steel (2008) cite an increase in “feminized content” (653) – without

expounding further on the term⁶ – particularly in the *Daily Mail*, as well as an augmentation of “lifestyle and consumer journalism” (653) in the *Guardian*, suggesting a growth in consumption-oriented content which might serve to attract augmented attention from advertisers and readers in a favourably cross-fertilizing manner.⁷ In the context of television’s widespread ascension, Belson, for example, shows a decline in ‘quality’ publication purchases in comparison to stability or increases in tabloid sales through a survey analysis of individuals who had recently started to watch television and individuals who had not (1965). The evidence, Belson notes, substantiating these contemporaneous shifts in newspaper consumption, fails to convincingly depict television as the causal agent, as other potential factors, such as cultural or political forces, are unacknowledged.

The Wapping Revolution of 1986 has been associated with a sea tide of change in the British newspaper industry (Tunstall 1996; Eldridge, Kigzinger and Williams 1997; Curran and Seaton 2003; Conboy 2011). This event will be examined in greater detail in this thesis’ first results chapter, Chapter 5, wherein newspaper articles from the years before and after Wapping are subject to examination. In brief, the Wapping Revolution entailed the relocation of Murdoch’s stable of newspapers from Fleet Street to a facility in Wapping, in East London, equipped with streamlined, computerized layout and printing technologies, which led to mass redundancies in newspaper staff. As noted by Conboy (2011), while the technologies which stood to reduce the dependency of newspapers on their workforce existed as early as the 1970s, it was not until the Wapping Revolution that Murdoch’s stable of British newspapers adopted these new technologies, an overhaul shortly thereafter emulated by the British

⁶ Presumably, “feminized” content, particularly in this socio-temporal context, refers to elements with greater emphasis on private sphere characteristics, such as matters related to the domestic realm and emotion more broadly.

⁷ Contemporaneous changes in consumer spending are discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.7.

newspaper industry at large. Further, political and economic shifts stemming from the neoconservative Thatcher administration created the conditions which enabled the relocation to Wapping (Tunstall 1996; Curran and Seaton 2003).

Several concrete and immediate changes resulted from the Wapping Revolution. The introduction of computerized printing technologies led directly to layoffs, “new industrial relationships” (Conboy 2011, 94), and facilitated increases in pagination, colour printing, and entertainment-focused content. Unpacking each of these shifts, the surge in individual contracts, entailed in the new relationships, resulted in a decline in job stability and benefits, or working conditions, standing to decrease newspaper staffs’, including journalists’, commitment to the newspaper and the standard of work produced (Van Aerden et al. 2015). Further, simultaneous growth in pagination suggests an increased demand for journalistic content, despite the thinning out of journalists. Growth in colour printing ostensibly suggests a heightened emphasis on literal and figurative elements of “colour,” while growth in entertainment-focused content directly indicates an augmentation in tabloid-like, ‘soft’ news content.

Accordingly, in the case of Wapping, the introduction of new technologies rendering production cheaper contributed to conditions under which editorial staff stood exposed to forces and pressures which resemble those faced in contexts of increased financial pressure. As suggested through the literature underpinning H1, these forces have been associated with a resulting rise in tabloid elements. The Wapping Revolution also more broadly represents a rise in capitalist logics in its focus on a cheaper, more enhanced and attractive (to both readers and advertisers), printed product. These mechanisms of tabloidization will be tested through *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*. Possible changes in the quality and proportional presence of

tabloid characteristics in both 'quality' and tabloid newspapers in the wake of Wapping will also be directly examined in the thesis' first results chapter, Chapter 5, wherein data points before and after the event are subject to analysis.

As with the Wapping Revolution, the ascendance of the Internet has been accompanied by new newspaper production platforms and technologies, and fundamental shifts in the economics of the newspaper industry and adjunct pressures facing newsrooms and journalists. It has also impacted on conceptualizations of journalism as a profession, and the relationship between news audiences and journalists. While certain scholarship maintains an optimistic outlook of journalism in the Internet era (Dutton 2005; Newman, Dutton, and Blank 2012), the ascendance of the Internet is often depicted as a death knell for journalism (Rowe 2011; McChesney 2016), and in particular, 'quality' journalism, which is seen to have been supplanted by tabloidized content and values (Conboy and Steel 2008; Lewis et al. 2008; Rowe 2011).

Studies which examine Web 2.0 and/or Web 3.0 enabled journalistic developments – web logs, social media platforms, online news websites, and editorial analytics – also tend to discuss adjunct, fundamental shifts in gatekeeping and agenda-setting dynamics (e.g. Dutton 2005; O'Sullivan et al. 2008; Springer et al. 2009; Hermida et al. 2010; Lewis et al. 2010; Singer 2010; Bright 2016). Gatekeeping in particular has been identified as a core role of journalists (Singer 1997, 2010; Shoemaker et al. 2001) and accordingly, the literature regarding this concept and recent changes in gatekeeping dynamics merits discussion before moving towards a theoretical framework drawing from technological factors.

2.5a. Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping can be defined as, “the process of selecting, writing, editing, positioning, scheduling, repeating and otherwise massaging information to become news” (Shoemaker et al. 2008, 73 in Tandoc 2014, 560). More broadly, it has also been conceptualized as the “overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed” (Shoemaker et al. 2001, 233, in Lewis et al. 2010, 164). As noted by Singer (1997), starting from the 1950s, journalism scholarship depicts publishers and/or newsroom editors as the most powerful actors in the selection and shaping of news stories: in this context, publishers and/or newsroom editors also set the agenda, determining which stories were newsworthy.

With the ascension of Web 2.0 and editorial analytics, news audiences have increasingly been attributed agency in gatekeeping and agenda-setting processes (Deuze 2003; Dutton 2005; Lewis et al. 2010; Singer 2010; Boczkowski 2004a, 2013; Tandoc 2014; Vu 2014; Bright 2016). A powerful example of this shift involves the placement of articles on news publications’ websites. As documented by recent scholarship, online news article placement often varies in conjunction with an article’s perceived popularity with audiences at any given moment (Boczkowski 2009b, 2013; Bright and Nicholls 2014; Tandoc 2014; Petre 2015; Bright 2016). For instance, Tandoc (2014) coins the term ‘de-selection’ to identify the process through which journalists relocate a prominently placed news item to a more peripheral location in line with the judgement that a different news article will generate more clicks. This aligns with the trend noted by Boczkowski (2009b) whereby news articles featured centrally on a news site’s homepage are moved elsewhere after two to four hours.

The augmenting role of audiences is also discussed by Dutton (2005) and Newman, Dutton, and Blank (2012), who identify an emerging Fifth Estate constituted by individuals

who routinely use the Internet to distribute and source their own information, whereby the power of traditional media producers is complemented rather than replaced. While such individuals may sidestep traditional news production resources, representing a fundamental shift in the gatekeeping process (Dutton 2005), paralleling the sentiments of pro-tabloidization scholars such as MacDonald (2000) and Örnebring and Jonsson (2007), Dutton and his associates depict the engagement of non-traditional actors in news production processes as salutary to liberal democracies. Suggested is the notion that citizen journalism-related shifts to gatekeeping and agenda-setting practices can be seen to represent a democratization of the news.

2.5b. Technological Factors in the Literature

This subsection focuses on specific factors and adjunct shifts in the technological arena which have been portrayed as impacting on journalistic values and content by the pertinent literature. These putative causal factors are: the technological means to produce content more cheaply, emphasis on speed, and emphasis on interactivity. The 3 potential causal factors are reflected in 3 of the thesis' hypotheses: *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*, *H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization*, and *H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization*. As with the previous subsection which provided a historical overview on technological developments of relevance to journalism, overlap in this subsection between technological and economic factors also occurs at certain junctures.

An important consideration with regards to putative technological factors is the possibility that more recent shifts in journalism, or a tabloidization, are the continuation of a

process that commenced in pre-Internet, or even pre-broadcast, eras. With regards to this possibility, Conboy and Steel (2008), for example, argue that a recent surge in “commentary and identity politics” in newspapers are in fact a, “continuation of socio-economic trends that go back as far as the 17th century” (651). The authors attest that the “hyper-differentiation” (658) yielded through customization of online content stems from demographic targeting that emerged in the wake of 19th century industrialization. Whereas more recent customization of news content is enabled technologically through online affordances such as algorithms, during the 19th century, demographic targeting was enabled by immense growth in printing and distribution. In line with Schudson (1978), who advocates a socio-organizational approach, Conboy and Steel state, “... technology may enable commercial ventures, but does not drive them” (2008, 658).

A possible tabloidization of journalism could also be a continued effect of a ‘Third Wave’ of marketing which began in the 1980s. Contrasting a first, data-based, wave of marketing, and a second, information-based wave, wherein patterns underlying data are examined, a third wave deploys more sophisticated approaches to information extraction, applying a ‘systems-based’ framework to data analysis (Schmidt 1993). Technological developments since the 1980s, namely the rise of the Internet and the ‘Internet of things,’ have led to increasing overlap in marketing and journalism, as represented through the rise of customized newspaper and ad content (Hallahan 2014; Ikonen, Luoma-aho, and Bowen 2017). This reconfiguration further parallels the transformation of journalists’ authority whereby the gatekeeping previously executed by journalists and editors has become an interactive process in which citizens participate. If marketing is to be understood as a tool applied to an end of increasing financial profits, and increasing emphasis on profits, as suggested by the scholarship (Schmidt 1993; Ikonene, Luoma-aho, and Bowen 2017), detracts

from journalism's public service function, marketing strategies pre-dating the rise of the Internet - only compounded through the rise of new online features and devices - must be attributed some causality in a tabloidization effect.

At the newsroom level, the ascension of the Internet has been associated with a surge and variegation in the pressures faced by journalists. Many journalists have had to learn new technological skills, with variation also seen in the relationships between dedicated print and dedicated online staff, as well as in the adoption of and attitudes towards Internet-powered tools (Boczkowski 2009a, 2009b; Petre 2015; Cherubini and Nielsen 2016). While certain legacy newspapers maintain entirely separate print and online newsrooms, at other newspapers, these teams are relatively integrated into one another. Petre (2015), for example, documents the autonomy of print and online newsrooms at the *NYT* from one another as does Boczkowski (2009b) for *Clarín* in Argentina; Cherubini and Nielsen (2016), by contrast, depict a 'culture of data' (14) at the *Guardian* according to which print journalists work both directly with Internet-powered tools, such as editorial analytics, and with staff dedicated to online content. Through each study, it becomes clear that these differing approaches align with differing journalistic attitudes towards the technologies at hand: whereas the *NYT* journalists interviewed and observed by Petre convey opposition to the integration of (quantified) audience preferences into news production processes, their counterparts at the *Guardian* are depicted by Cherubini and Nielsen as more open to the involvement of audience interests. This poses the interesting question of whether news organizations impose values on their journalists or if journalists bring certain value sets to certain news organizations.

The rise of the Internet and of online journalism has further resulted in layoffs of journalists at numerous 'quality' and tabloid legacy newspapers, forcing remaining journalists

to learn new technological skills, and leading to the introduction of new digital teams. Reinardy (2013), for instance, identifies correlations between staff reductions and the subsequent increases in hours and responsibilities accrued by those journalists who remain and the latter's proclivity to psychological burnout. Further, Witschge and Nygren (2009) suggest the dearth of newsroom budgets which allow journalists to receive training in the relevant technological arenas, and the authors subsequently identify a gap between what journalists perceive as the range of technological skills they should have and the range of skills which they actually have. These points tie into the suggested mechanism whereby newsroom pressures detract from the production of 'quality' journalism and give rise to tabloid-like news output, the former of which requires focus, time, and resources. Once again implied is the relative bankability of journalistic emphasis on sensationalism and personalization, which contrasts with a suggested requirement and assumed lack of return on additional resources needed to prioritize the 'information-orientation' seen as characteristic of traditional 'quality' journalism.

Shifts in the directionality of information are of particular relevance to this dissertation. Whereas journalism traditionally entailed the one-way flow of information from news producers to news audiences, new technologies have enabled a two-way flow of information and commentary (Thompson 1995, 2000; Witschge and Nygren 2009; Hermida 2010; Lewis et al. 2010; Bergstrom and Wadbring 2014). In this new landscape, ordinary citizens can produce news through various online formats, blurring the distinction between citizen and journalist. The lower price of publishing text qualifying as "news content" as seen through the rise of 'citizen bloggers,' and whereby news content has abounded across online news, blogging, and micro-blogging platforms, is relevant to the ascendance of the Internet and *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show*

more evidence of tabloidization. In line with shifts depicted in the wake of the Wapping Revolution, the lower cost and ease of content production available through the Internet has, amongst other shifts, contributed to newsroom layoffs whereby reduced editorial staffs have had to learn new skills and produce more content; further, the profusion of news and information accessible through the Internet has contributed to an information economy whereby competition between news organizations has heightened. Hereby, in the wake of the Internet's ascendance, journalists and editors have faced forces similar to those associated with increased financial pressure, which has been linked with a subsequent rise in tabloid values and content. H2 will be tested through application of corpus linguistic and content analyses to each of the newspapers before and after each introduced an online version.

With regards to interactivity, through blogging and social media platforms, journalists employed by professional news organizations also have the capacity to communicate directly with audiences outside of the temporal and professional constraints imposed by their news organization. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, for example, provide journalists with the ability to publish content and opinions instantaneously, enhancing their relationships with audiences and building their own personal brands (Lee 2015). As posited by Lee (2015), the interpersonal dynamics of social media platforms, however, can act as a "double-edged sword" (5) whereby professional journalists may gain likeability and simultaneously lose credibility in the eyes of audiences, thereby possibly contributing to increasing perceptions of tabloidization. Underscored is the emergence of a new media ecosystem wherein professional journalists must renegotiate their identities in terms of both journalistic and social media norms (Lee 2015), which may at times clash with one another; hereby, the values and personas of journalists may stand to be comprised of the greater degrees of

personalization which is more salient in interpersonal forms of discourse (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1997).

The emergence of interactivity in the Internet age has also subjected understandings of journalism as a profession to reconsideration. Picard (2014), for example, suggests a “de-institutionalization” (504) of journalism whereby, “the structures, work divisions, and focuses of news production are changing” (504) as a part of a broader shift away from relationships, structures, practices, and norms which accounted for elite and journalistic interests rather than those which more fully engage and represent ordinary citizens. Witschge and Nygren (2009) suggest a “de-professionalization” (55) of journalism whereby journalists’ former “knowledge monopoly” has diffused, traditional division of labour structures are in flux, and the feasibility of the public service function of journalism is in question due largely to growth in the “financial motives” (56) of media companies. In this context, the impetus for a journalist to seek employment at a legacy ‘quality’ newspaper today – in particular, a drive to produce journalism aligning with the public service values of the newspaper, despite low wages and job security - is likely quite different than it was 20 years ago, when newspaper journalism was even seen as glamorous. Linked to this shift, a fundamental change in the dynamics and salience of newspaper brand value adjunct to the rise of the Internet also stands to be addressed.

Professional journalists can also interact with audiences through infrastructures housed by their news organization, particularly in the form of the comments sections adjacent to news articles. This arena has been described as an extension of the letters to the editor pages traditionally featured in legacy print newspapers (Bergstrom and Wadbring 2014; Hille and Bakker 2014). While evidence shows the perceived importance of this arena to both journalists and audiences (Bergstrom and Wadbring 2014), the percentage of news readers

who actually contribute to comments sections is extremely small, forming just a couple of percentage points of readers in the Swedish context, for example (Bergstrom and Wadbring 2014). Research also suggests a conflicting trend whereby professional journalists are reluctant to participate in the comments forums of articles they have authored, yet still feel an obligation to maintain the integrity of this space when, for example, it may come to feature obscenities (Bergstrom and Wadbring 2014; Hille and Bakker 2014). Whereas journalists' involvement in social media platforms is depicted as aligning more with the "interpersonal" (Lee 2015, 2) qualities of social media, journalists' involvement in online comments sections is depicted as aligning with traditional 'quality' journalistic norms, suggesting that journalists' participation in online comments sections may in fact reinforce traditional 'quality' values more than tabloid news values.

Often in conjunction with considerations of speed and interactivity, media scholarship identifies increased fragmentation and concerns over factual accuracy as features of the new media landscape (e.g. Lewis et al. 2009; Hermida 2010; Bennett 2012; Sambrook 2012; Bell 2014; Levy et al. 2017). Microblog and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have allowed for the "instant dissemination of short fragments of data from a variety of official and unofficial sources" (Hermida 2010, 297) and as Witschge and Nygren note, "News organizations with resources can also use the web for giving depth and background, but the dominant media logic of the web is fast and short" (2009, 47). Extending this notion of fragmentation, Witschge and Nygren (2009) assert that "constant deadlines conflict with the need for accuracy" (46). Thus, despite the vast informational resources provided by the web, media scholarship suggests a trend whereby speed and fragmentation often triumph over nuance and accuracy, producing journalism that may less resemble that of traditional 'quality' newspapers and more that of tabloid publications (Bell 2014). Disjuncture between emphasis

on speed and the time required of journalists to ensure accuracy is, furthermore, a source of tension with profound consequences on the production of public service journalism, as seen, for example, with the recent spate of election-related 'fake news'.⁸

Variation in the impacts of affordances of the Internet and online features on different types of news stories is another point of consideration and is one which also pertains to differences in the role of journalists in news production processes. Through an ethnographic study of 'hard' news and 'soft' news production at Argentina's largest online newspaper, *Clarín.com*, Boczkowski (2009) depicts a growing divergence between the two types of news stories. Of particular pertinence are the temporal dimensions entailed in the production of each, according to which, "soft new stories need not be timely" (Tuchman 1978, 51 in Boczkowski 2009, 100), while 'hard' news stories must keep pace with the 24/7 online news cycle. In line with literature referencing an increasing emphasis on speed in newsrooms, with regard to 'hard' news and 'soft' news production, Boczkowski depicts the restricting impact of time pressures on sourcing, "the coupling of the high speed of publishing and updating with the high volume of stories left little time for the typical sourcing work of traditional journalism" (Boczkowski 2009, 108). Suggested is an elevation in the thoroughness and complexity of 'soft' news alongside an adjunct thinning out of resources available for 'hard' news production, a shift which suggests a reversal of the characteristics of the types of stories traditionally associated with legacy 'quality' and tabloid newspapers respectively, in the online context. This is an interesting possibility, which may be seen to indicate *Clarín.com's*

⁸ 'Fake news' is, like tabloidization, a term with definitions that are "fraught with difficulty" (Levy et al. 2017, 38); while 'fake news' often refers to stories which intentionally lack accuracy and truth, 'fake news' has also addressed stories which audiences "don't feel comfortable about or don't agree with" (Levy et al. 2017, 38), the latter of which could result from an unintentional failure of journalists to verify information or provide sufficient context.

decision to put more resources into the types of news stories which are seen to interest the public, rather than those which are in the public interest. The thesis' corpus linguistic and content analysis of the *Huffington Post*, alongside the 4 legacy publications, will generate empirical data to the end of investigating this possible shift.

2.5c. Technological Approaches in the Literature: Towards a Theoretical Framework

Numerous scholarship and media commentary references transformations of the media ecosystem connected to the Internet's ascendance (e.g. McChesney 2016; Chadwick 2017; Deuze and Witschge 2018; Rusbridger 2018). Certain scholarship herein offers useful theories pertinent to a recent possible tabloidization of newspapers. Theories drawn from other bodies of scholarship also provide useful conceptual frameworks through which to understand these possible recent shifts in news publications' values and content.

Andrew Chadwick (2017) proposes a useful approach to today's media system accounting for the new media's multifaceted, multidimensional roles, while acknowledging the continued role and impact of old media logics. The 'hybrid media system' attests to the emergence of new practices, norms, and tensions which go beyond a mere convergence of old and new media, restructuring adjunct power dynamics. Of particular interest is Chadwick's acknowledgment of a certain lack of novelty of 'new media,' noting that "all older media were once newer and all newer media eventually get older. But older media of any consequence are rarely entirely displaced by new media" (2017, 28). Heeded through this reference are halcyon notions of past eras that arise with the introduction of new technologies throughout history. While there is a tendency to view journalism of the past with rose-tinted lenses, underscored is the need to examine whether and if so, which, shifts have occurred.

While Chadwick conducts detailed case studies of contemporary media events, such as the 2016 Donald Trump election campaign, *The Hybrid Media System* (2017) lacks longitudinal analyses wherein pre-Internet era cases are compared to contemporary ones. Similarly, a lack of diachronic, systematic analyses, wherein journalistic values or journalistic content are examined and compared persists across scholarship in which the relationship between journalism and technology is subject to examination. While the relevant literature suggests a decline in the public service value of journalism accompanying the ascendance of the Internet, particularly in the context of 'hard' news stories, a study which provides supporting empirical data has not been conducted.

Boczkowski (2009a, 2010) discusses the notion of journalistic mimicry as increasing and evolving as a result of recent changes in the ecology of journalism. While Boczkowski does not define the term, mimicry in his scholarship refers to coverage of specific news stories and/or types of stories, and the extent to which one or both may be picked up and replicated by other journalists. In an ethnographic study of 3 online and print Argentinian newspapers, Boczkowski (2009a), identifies an increase in the mimetic practices of journalists as a function of a shift from "unmediated to mediated" (64) monitoring of news stories by journalists. In the context of legacy news organizations, not only do the journalists producing online stories mimic coverage of the stories scooped by online journalists at other news organizations; they can mimic, or appropriate the stories picked up by print journalists at their own news organizations. A possible increase in news stories on the same topics and/or types of topics in the wake of the emergence of online journalism is thus a notion of interest to this thesis' content analysis. While not investigated by Boczkowski, the possibility of increasing mimicry in journalistic language, and the values therein represented, is another point of interest to this project.

Although not specific to the media ecosystem, the concept of ‘creative destruction’ is a useful one which has been applied to expound certain ostensible recent shifts occurring in the media industry. Initially posited by Joseph Schumpeter, an economics scholar, in 1943, media scholars such as Van Weezel (2010) and Nee (2013) have used the term to describe a supplanting of legacy media organizations by smaller, newer media outlets. Nee (2013), for example, argues that in periods of technological disruption, older organizations are less likely to effectively innovate, and accordingly, newer competitors, who do not have to recreate practices or retrain employees, are more successful in achieving performance goals. Further, a failure of traditional organizations to innovate in line with technological advancements is seen as uniquely problematic in capitalist societies wherein the most adept player in the market is positioned to succeed.

The notion of ‘creative destruction’ is particularly pertinent to the dissertation’s examination of the *Huffington Post*, a digital native news publication, and the project’s comparison of the *HuffPo*’s values and content against those of 4 legacy newspapers. Does a news outlet created in the Internet era deploy the same proportional configurations of linguistic proxies and content as a tabloid or a ‘quality’ legacy newspaper, or of neither? The thesis will address the possibility that a digital native news outlet such as the *Huffington Post* may be an example of creative disruption.

Another, more temporally-oriented theoretical consideration is the notion of a shift from a Web 2.0 era to a Web 3.0 era, each defined by different technological characteristics. While Web 2.0 has principally been defined in terms of user *participation*, as enabled through the rise of networks and platforms (Blank and Reisdorf 2012), Web 3.0 has been understood in terms of user *cooperation* (e.g. Barassi and Treré 2012; Kreps and Kimppa 2015). Crucial to the concept of Web 3.0 is the utilization of user-generated data to “manage, organize and

create meaning” in new ways (Barassi and Treré 2012, 1272). In line with a perspective that neither trumps technological determinism or social shaping, the Internet of things and the semantic Web can be understood to have a reflexive relationship with Web 3.0, and to be characteristic of the Web 3.0 framework.

While the roots of the Web 3.0 period can be understood to have emerged as early as the first decade of the 21st century with the introduction of certain devices constituting the Internet of things and the mainstream uptake of major social media and search platforms, the second decade of the 21st century can be understood as a period wherein the predominance of these elements came to characterize the online context. Hereby, the former salience of user *participation* was supplanted by user *cooperation*. The characteristics of the Web 3.0 context and its implications for print and online journalism are expounded in greater detail in the thesis’ third results chapter, Chapter 7, in order to situate the data points and analyses from these years within the pertinent contextual framework.

In moving towards the presentation of a novel framework for the process of tabloidization, the following section of this chapter focuses on the third arena of putative causal factors of tabloidization. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, while cultural factors resist operationalization, this thesis acknowledges that tabloidization does not take place exogenous to a cultural context, and further finds the frameworks through which numerous pertinent cultural forces are discussed to be of use to the conceptualization of the longitudinal process of tabloidization, which is posited in the penultimate section of this chapter.

2.6. Cultural Factors and Frameworks

Tabloidization is implicitly or explicitly attributed to cultural factors by numerous journalism scholars, particularly in critical analysis approaches (Turner 1999; McDonald 2000; Conboy 2002; Örnebring and Jonsson 2004). Rare, however, is tabloidization scholarship which depicts the phenomenon principally in terms of cultural criteria, or which ascribes primary agency to cultural shifts. While the existing body of literature offers some insightful critiques and useful, if nebulous, theoretical frameworks, it can be observed that such studies generally fail to involve empirical data and those that do, tend to derive data from cherry-picked case studies. This thesis will relate certain interpretations of empirical data-based findings to the realm of cultural factors, however, due to resistance to operationalization, these factors are largely referenced in the thesis' conclusions as considerations pertinent to the interpretation of certain shifts which do, and contrary to popular assumptions, do not occur during the course of the dissertation's 48-year timeframe.

As a heuristic, the term 'cultural factors' requires some unpacking, particularly as definitions of culture remain contested (Spencer Oatey, 2008; Griswold 2013). Griswold's cultural diamond framework is a useful means through which to conceptualize cultural objects; it identifies 4 elements - producers, receivers, the social world, and the cultural object – which serve to pinpoint the relationships associated with the object. Building from the first edition of her book *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, Griswold (2013) acknowledges the recent blurring of producers and receivers, and draws attention to the role of participation in the interplays which shape a cultural object's meaning. Thus, the cultural diamond does not depict a cause and effect relationship, but rather illuminates the different macro-level arenas which may account for the object's cultural meaning.

Numerous cultural approaches to tabloidization draw heavily from the Habermasian public sphere model. MacDonald (2000), for example, depicts shifts in the Habermasian public sphere according to which recent personalization in the 'quality' press may be seen as a virtue. In line with other proponents of tabloidization, and as discussed in the thesis' Introduction chapter, MacDonald views an ascension of personal, emotional content in newspapers as representing a broader range of perspectives and values, thereby encouraging a wider readership and subsequently, contributing to an increasingly well-informed public. Applying the cultural diamond framework, MacDonald's argument indirectly points to shifts in the values upheld by news producers, by audiences, and in the social world more broadly according to which personalization has acquired greater salience. This is something of a vague picture, and MacDonald does not depict any mechanism(s) whereby this reconfiguration in values may have transpired; her book chapter consists of several case studies wherein the personalization of several British news programs is depicted as augmenting the ability of 'hard' news issues and facts to resonate with audiences. While the notion of journalism as a function of cultural hierarchies and adjunct gendered biases is an interesting one, it is also one which has to the best of the author's knowledge resisted operationalization.

A putative recent heightening of personalization and 'emotionalism' in journalism can also be connected to notions of a recent broader growth in the role of emotional capital in democratic societies. Richards and Rees (2011) develop the concept of an 'emotional public sphere' which underpins the public sphere, reflecting "a deliberated and informed attention to the emotional dynamics of the public" (2011, 852). The authors view journalists as the principal managers of the public sphere's "emotional tone" (2011, 853), as influenced by the emotional labour conveyed through their journalism. In loose theoretical terms, it is suggested that a broader turn to affect at the societal level has also influenced producers of

media content, impacting on journalistic values. However, this broader shift to affect, and an ascension of affect in journalism remain unsubstantiated; if, as suggested, personalization can be understood as a proxy of emotional capital or affect, this thesis will offer evidence pertinent to this shift as seen within the field of journalism.

Another societal shift of relevance to a possible reconfiguration of journalistic values and content are shifts in so-called popular culture. As with culture, the term popular culture requires unpacking due to plurality in and contestation over its multiple meanings. A view common in the relevant literature is of popular culture as an ongoing process constituted by conflicting, hierarchical forces (Fiske 1989; Bakhtin 1996; Conboy 2002). Disjuncture has been depicted between the economic and cultural capital associated with popular culture, identifying the 'elite' as owners of the resources from which popular culture is constructed, and 'subordinates,' or ordinary consumers, who construct popular culture itself using these resources (Fiske 1989). If these resources are, in the context of news, and as acknowledged by Conboy (2002), channels of communication, then with the ascendance of the Internet, a pivotal new field of resources for the construction of and conflict within the field of popular culture has emerged starting at the turn of the 21st century.

Popular culture, of course, pre-dates the Internet, as well as the emergence of mass culture, and can be dated as far back as cavemen drawings and Roman graffiti (Betts 2013). Raymond Williams (1978) attests to a sharp augmentation of interest in the term popular culture starting in the 1950s, which has been connected to the mainstream uptake of television and emergence of "art inspired by consumerism and then music directed to the young," as conveyed through the contemporaneously-coined term 'pop culture' (Betts 2, 2013). Thus, with the increases in consumer spending and in the youth population of Britain during the 1960s – 1980s, contemporaneous growth in content related to popular culture, for

example, in the realms of entertainment or scandal coverage, might be anticipated to emerge through the content analysis of the newspapers during these years.

Another key characteristic of popular culture is its heteroglossia, whereby a multiplicity of voices and meanings can be interpreted (Bakhtin 1996). As noted by Conboy (2002), in the context of the popular, or tabloid press, this feature of popular culture serves to attract a wide range and large quantity of readers. The notion of a polysemous vernacular distinct to popular and/or tabloid culture is one of interest to this thesis, and one which will be addressed in this thesis' conclusions chapter within discussions of the dissertation's comparative longitudinal findings.

As suggested by the literature, another key characteristic of popular culture is technology, which serves as a crucial conduit for its construction. The rise and widespread use of television in the 1950s, which, as discussed, has been connected with a rise in entertainment and leisure content, and a decline in the public service quality of 'hard' news stories in newspapers, can thus also be associated with an ascension of popular culture. Further, claims regarding a blurring of popular and 'high culture' issued by numerous critical theorists, semiologists, and postmodern scholars (Baudrillard 1970; Featherstone 1990), often mirror those of proponents and critics of tabloidization, who attest to a spillover of tabloid values and content into elite or 'quality' newspapers.

The rise of popular culture has also been associated with the emergence of a postmodern paradigm, representing a break from a modern paradigm defined by values of rationality and enlightenment thought. Adherents of a more extreme strand of postmodernism, such as Jean Baudrillard (1970), view a loss of meaning and truth as a byproduct of the rise of mass production and mass media, whereby it is impossible to understand or derive meaning from any one object or entity, as any one singular item exists

amongst a cornucopia of other products, each offering a profusion of features and services. In a postmodern context, meaning has, according to this conceptual framework, become absorbed and shattered by commercial and technological imperatives, and truth is arbitrary. While this thesis does not adhere to such an extreme strand of postmodern theory, it finds pertinence in the notions of increased polysemy and crises involving the meaning of 'truth' accompanying the rise of mass media, mass production, and global mass-mediated technologies, as recently reflected in widespread concerns over a putative spread of 'fake news,' and even 'deep fakes' in the online context.

It should be noted that notions of a cultural shift to a postmodern context are also not unrelated to certain economic transformations. Commercial forces are, even to scholars subscribing to more moderate versions of postmodernism, a crucial agent of this new paradigm, with disjuncture from modernist predecessors marked by the rise of corporations, in particular multinational ones, global financial markets and global media communications systems, and further, the "capitalist boom" (Whitley 2011, 187) seen in the 1980s (Jameson 1983, 1984). The conglomeration of media companies during the 1980s can as such be understood as a key enabling feature of a possible shift towards postmodernism.

In journalism scholarship, a shift towards postmodernism has also been understood in terms of the emergence of a postmodern public sphere, whereby citizens excluded from the bourgeois public sphere have gained representation in an increasingly fragmented press (Conboy 2002). Although tabloid publications, according to certain scholarship, historically represented those marginalized from the mainstream public sphere (Conboy 2002; Örnebring and Jonsson 2004), in a postmodern context wherein popular culture has become increasingly pronounced, the heteroglossia of the tabloid press has (putatively) amplified and rhetoric has become increasingly essential in maintaining newspaper brand identity and appeal (Conboy

2002). Underscored is the importance of language to tabloid newspapers in a postmodern context wherein the salience of popular culture has augmented.

Newspapers' and journalists' self-branding, however, is a topic that has largely been overlooked by the journalism literature, and, particularly in the Internet era context, is worth consideration. Branding scholarship identifies a heightening of "brand awareness" (Aronczyk and Powers 2010, 1) at the turn of the 20th century, whereby it has been adopted by "multiple forms of political, social, and cultural expression and organization" (2010, 2). With the profusion of information resources, journalists (citizen and traditional), and news platforms, brand identity stands as a means to distinguish and pronounce journalists and news organizations from respective competitors. Theoretical literature by Aronczyk and Powers (2010) highlights the relevance of branding to contemporary producers of news, "In a competitive global economy characterized by surfeits of information and hypermediation, and corresponding deficits of time and attention, brands are heralded as the 'imaginative genre' (Poovey 2008) that can simplify, differentiate and narrate a wide range of economic and social values" (2010, 2).

Characteristics of postmodernism, popular culture, and branding can further be seen to align with a contemporary decline in public trust in institutions, including political and media ones. In the case of branding, lowering levels of public trust might to varying extents connect to a perceived gap between the quality of the constructed image or connotations of a brand and that offered by its services or products, in some cases, in the context of newspapers, linking to perceptions of tabloidization. While variation in public trust exists on a nation-to-nation basis and institution-to-institution basis, numerous polls indicate falling and conspicuously low levels of trust in the media and journalists, and this trend is particularly pronounced in the UK. A 2010 EU study sees the UK place last in a media trust poll run

amongst 27 member nations (Newman et al. 2016, 110). The 2016 Reuters Digital News Report locates public trust in traditional media – “defined as broadcasters and newspapers, including their web offerings” (Newman et al. 2016, 110) – at only 50% (ibid). Suggested is variation in public trust across tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers, and in accordance with the distribution medium at hand. The analysis of the 2012 – 2016 segment of the thesis’ corpus, wherein a digital native newspaper, the *Huffington Post*, is also subject to examination, will identify differences in the journalistic values and content of legacy tabloid and ‘quality,’ and an online native newspaper, shedding light on certain putative causal agents of the varying public perceptions of each outlet type.⁹

Applying the cultural diamond framework, the amplification of popular culture and the possible emergence of a postmodern paradigm can be understood to have potentially impacted at the societal, news production, and news reception levels. While the thesis addresses declining public trust in journalism and variation across different types of newspapers as a pertinent area of interest which merits some consideration, as they are factors which are of some relevance to news reception, of particular interest to the thesis are the social world and news production arenas of the cultural diamond.

Finally, to iterate, cultural factors are important while nebulous forces to consider when interpreting data from the course of the thesis’ 48-year timeframe. Further, although popular culture and postmodernism are contested concepts, the thesis’ findings further stand to be of interest to the bodies of scholarship which are dedicated to popular culture and literature, and which adhere to different strands of postmodern theory.

⁹ This is not to confound journalistic values and content with the full set of causal factors which may account for variation in public trust across different types of newspapers, but to identify certain distinctions between the 3 types of publications which stand to contribute to these perceptions.

2.7. Theoretical Framework for the Process of Tabloidization

Drawing from the key economics, technological, and culture related factors, developments, and theoretical frameworks, this section proposes a theory through which to explain the process of tabloidization. Acknowledged in this conceptualization are economic, technological, and cultural causal factors which stand to directly or indirectly impact at the market, newsroom, and individual journalist level, in turn shifting journalistic values and/or content.

The processes and mechanisms described in this section, with the exception of those pertinent to cultural factors which will be addressed in the dissertation's conclusions chapter, will be tested through the thesis' 4 hypotheses. For heuristic purposes, the 4 hypotheses are listed once again:

- ***H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.***
- ***H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.***
- ***H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization.***
- ***H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.***

As noted by scholars such as Sjoavaag (2014), technological shifts, such as the introduction of technological means to cheaply produce more content, result in changes in the work practices

of journalists and force “newsrooms to change the way they think about journalism” (512). Also bearing influence at the newsroom level are dramatic economic shifts whereby “managerial behaviours have changed in an attempt to satisfy investors” and “stress levels in newsrooms” have risen (Picard 2006, 10). Extending both notions, it can be proffered that the rise and widespread use of the Internet and adjunct economic factors (as well as perhaps less impactful economic and technological factors preceding the Internet’s ascendance) have caused shifts at the newsroom level, affecting the configuration of values upheld by journalists and editors. It is also likely that such changes amplified with the shift from a Web 2.0 to a Web 3.0 context, beginning in the second decade of the 21st century.

Media scholarship notes the association between news outlets with a stronger commercial-orientation and the prominence of sensationalism, personalization, and entertainment-centric news values and content, the latter serving as a means through which circulation is maximized (Sparks 2000; Skovsgaard 2014; Umbricht and Esser 2016; Magin 2017). While not explicitly stated by the literature, implied is the stronger attraction of more readers to heightened, emotional and/or entertainment-oriented news, or news with more ‘human’ elements, than to ‘information-oriented,’ ‘serious’ public affairs-oriented news. Accordingly, as the traditional business model of tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers has disintegrated and caused financial hardships for both newspaper types, editors and journalists at ‘quality’ news outlets have been placed in a position in which they are increasingly inclined towards the values and content traditionally more characteristic of their tabloid counterparts. Further, a thinning out of financial resources may place strain on the ability of journalists to produce ‘information-oriented’ content, which can often require greater financial resources. While tabloids are more reliant on circulation for revenues, ‘quality’ newspapers must also retain certain essential circulation figures so as to secure the

advertising revenues upon which they are more reliant. Across tabloid and 'quality' newspapers respectively, the extent of this financial malaise, however, varies on a news organization to news organization basis, and accordingly, it is logical to assume that subsequent shifts in the values and published content of journalists vary on such a basis as well. As posited through SCP theory, certain variation can be attributed to the market structure and market positioning therein of a news publication. In line with the increasing conglomeration of the newspaper industry, shifts stemming from the market structure level over time thus stand to impact at the micro- level, or journalistic values and content manifest in news publications.

Also with regards to longitudinal economic shifts, the movement of advertisers to the Internet has reduced the flow of advertising income to newspapers. Declining advertising revenues, particularly in the case of 'quality' newspapers, has pushed newspapers to make changes to their business models and increase their presence online, where web metrics can immediately measure article popularity. Subsequently, journalists can be encouraged to produce articles which receive the most clicks - those which more prominently feature tabloid content and values – and produce fewer articles characteristic of legacy 'quality' publication values and content. This is another means whereby the cheaper production of more content, possibly on an instantaneous basis, may lead to an ascension in tabloid values and content, and also a greater homogenization of values and content.

Similarly, it can be assumed that the ways in which new technologies – affecting the production, dissemination, and accessibility of news – are adopted differ on a newsroom-to-newsroom basis. For example, news organizations facing greater financial pressures may prioritize editorial analytics, speed, and/or interactivity to a stronger degree. Further, journalists at news organizations experiencing more financial stress may also engage in

mimicry to a greater degree. Variation across new technology training procedures and approaches also stand as possible mechanisms whereby journalists may undergo increased exposure to pressures which impact on their discursive output.

In the Web 3.0 context in particular, different impacts of financial pressures and contemporaneous technological change may have, accordingly, also lead to changes in gatekeeping practices. With the influx of user data and increasing emphasis on creating new meaning with large datasets, it is possible that the traditional agenda-setting role of journalists has reconfigured to empower news consumers with greater agency in determining the types of news stories that are covered most prominently and prevalently, and the values conveyed within this coverage. Such a shift in gatekeeping dynamics would manifest in the proportional configuration of different types of news stories ('hard' news or 'soft' news, principally) and of the specific topics reported (such as political scandal, finance, entertainment, and crime).

Twentieth-century developments preceding the rise and widespread use of the Internet, however, can also be associated with a cultural paradigm shift whereby, in accordance with the cultural diamond framework, fundamental shifts have occurred at the societal and adjunct news production levels. In particular, these developments are the ascension in popular culture and emergence of characteristics of post-modernity, commencing in the 1960s and amplifying during the 1980s, with the increasing conglomeration of multi-national media companies and heightening of capitalist logics. The increased emphasis on consumption and capital of the 1980s, as reflected in events such as the Wapping Revolution, can contemporaneously be associated with the above-discussed effects of increasing financial pressure on journalists in newsrooms, however, to a degree less extreme than that depicted with the ascendance of the Internet and the introduction of

related technologies into newsrooms. In terms of field theory, the increasing strength of the economic pole, and movement of the journalistic field towards this pole, stands to impact on journalistic output. This is to suggest that a tabloidization of journalistic values and content may have preceded a possible amplified tabloidization accompanying the rise and widespread use of the Internet in the 21st century.

In line with this notion is hybrid media system theory's acknowledgement of new media logics as supplementing rather than supplanting old media logics. The theory's simultaneous recognition of the new power dynamics stemming from the emergence of new media should also be kept in mind, as this thesis, for example, views an increase in the power of the economic pole as impacting on journalism and journalistic output.

Finally, it is possible that shifts in journalistic values and content occurring as a result of these recent shifts in the ecology of journalism may have resulted in a fundamental reconfiguration of journalism ideology. As posited in this thesis' introduction chapter, in line with scholarship by Deuze in particular (2004, 2005a, 2005b), journalism ideology, was core to the professionalization of journalism during the 20th century and superseded potential influencing factors at the organizational and cultural levels. A possible ascension of tabloid characteristics in journalism may suggest a risk to the professional status and authority of journalism and represent a strengthening of factors at the cultural and organizational levels.

2.8. Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the 3 arenas of putative causal factors of an ostensible tabloidization of newspapers, and proposed a novel framework for the process of tabloidization. The chapter began with an introduction of the project's research question and

hypotheses, and foregrounded a discussion of economic considerations of relevance with an overview of the principal newspaper ownership models upheld in 'liberal' media systems, such as the UK.

The key developments, factors, and theoretical frameworks pertinent to the putative economic and technological agents of a possible tabloidization of newspapers were discussed, followed by an overview of the relevant cultural frameworks. With the relevant putative factors and theoretical frameworks expounded, the proposed novel framework for the process of tabloidization was posited. Aspects of the framework will be referenced where pertinent in the thesis' results' chapters and revisited in greater detail in the final chapter, Chapter 8, wherein the project's overall key findings are interpreted in full.

With the theoretical framework for the process of tabloidization posited, the following chapter will provide an overview of the methods applied to collect and analyse the thesis' data. The rationale for the selection of methods will be explained with regard to the thesis' aims and the existing body of relevant research.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis situated the putative causal factors of tabloidization within the relevant journalism and media scholarship, and proffered a theoretical framework through which to conceptualize the process of tabloidization. This chapter discusses the thesis' methods, through which the putative causal factors of tabloidization are assessed, situating the methodological dimension of the project within the body of pertinent empirical journalism and media scholarship.

The thesis is a social science project with a methodological framework grounded in quantitative linguistic methods. As newspapers are constituted by language, it is logical to apply a linguistic approach (see studies by Bednarek 2006; Conboy 2007; Richardson 2007; Clark 2013, which exemplify this reasoning). Furthermore, this chapter shows that while numerous examples of linguistic analyses of media texts can be identified in the scholarship, this project applies a novel combination of methods, journalistic texts, and temporality which are uniquely suited to an assessment of a possible tabloidization of newspapers.

This chapter begins with an overview of the project's methodological aims and its methodological approach, and then focuses on the two methods applied: corpus linguistics and content analysis. A definition of corpus linguistics is provided, followed by a discussion of the corpus linguistic analyses in the relevant media and journalism literature; similarly, in a following set of chapter subsections, a definition of content analysis is proffered, followed by a discussion of the relevant content analytic media and journalism scholarship. With corpus linguistics and content analysis expounded and the relevant literature discussed, the thesis' corpus linguistics and content analytic approaches are explained, with subsections focusing on case selection, dataset construction, and operationalization of journalistic values and

content types detailed. In a penultimate section, the thesis' composite tabloidization measure, wherein overall change across the proxies of tabloid and 'quality' characteristics are calculated, is discussed, and the significance of these measures elucidated. The chapter concludes with a summary of the thesis' methodological approach.

3.2. Methodological Aims and Overview of Methodological Approach

Corpus linguistics is the principal component of the project's methodology. This is a quantitative approach, through which the linguistic features of a large body of newspaper texts are subject to systematic examination. Research in the fields of journalism, media, and media linguistics largely support tabloidization claims on the basis of qualitative methods or mere intuition, as discussed later in this chapter (Lefkowitz 2018). A significant gap in this scholarship is the absence of a study wherein a large diachronic body of newspaper texts are subjected to a systematic form of analysis, such as a corpus linguistic one. A core aim of this thesis is to provide a methodological intervention through a longitudinal, quantitative linguistic analysis of tabloid and 'quality' newspapers.

The project's corpus linguistic approach is complemented through application of a content analysis. Whereas the corpus linguistic framework identifies longitudinal change and continuity in the linguistic proxies of tabloid and 'quality' newspaper values respectively, the content analysis assesses change and continuity in the configuration of topics and types of news stories covered by tabloid and 'quality' newspapers over time. Hereby, the thesis' methodological approach examines change and continuity in journalistic values as conveyed through language and the broader content in which the language is deployed.

3.3. Corpus Linguistics

A *corpus* can be understood as, “a body of text which is carefully sampled to be maximally representative of a language or language variety” (McEnery and Wilson 2001). While *corpus linguistics* has been defined in numerous ways (McEnery and Hardie 2012), it can broadly be understood as a methodology wherein computer-based methods are used to examine large bodies of text. Pollach (2012), for example, defines the methodology as, “a branch of linguistics that conducts computer-aided analyses of language” (264), and, acknowledging heterogeneity across different corpus linguistics approaches, McEnery and Hardie define it as, “dealing with some set of machine-readable texts which is deemed an appropriate basis on which to study a specific set of research questions” (2012, 1). Social science research has tended to adopt content and textual analytic approaches rather than corpus linguistic ones, and this is a lacuna which merits attention. While textual analytic approaches, such as content analysis, tend to entail scanning of a text or set of texts in order to determine a bias or a general classification of the topic or type of text at hand, corpus linguistics involves analysis of a large body of text(s) that is representative with regards to a specific research question or set of questions. Further, due to the volume of text in a corpus, corpus linguistics applies computer-facilitated techniques to analyse the data therein. It is also the author’s view that the potential of corpus linguistics with regards to journalistic texts has remained largely untapped, particularly to the end of an examination of journalistic values.

Corpus linguistics first emerged in the 1960s and its popularity has flourished alongside developments in computational technologies. Drawing from the adjunct availability of large-scale linguistic data, the emergence and subsequent analyses of large corpora, have

facilitated new theories of language, and of linguistic drift¹⁰ (McEnery and Hardie 2012). The methodology enables rapid searches of linguistic patterns and the quick generation of frequency counts for lexical items, which would with a large volume of texts, otherwise exceed the realm of feasibility (Krennmayr 2012). Computer technologies thus play a crucial role in the rapid and reliable analyses of corpora (McEnery and Hardie 2012).

This thesis tailors a corpus linguistic approach to the end of assessing its research question, *To what extent have news outlets tabloidized in the past 48 years, and what explains the extent of variation across these outlets ?* The specific ways in which the thesis' corpus linguistic approach is used to examine this question and its supporting hypotheses is explained in Section 3.5 of this chapter. Before this discussion, an overview of relevant applications of corpus linguistics approaches in the journalism and media scholarship is proffered.

3.3a. Corpus Linguistics in Journalism and Media Studies

A number of projects have applied corpus linguistics to newspaper texts (Biber 1988, 2003; Biber and Finegan 1989, 1997; Hundt and Mair 1999; Westin 2001; Westin and Giesler 2002; Clark 2013; Krennmayr 2015), however, a study has yet to interpret corpus linguistics findings in terms of the journalistic values at play and in terms of a possible tabloidization of newspapers.

¹⁰ Linguistic drift is a phenomenon whereby a longitudinal shift in language occurs across genres, and has been defined as, "... constituted by the unconscious selection on the part of its speakers of those individual variations that are communitive in some special direction" (Sapir 1921, 155, in Biber and Finegan 1989 489). Accordingly, this thesis is interested in linguistic change exogenous to linguistic drift, and which is specific to the journalistic field.

Biber (1988), for example, applies corpus linguistics to identify and compare the linguistic features characteristic of all registers in the English language, with newspaper discourse subject to analysis as a register therein. The study establishes which ‘factors,’ or sets of linguistic features commonly found together in certain types of discourse, distinguish newspaper texts. Biber goes a step further and identifies linguistic ‘dimensions,’ wherein one pole, or set of co-occurring linguistic factors, are prevalent and a second pole, or set of co-occurring linguistic factors, tend to be relatively absent. For example, one such dimension, “involved vs. informational production,” consists of one factor, a set of features indicative of a speaker’s more informal involvement with an addressee, and a converse set of co-occurring features, or factor, that index a formal focus on information. Newspaper discourse is thus examined in terms of the relative salience of features with regard to those characteristic of other registers, rather than in terms of the journalistic values of the newspaper register itself. It is of pertinence to this thesis to note that the “informational production” pole of the “involved vs. informational production” dimension is found to be of particular salience in the newspaper reporting discourse register; features which comprise this factor include noun-noun phrases and word length.

The multi-dimensional corpus linguistic approach developed by Biber has been applied in other scholarship (Biber and Finegan 1989, 1997; Hundt and Mair 1999; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002) to the end of assessing differences and similarities across linguistic registers, including that of newspapers, and possible changes in the newspaper register over time. Westin (2001) focuses on editorials in British ‘quality’ newspapers, and identifies an increase in the salience of informal, argumentative, as well as informational language between 1900 and 1993. Of particular interest to this thesis are increases in word length, and decreases in sentence length, first person pronouns, and private verbs. Interestingly, with

regards to Westin's findings, more "informal" (150) language is identified as distinct to the *Guardian* in relation to its 'quality' newspaper counterparts, the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. As the study's focus is solely on a sub-register of the newspaper register, newspaper editorials, it would be prudent to expect differences between the findings of this thesis and those of Westin's research.

In general, the corpus linguistic studies of newspaper texts find a relatively recent increase in the salience of markers of informal language in newspaper discourse (Hundt and Mair 1999; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002; Clark 2013). Hundt and Mair (1999) and Clark (2013) in particular identify increases in first and second person pronouns in British newspapers in the late 20th century, with Clark also identifying an augmentation of contractions, quotes, and taboo language. While the phenomenon of linguistic drift can to a certain extent account for an increasing informalization of language, studies by Biber and Finegan (1989) and Hundt and Mair (1999), which compare shifts in the journalistic register to that of other registers, show that journalistic discourse is a particularly "agile" register (Hundt and Mair 1999).

This relative susceptibility of the journalistic register to linguistic change is an important point rendering identified changes in journalistic language as of interest in their own right. Accordingly, a study of journalistic texts is an arena of particular interest through which certain macro level shifts, at the newsroom, and even socio-cultural levels, may be reflected. This is a notion which is discussed with regards to the project's corpus linguistics results in the thesis' conclusions chapter.

Interestingly, in addition to an increasing informalization of journalistic language, corpus linguistic studies of journalistic texts have often emphasized the information-centric language of the register (Biber 1989, 1997, 2003; Hundt and Mair 1999; West 2001; Westin

and Giesler 2002). For example, Biber and Gray (2013) show the increasing use of nouns and nominalizations in newspapers, and Biber (2003) similarly identifies an increase in compressed noun-phrase structures in news coverage over the course of the 20th century. These studies, however, do not include data from the 21st century and thus do not capture the possible impact of the Internet's ascendance on the journalistic register. The author is also unaware of quantitative linguistic studies which compare the language of tabloid and 'quality' newspapers, despite common conceptions of tabloids as less information-centric than their 'quality' publication counterparts.

Several case study-oriented projects have applied a corpus linguistic approach to assess more specific research questions regarding elements of newspaper coverage. For example, Krennmayr (2015) conducts a corpus linguistic analysis to the end of assessing the role of metaphors in 'quality' British newspapers, and Botella, Stuart, and Gadea (2015) create a new corpus of 'quality' Spanish newspapers, applying a corpus linguistic approach to identify the language and adjunct ideologies through which the newspapers report on the 2008 financial crisis. While the results of each of these studies are interpreted in terms of certain ideologies upheld by journalists, these differ from the journalistic values of interest to this thesis and of tabloidization scholarship more broadly. For example, Botella, Stuart, and Gadea's article finds *El Mundo's* tone of "comfort and reassurance" (ibid 2015, 49) in contrast to *El Pais'* tone of anger and condemnation as indicative of different ideologies; journalistic values such as sensationalism or objectivity, for example, are not discussed. Krennmayr and Botella, Stuart, and Gadea's studies apply different sampling and linguistic analysis techniques, conveying the heterogeneity of corpus linguistic approaches.

Thus, several key findings from corpus linguistic approaches in the journalism and media literature with regards to this thesis can be noted. These include the salience of

informational linguistic proxies in the newspaper register, namely in the form of word length and sentence length, a recent ascendance in informal or “involved” language in newspapers, particularly as seen in personal pronouns and quotes, and on a broader level, the relative malleability of journalistic discourse, which is more prone to change in line with linguistic shifts at the societal level. With regards to specific newspapers, the scholarship identifies informal language as more characteristic of the *Guardian* than of its ‘quality’ newspaper counterparts, and in particular, in relation to that of the *Times*, which is found to use the most formal language (Westin 2001).

In the context of this dissertation, a corpus linguistics approach enables the collection and analysis of a statistically representative volume of newspaper texts, such that synchronic and diachronic assessments regarding the journalistic values manifest in two ‘quality’ and two tabloid British newspapers, as well as one digital native publication, can be produced. The corpus linguistics measurements applied in this thesis are discussed in this chapter’s Section 3.5., which consists of an overview of the pertinent case selection, corpus construction, and operationalization of key journalism values. Subsections contained in Subsection 3.5c., detail the parts of speech selected as proxies for each of the journalism values of interest and provides definitions and examples of each where relevant.

3.4. Content Analysis

Content analysis has a long history of use in a multitude of fields, such as communication, psychology, and political science (Neuendorf 2002). Over the course of the second half of the 20th century, applications of the approach augmented dramatically (Fowler 1986; Riffe and Freitag 1997), and the method has become increasingly popular with the rise of digital media

technologies, whereby a broader range of texts from various linguistic registers have become more widely available (Pierce 2015). With the ascendance of the Internet, it has even been suggested that greater cohesion and communication have been facilitated between content analysis scholars (Neuendorf 2002).

While it has been noted that humans perform content analysis on a daily basis, such as, for example, in processing and making mental judgments on something stated by a colleague or family member, in the context of the social sciences, content analysis entails systematic, replicable procedures and classifications (Fico, Lacy, and Riffe 2008). A useful understanding of the method is proffered by Berelson (1952), who defines content analysis as, “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (1952, 18). In this context, and as noted by Potter and Levine-Dorrenstein (1999) “manifest content” can be understood as “that which is on the surface and easily observable” (1999, 259). The surface elements of content analysis thus contrast with more intensive and linguistically-nuanced textual methods of discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis.

While certain scholars view content analysis as more quantitative rather than qualitative in light of the relatively superficial focus on textual characteristics (Neuendorf 2010), content analysis has also been classified as either quantitative or qualitative. In the case of this thesis, while certain qualitative dynamics apply to the content analysis, it is principally a structural quantitative approach (Pierce 2015). Structural quantitative approaches are commonly used to assess “how” a text is presented, as opposed to assessing the substance of a text (Pierce 2015, 7), and is a method often deployed in studies comparing media texts (Pierce 2015), such as this thesis.

In the context of this dissertation, news articles are categorized within one of 11 article topic categories, where the assigning of classifications entails qualitative judgments by the author in numerous instances wherein an article overlaps across multiple categories. As this typology draws from previous, theoretically-grounded research, in particular, scholarship by Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky (2010), the content analysis applied in this thesis is deductive, rather than inductive. Deductive content analyses may apply a variety of strategies to establish the reliability and validity of the project's coding scheme (Potter and Levine-Dorrenstein 1999). The coding scheme as well as the method's sampling design are discussed in the following Subsection, 3.5d.

A limitation of quantitative content analysis is a "reductionist" dynamic (Riffe et al. 2005, 24) whereby communicated messages are converted into a form of more manageable data. While this is a significant shortcoming of the method, the thesis' content analysis serves as a supplemental approach to compliment the project's core method, an extensive corpus linguistic analysis of newspaper texts. Accordingly, the dissertation's content analysis serves as a triangulating measure, rather than a core method, adapted to the end of assessing the project's research question, *To what extent have news outlets tabloidized in the past 48 years, and what explains variation in the extent of variation across these outlets ?* As with the thesis' corpus linguistic dimension, content analysis is also applied to assess the thesis' hypotheses, *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization, H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization, H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization, and H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.* Before the thesis' content analytic approach and the measurements therein

are detailed, the pertinent journalism and media studies literature which apply content analysis are discussed.

3.4a. Content Analysis in Journalism and Media Studies

While content analysis has been applied in a plethora of journalism and media studies research, this review of the literature focuses on the publications of particular relevance to this thesis. Accordingly, content analyses pertinent to the design of the dissertation's sampling approach, those illustrating the salience of conceptualizations of 'hard' news, 'soft' news, and 'general' news, and those which discuss more specific 'hard' news, 'soft' news, or 'general' news topics, such as, for example, political or entertainment coverage, are discussed. More broadly, studies deploying the method that engage with notions of tabloidization are also reviewed. The relevant findings from these studies are identified in order to provide context with regard to the thesis' content analytic approach and subsequent findings.

Several content analytic studies have examined quantitative changes in the coverage of news articles traditionally seen as characteristic of 'quality' and tabloid newspapers respectively (MacLachlan and Golding 2000; Rooney 1998, 2000; Uribe and Gunter 2004; Reinemann et al. 2011). For example, Reinemann et al. operationalize the concepts of 'hard' news and 'soft' news in a content analysis of the scholarship wherein these terms are discussed, subsequently identifying theme, focus, and style as key dimensions of each. Reinemann et al. also draw from the body of content analytic media and journalism literature in referencing variation in content analytic findings from the body of scholarship with regard to whether or not a tabloidization, in the form of an ascension of 'soft' news and a decline in 'hard' news, may be occurring. While this thesis agrees that the thematic, or topical,

dimension of a news article can be examined aptly through content analysis, its focus, or the way in which a theme is reported on, and style to be captured more appropriately through the concept of journalistic values, which also require more intensive analysis, in the form of a corpus linguistic examination.

MacLachlan and Golding's content analysis of British tabloid and 'quality' newspapers between 1952 and 1997 has often been cited in the tabloidization literature, and even replicated and extended by scholars such as Uribe and Gunter (2004). The authors chart change in international coverage, politics, entertainment, and human interest coverage, as well as shifts in the proportional configuration of photographs during the 45-year timeframe. Findings of particular interest and relevance with regard to 'hard' news reporting include declines in international coverage in the *Times* and the *Guardian*, a dramatic increase in political stories in the tabloids and a small increase in political coverage in the 'quality' newspapers. With regard to 'soft' news stories, pertinent findings include a large increase in human interest stories in the 'quality' newspapers, and a dramatic increase in entertainment stories in the tabloids. Further, the proportional magnitude of photographs increases across both newspaper types, with a particularly substantial increase seen in the *Times*. Finally, the authors also assess changes in article length with the most consistent, un-erratic data coming from the *Guardian*, which increases substantially over the course of the 45-year time period. In view of the study's diachronic application, the news publications and features therein examined, as well as the authors' interest in tabloidization, MacLachlan and Golding's research is of particular interest and relevance to this dissertation.

In the context of journalism studies, content analysis has been applied to British tabloid newspapers in two studies by Rooney that chart changes in the proportional coverage of 'public affairs' and 'non-public affairs' stories (1998; 2000). Both projects identify declines

in the former accompanied by growth in the latter; the studies also cite increases in the proportion of advertisements in the tabloids alongside growth in consumer spending. It can be noted that this focus reflects Rooney's interest in the role of economic factors in identifying a further tabloidization of tabloids seen at the news topic level.

Content analytic literature by Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky (2010) is also of particular interest to this thesis; the scholars propose a novel typology of news article types. The research, which examines 3 daily Israeli newspapers, identifies 3 principal categories of news articles, 'hard' news, 'soft' news, and 'general' news, marking an intervention to the common dichotomization of news articles into 'hard' news or 'soft' news stories. While this typology is discussed in more detail in Subsection 3.5d., 'Operationalization of Tabloid and 'Quality' Journalistic Content,' it is worth noting the validity and reliability established by the Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky study. Criteria for each of the 3 categories were drafted by the authors and modified and finalized through checks conducted by 26 journalists from across the three news publications of interest. The intercoder reliability secured through this research subsequently enhances the credibility of the proposed news article typology, which provides further support for the application of this framework in the context of this dissertation.

In terms of sampling schemes, numerous content analytic studies have shown the capacity of a 6-day week, two-constructed week sampling approach to yield a statistically representative sample of a year of newspaper coverage for the publication at hand (Riffe et al. 1993; Lacy et al. 2001; Hester and Dougall 2007). This scholarship establishes the reliability, or replicability, and validity, in the form of statistically representative validity, of application of a 6-day week (excluding Sundays), two constructed-week sampling approach (Drost 2011). As demonstrated by Riffe, Aust, and Lacy (1993), constructed week sampling is also more efficient than random sampling (139). In order to avoid oversampling from any specific day of

the week or time of year, it would be necessary to collect an extremely high number of dates per publication per year of interest. In consideration of the central limit theorem, a core framework of statistics in the social sciences, when the (newspaper) population distribution is known and not normal, the mean of a constructed week selected sample is a better estimate than a randomly selected sample (Riffe, Aust, and Lacy 1993).

Content analytic research has also verified the ability of a two-constructed week sampling approach to provide a statistically representative sample of a year of online news (Wang 2006; Riffe and Wang 2010). Wang (2006), for example, tests numerous sample sizes to the end of determining a sufficient sample size applicable to an online news site which will yield reliable and valid findings, in the form of a replicable, statistically representative sample. The research identifies the 6-day week, two-constructed week sampling approach as producing credible and viable findings, a result which is further confirmed through Riffe and Wang's 2010 content analysis of the *New York Times Online*. These content analytic studies thus provide empirical evidence in favour of the efficacy of a 6-day week, two constructed-week sampling framework.

In summary, several key findings from the content analytic approaches in journalism and media literature can be identified as particularly relevant to this thesis. These are declines in 'hard' news topics in 'quality' newspapers, increases in certain 'soft' news topics in both 'quality' and tabloid newspapers, and the common usage of the concepts of 'hard' news and 'soft' news in the research, a framework which may, for the purposes of this thesis, fruitfully be enhanced through the addition of a third news type category, 'general' news, as conceptualized by Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky (2010). With regard to pertinent sampling schemes, the scholarship shows the efficacy of a two-constructed week sampling approach, which is proven to yield a statistically representative sample of a year's worth of newspaper

coverage for the publication of interest. In the following section and subsections contained therein, the content analytic and corpus linguistics approaches applied in the thesis are explained in detail.

3.5. Thesis: Corpus Linguistic and Content Analytic Measurements

The thesis' corpus linguistic and content analytic approaches are designed to assess the project's research question, *To what extent have news outlets tabloidized in the last 48 years, and what explains variation in the extent of tabloidization between these outlets*, and the dissertation's 4 hypotheses, which facilitate evaluation of the research question. Accordingly, the selection of news outlets, years, and news articles subject to analysis, the construction of the thesis' dataset, and the operationalization of journalistic values and content types each contribute to a reliable and valid examination of the dissertation's research question and hypotheses. In the following subsections, the project's case selection, dataset construction, and means of operationalizing journalistic values and content types are discussed in detail, showing how each contribute to a diachronic analysis of a shifts in the journalistic values and content once distinctive of tabloid and 'quality' newspapers respectively.

3.5a. Case Selection

In view of the absence of corpora containing data from the time period and news publications of interest, a new corpus titled, 'British Newspapers, 1968 – 2016' was created. A smaller version of the corpus, 'British Newspapers, 1970 – 2010,' was constructed in order to test the feasibility of the method, allowing the pinpointing of certain necessary refinements which could only be identified through pilot work. 'British Newspapers, 1968 – 2016' consists of

news articles from 5 publications, the *Guardian*, the *Times*, the *Mirror*, *The Sun*, and the *Huffington Post*. These news outlets were selected on the basis of digital accessibility from the years selected for examination, feasibility in terms of the time involved in a potential analysis of each, and with a view to establishing the methodology's reliability and validity. Accordingly, the 4 legacy newspapers were selected in consideration of ideological alignment – one left of centre 'quality' title, the *Guardian*, and one right of centre 'quality,' the *Times*, with one left of centre tabloid, the *Mirror*, and one right of centre tabloid, *The Sun* - with the *Huffington Post* examined without a right of centre counterpart in view of time limitations. Additional rationale for the selection of each of the 4 legacy newspapers and the *Huffington Post* for analysis is discussed in the thesis' following chapter, 'The News Publications and Social Context.' The same news outlets and dates selected for the dissertation's corpus linguistic analysis are used for the thesis' content analysis.

The 1968 – 2009 section of 'British Newspapers, 1968– 2016' consists of articles extracted one year before and one year after key economic and technological events of pertinence to possible shifts in journalistic values. This sampling approach, and namely the events selected for examination, are tailored to assess the thesis' hypotheses, *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*, *H2: News outlets with the technological means to produce more content more cheaply will show more evidence of tabloidization*, *H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization*, and *H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization*. As opposed to a sampling scheme wherein data from every 5 or 10 years were extracted for examination, analysis of change and continuity of the linguistic proxies and content types from one year

before and after each event or development provides greater validity for an assessment of the possible impact of the causal factors of tabloidization captured through each hypothesis.

The events and developments selected for examination include Rupert Murdoch’s purchase of the *Sun* in 1969, the Wapping Revolution of 1986, the introduction of online editions by the *Times* and *Guardian* in 1999, the *Sun* in 2000, and the *Mirror* in 2001, and the introduction of social media sharing functions by the *Mirror* in 2007, and by the *Sun*, *Times*, and *Guardian* in 2008. Articles from each year within the 2012 and 2016 are extracted and analysed in view of the many technological developments that occurred therein during the Web 3.0 era; due to time limitations, *Huffington Post* articles from 2014 and 2016 are examined. Each of the events and developments selected for analysis from the 1968 – 2009 period are discussed in greater detail within the respective results chapter of relevance.

Table 3.5a. Events/Developments and Corresponding Hypotheses Examined

	H1	H2	H3	H4
Murdoch’s Purchase of the <i>Sun</i> , 1969	X			
Wapping Revolution, 1986	X	X		
Launch of Online Editions, 1999 - 2001	X	X		
Introduction of Social Sharing Features, 2007 - 2008	X			X
Web 3.0 era, 2012 – 2016	X	X	X	X

Newspaper articles between 1968 and 2016 are extracted on the basis of a two-constructed week sampling approach. As discussed in this chapter’s Subsection 3.4a., journalism scholarship establishes a two-constructed week sampling approach as producing the minimum yield of articles necessary to establish a statistically reliable sample of newspaper

articles for a given year of interest (Lacy et al. 2001; Hester and Dougall 2007). In this approach, for each day of the week, within each year subject to examination, two dates are selected at random. As coverage of specific topics and events tend to be concentrated on certain days of the week or at certain points during the year, the concept of the constructed week allows the researcher to avoid oversampling particular types of coverage (Riffe, Aust, and Lacy 1993; Lacy et al. 2001). For example, the occurrence of a snap election in the U.K. during January will likely lead to a higher proportion of articles focused on politics in January and December. As also discussed in reference to the literature on the two-constructed week sampling approach in Subsection 3.4a. of this chapter, application of a two-constructed week sampling approach thus provides reliability and validity to the thesis' sampling design.

'British Newspapers, 1968 – 2016' also excludes Sundays as 4 of the 5 newspapers subject to analysis publish a separate Sunday title, such as, for example the *Sunday Times*, which is produced by a different editorial staff. Further, Sunday editions tend to differ from editions published on other weekdays, in particular through an emphasis on entertainment and other 'soft' news content (Conboy 2004).

The following subsection describes the technical means through which the thesis' corpus was constructed. This subsection accordingly details the databases from which the various news articles were extracted and the steps taken to ensure uniformity in the formatting of articles comprising 'British Newspapers, 1968 – 2016.'

3.5b. Dataset Construction

The newspaper articles were extracted from several digital databases; NexisUK, NewsBank, *Guardian (1821 – 2003)/Observer (1791 – 2003)*, *Daily Mirror Archive*, *The Times Digital Archive (1785 – 2012)*, and the *Huffington Post's* online archive. While the project's corpus

linguistic analysis examined the entirety of content published on each date selected for analysis from each newspaper of interest from the 1998 – 2016 period, throughout the entire duration of the thesis' timespan, it is only articles from the front page of the publications that are subject to content analysis

Between 2000 and 2016, all legacy newspaper articles were collected from NexisUK, and articles from the *Guardian* and *Times* published in 1998 were also extracted from this database. Articles from the *Huffington Post* were extracted from the archives of the publication's website, which were obtained through use of the WayBack Machine, a website run by the Internet Archive which has archived billions of pages from the World Wide Web since 2001. As the archive often contained snapshots of the *Huffington Post*'s homepage from several times on any given date, the time of day selected for analysis was chosen at random.

In NexisUK, searches were run for all journalistic content featured in print and online editions from each date selected for examination through the two-constructed week sampling approach. Up to 500 articles could be combined and downloaded as one Microsoft word document; on dates with 500 or more results, multiple Microsoft word documents were created. As articles from different years and different publications contained different metadata, a python script was written and applied to each word document in order to ensure uniformity of any non-article content contained in the files, as such inconsistencies would potentially stand to impact on corpus linguistics findings. Such metadata could include, for example, the publication title, which is not in its *de facto* context printed with each article published by said newspaper, as well as copyright information. The python script stripped all metadata with the exception of each article's publication date, author name, and edition, where listed. In preparation for the parameters of the automated part of speech-tagging web

interface, the script also divided the documents into .txt files of up to 100,000 words and ensured the absence of articles broken and spread across two files.

Articles from the *Sun* published in 1999 and 2001 were collected from NewsBank. All journalistic content featured in print and online editions from each date of interest was manually copied and pasted into a Microsoft word document, as NewsBank does not produce files combining selected articles. This same procedure was applied to articles from the *Huffington Post*, which were similarly extracted from the publication's website – by way of the WayBack Machine - one by one. These word documents were then run through the metadata standardization python script.

A modified version of the article collection approach applied to post-1990s content was applied to news texts published before 1989. While the entire front-pages of the selected newspapers were subject to content analysis, due to technical, time, and budgetary constraints, a limited number of articles from the front-pages were subject to corpus linguistic analysis. Limitations emerged from the digital formatting, or lack of, from the pre-1989 articles: the *Sun* was not available in digital copy from these years, with digital texts from the *Guardian*, *Mirror*, and *Times* constricted to poorly OCR-ed .pdf formats, located in the *Guardian (1821 – 2003)/Observer (1791 – 2003)*, *Daily Mirror Archive*, and *The Times Digital Archive (1785 – 2012)* respectively. In view of the formatting of the databases' contents, articles could not be converted into a .word or .txt file through any automated mechanism. As the manual re-typing of articles by the thesis' author was not possible due to time limitations, the decision was made to enlist a transcription company to convert the news texts into .txt files. A £700 grant from the ESRC enabled transcription of roughly 70,000 words of text from the pre-1990 years.

In accordance with the £700 budget, both corpus linguistic and content analytic data collected from before 1990 was limited to two newspapers, and the amount of news text extracted per publication per day for corpus linguistic analysis was limited to roughly 1400 words. The *Mirror* and the *Guardian* were selected for analysis in order to eliminate political positioning as an independent variable, and as the *Sun* was not available in digital format from these years. In accordance with the 1400-word threshold, for each publication and year of interest within this timespan, two articles were extracted from the front-pages of these two newspapers. While within certain newspapers issues, particularly from the *Guardian*, individual front-page articles may have approached 1400 words, the decision was made to always include two articles rather than one in order to avoid over-representation of specific topics which may tend to occupy more text on the front-page. In accordance with this consideration, the two articles extracted from the *Guardian* were often the two shortest articles featured on page one. In the *Mirror*, however, as front-pages from this timeframe typically featured two articles, the number of words extracted was often determined automatically. This wordcount usually amounted to less than 1400 words, however, in some cases, it was exceeded.

Articles from the front-page were selected for corpus linguistic examination from the pre-1989 segment of the corpus in view of page one's particularly "signifying" role in the context of newspaper coverage (Niemeyer 2019, 190). For example, scholarship has depicted the front page as "... essentially an extension of the core values of the newspaper's staff" (Shoemaker and Reese 2013 in Kim and Chung 2017, 951). The front-pages of newspapers have accordingly and in view of their prominent visibility also been noted for their "particularly important function in informing the public" (Kim and Chung 2017, 950). As this thesis is interested in possible diachronic shifts in journalistic values and content across

different newspapers and newspaper types, as well as in the potential implications of such changes with regard to the public interest function of the press, an examination of articles from front-pages was an apt approach in view of the technological, time, and budgetary restraints which apply to articles from these years.¹¹

The following subsection details the means through which the journalistic values of interest to this thesis – personalization, sensationalism, and ‘information-orientation’ – are operationalized and assessed, with the operationalization of tabloid and ‘quality’ content types expounded. Technical dynamics of the linguistic operationalization process are also discussed in this subsection, along with the rationale for the selection of each linguistic feature used as a proxy for the journalism values of interest to the thesis.

3.5c. Operationalization of Journalistic Values

The UCREL part-of-speech (POS) tagger for English web interface was used for the thesis’ corpus annotation. The URCEL interface was selected because, to the best of the author’s knowledge, it has the POS tagger equipped to annotate the most extensive range of parts of speech in the English language. Developed in the 1980s by the University Center for Computer Corpus Research on Language at Lancaster University, the system offers two different POS taggers, in the form of Constituent Likelihood Automatic Word-tagging systems (CLAWS).

¹¹ Literature on newspaper front-pages discusses additional elements of page one coverage, including design frameworks, assessing elements such as photography and typography, organizational processes relevant to page one story selection, as well as possible recent shifts in front-page reporting and layout elements associated with the Internet’s recent ascendancy. This dissertation, however, is interested in systematic characteristics of page one reporting whereby articles from this page may be seen as the most appropriate proxy for reporting found in the respective newspaper issue on the whole.

In order to conduct frequency counts of the parts of speech of interest, the content of each .txt file of less than 100,000 words of newspaper text was run through the CLAWS 7 part-of-speech tagger. CLAWS 7, as opposed to CLAWS 5, was selected for use as it is the tagset with the most robust range of annotations. The output for each .txt file was subsequently pasted and saved into a new .txt file.

Counts of the parts of speech of interest per year and publication of interest were conducted in AntConc, a linguistics software which offers numerous search and calculation functions. All of the POS-tagged .txt files for each publication, from each year of interest were uploaded together; using the CLAWS 7 code for each part of speech subject to examination, searches were then conducted, and counts were then recorded into an excel spreadsheet. The frequency counts for each part of speech, for each publication for each year of interest were calculated in Excel using the total count for any given part of speech and the total number of words contained across all articles from the particular year and publication. Through these steps, diachronic changes and differences across news outlets in the linguistically operationalized journalistic values could be identified.

The calculated frequency counts for each year and publication subject to examination are displayed in tables featured in each of the thesis' results chapters. So as not to present an influx of data and analysis in any one results chapter, the first two results chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, convey data and examine findings from two of the events and developments subject to examination; Chapter 5 discusses findings from one year before and one year after Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* and from one year before and one year after the Wapping revolution, and Chapter 6 discusses findings from one year before and after each of the newspapers introduced an online version and one year before and after each of the publications launched social sharing features. The third results chapter, Chapter 7, discusses

findings from each data point from within the 2012 – 2016 timeframe, which also includes linguistic data from the *Huffington Post*. Graphs featured in this chapter were created using scripts produced through Latec. Findings and results from the corpus linguistics data across the project's entire 1968 – 2016 timeframe are discussed in the thesis' conclusions chapter, Chapter 8. While each results chapter identifies the hypotheses relevant to each development or event subject to analysis and assesses whether or not and the extent to which each hypothesis is supported or refuted by corpus linguistic data, Chapter 8 examines each hypothesis as well as the project's research question with regard to the thesis' theoretical framework in greater detail.

The indices of tabloid and 'quality' journalism values were selected on the basis of linguistics, media linguistics, and journalism literature (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989; McLachlan and Golding 2000; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002; Clark 2013; Landert 2014, 2015). In the following paragraphs, before proceeding to a discussion of the thesis' operationalization of 'quality' and tabloid content types, the rationale for the selection of each linguistic proxy is expounded.

3.5ca. 'Information-Orientation' Markers

The thesis measures 4 indices of 'information-orientation': average article length, average sentence length, average word length, and Flesch-Kincaid readability. The relevant media linguistics and journalism scholarship is discussed in greater detail, particularly with regard to the pertinent findings from the literature, which contribute to the reasoning behind the selection of each as a marker of the value. The definition for the Flesch-Kincaid readability is also provided.

Average article length was identified most directly on the basis of McLachlan and Golding's study of a tabloidization of British newspapers between 1952 and 1997, wherein article length is in essence measured as indexical of traditional 'quality' newspaper values (McLachlan and Golding 2000). In the study, the average length of articles increases in the two 'quality' newspapers subject to analysis, the *Times* and the *Guardian*, and decreases in the one tabloid examined, the *Mirror*. In line with McLachlan and Golding's research, this dissertation treats article length as a proxy of the quantity of informational content featured in an article whereby longer newspaper articles can be seen to contain more information (McLachlan and Golding 2000; Fink and Schudson 2014). Although the proportion of information in the public interest contained in a news article may not necessarily be directly measured through this proxy, longer articles can be understood to include more rather than less information. For example, while an article on the front-page of the *Guardian* might be 800-words, the subject of the article might be a BAFTA received by a famous actor that focuses on more tawdry details of his life. However, broadly and on the basis of the pertinent literature (Barnhurst and Mutz 1997; McLachlan and Golding 2000; Fink and Schudson 2014), longer articles can be seen as more 'information-orientated' and thus more representative of 'quality' journalism values.

Numerous linguistics, media linguistics, and journalism studies have used sentence length and/or word length as proxies of information density (e.g. Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002). In Biber's seminal multi-dimensional approach previously discussed in Section 3.3a, sentence length and word length are each markers of the 'informational' factor, which is shown to be particularly salient in newspaper reporting registers (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989). Applying Biber's multi-dimensional framework, Westin's study of 'quality' British newspaper editorials between 1900 and 1993

shows slight increases in word length and more significant decreases in sentence length over the course of this time period (Westin 2001). In line with McLachlan and Golding's study (2000), the timeframe of the newspaper articles subject to examination by Westin concludes before the mainstream ascendance of the Internet, precluding measurement of the potential impact of this development on the language and therein represented values of newspapers.

Flesch-Kincaid readability (FKR) is a metric which assesses the reading difficulty level of a text. Drawing from the average number of words, sentences, and syllables, FKR is the metric most commonly used to assess reading difficulty levels of texts (Lefkowitz 2018). To the best of the author's knowledge, the FKR metric was first applied in the journalism scholarship in Lefkowitz (2018), which examined longitudinal change in the reading difficulty level of the quoted speech featured in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* between 1970 and 2010. The study identified a dual-convergence whereby the quoted discourse of the *Guardian* lowered in reading difficulty while that featured in the *Mirror* became more difficult to read.

3.5cb. Personalization Markers

Three indices of personalization are identified and subjected to analysis in the thesis: first person pronouns, second person pronouns, and private verbs. Each of these parts of speech have been examined in previous linguistics, media linguistics, and/or journalism literature (Hundt and Mair 1999; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002; Clark 2013; Lefkowitz 2018). This subsection defines each of these parts of speech, briefly discusses the relevant media linguistics and journalism literature in greater detail with regard to these parts of speech, and also provides examples of each from news articles contained in the thesis' corpus.

First person pronouns express ego-involvement (Chafe and Danielewicz 1987), and second person pronouns indicate a speaker's involvement with an addressee (Chafe 1982;

Biber 1988). The thesis examines all tokens of both of the parts of speech using the corresponding part of speech (POS) tags from the CLAWS 7 POS tagset referenced in the previous Subsection 3.5c. Accordingly, the first person pronouns analysed are *I, me, we, us, myself, my, ourselves, our* and the second person pronouns examined are *you, your, yourself, yourselves*.

Both first and second person pronouns have been shown by numerous linguistics-grounded studies to be characteristic of spoken discourse and indexical of more informal speech (e.g. Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002; Clark 2013). In particular, Biber's multi-dimensional framework (referenced in the previous Subsections 3.3a. and 3.5ca.) identifies first and second person pronouns as components of the 'involved' factor of the 'informational versus involved production' dimension, which is shown to be the most characteristic of spoken and more informal registers of discourse (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989). As referenced in Section 3.3a., numerous studies have identified recent augmentations in the salience of first and second pronouns in newspaper discourse (Hundt and Mair 1999; Westin 2001; Westin and Geilser 2002; Clark 2013). In line with the media linguistics and journalism research pertinent to the 'information-orientation' markers, to the best of the author's knowledge, with the exception of Clark's work which examines markers of 'quality' British newspapers between 1993 and 2005, a study has yet to assess longitudinal change in the frequencies of first and second pronouns extending further into the Internet era.

Examples of first and second person pronouns from the thesis' corpus are provided below in order to illustrate the role of each as proxies of the journalistic value of personalization. In an article from the *Guardian* from May 14, 1998 included in the corpus, the chairman of Chrysler, Robert Eaton, is quoted with regard to potentially receiving a year-

end bonus of over \$100 million, “My personal situation never came to mind ” (Tran, 1998). In this context, Eaton denies his “personal” involvement in receiving a large financial bonus, while at the same time, other Chrysler employees are being laid off. Accordingly, the use of the first person pronoun is indicative of Eaton’s ostensibly “personal” role in a scenario in which his duty to Chrysler employees *collectively* is under question.

An article published in the *Mirror* on October 16, 1970 reporting on a drug bust features a second person pronoun in a quote from a Customs officer. This quote states, “When *you* think of the number of cigarettes that could be made out of that amount [of cannabis], it would be worth a king’s ransom” (Whittall and Sandiford, 1970). Use of the second person pronoun *you* in this idiomatic context, within the term, “when you think about [it],” involves the reader, who is seemingly included in the plural *you* featured in the quote. In this way, the second person pronoun involves the reader, creating a sense of personal involvement for the audience at large, even though readers were not present at the drug bust depicted in the article.

Private verbs have similarly been identified as characteristic of involved speech (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989; Westin 2001; Westin and Geisler 2002). In contrast to public verbs, which can be understood as observable speech acts that are often used to introduce statements, private verbs can be understood to describe intellectual acts or states. Examples of public verbs include *state*, *declare*, *announce*, and *confirm*; the private verbs assessed in this thesis and on the basis of pilot work are *think*, *fear*, *believe*, *reveal*, and *hope*. As the CLAWS 7 tagset does not have an annotation for private verbs, and because of the limited parameters of the linguistics software, AntConc, which was used to generate raw data counts of the different parts of speech, it was necessary to assess a limited number of private verbs and their tokens.

Differing from the body of findings that show recent increases in first and second person pronouns, Westin's longitudinal study of 'quality' British newspaper editorials identifies a diachronic decline in private verbs in 3 of the 4 newspapers subject to examination, with the *Daily Telegraph* as the outlier. As previously mentioned, with the exception of Clark's study (2013) which extends through 2005 and does not examine private verbs, Westin's study and the other scholarship referenced in this subsection do not analyse newspaper texts from the 21st century and accordingly, the potential impact of the mainstream ascension of the Internet on the salience of private verbs in newspaper discourse has yet to be assessed. Further, and as also previously mentioned, Westin's study examines 'quality' British newspaper editorials, omitting news articles from examination altogether.

An example of one of the private verbs examined in the thesis from the corpus can be drawn from a sports article featured in the *Sun* on January 25, 2012 (Keogh 2012). The article reports on Tiger Woods and the prospect of a comeback for the former golf champion who is at this time in the midst of a downturn in his career. The article opens with the sentence, "Tiger Woods *fears* Europe's young guns could shoot down his bid for a golfing comeback." In this context, the author speculates on Woods' mental state; while Woods, in a quote featured later in the article, acknowledges the talent of European golfers, Woods does not profess or allude to any *fear* he harbours with regards to playing against these golfers. Use of the private verb creates a heightened sense of anticipation, drawing from the psychological and emotional qualities of *fear*, pertaining to Wood's alleged mental state with regards to an upcoming tournament to be held in Dubai later that week. Thus, use of the private verb in effect stands to slake the readers' attention in suggesting aspects of Woods' internal, emotional state of being.

3.5cc. Sensationalism Markers

The thesis assesses 6 linguistic proxies of sensationalism: superlative general adverbs, degree adverbs, superlative degree adverbs, amplifiers, general adverbs, and general adjectives. In view of the multitude of types of adverbs and adjectives with tags in the CLAWS 7 tagset which could have potentially been examined as indices of sensationalism, the 6 indices were selected on the basis of pilot work through which the types of adverbs and adjectives most salient in the newspaper texts were identified and chosen as sensationalism markers. For example, comparative degree adverbs and comparative general adverbs were omitted from the thesis' examination as each were often absent at several of the data points selected for analysis. As with the previous Subsection 3.5cb, this subsection provides brief definitions of each of the 6 sensationalism indices, discusses specific findings from the relevant media linguistics and journalism scholarship, and produces examples of each of the proxies from the dissertation's corpus.

Superlative general adverbs quantify and/or compare that which they modify (Quirk et al. 1984), and examples of this part of speech include *best and longest*. An example of a superlative general adverb found in the thesis' corpus is in an article published by the *Guardian* on May 15, 2000. The article, which reports on a new play showing in London, states, "Katie Mitchel directs a new play by Martin Crimp whose fragmentary, post-modernist, elusive *Attempts On Her Life* was one of the *best* plays of the last decade" (Guardian 2000). The superlative general adverb *best* serves to signify a comparison between the playwright's previous play, *Attempts On Her Life*, and other plays from the 1990s, which the journalist views as inferior to the former. The part of speech in this context underscores the extraordinary talent of the new play's playwright, Martin Crimp, thus drawing attention to the quality of the author's work as exceptional.

Degree adverbs specify the degree to which an adverb or adjective may apply, and examples include *too*, *very*, and *so*. An example of a degree adverb in the context of a newspaper article is found in a May 24, 2016 article from the *Sun*, which describes an unexpected appearance by a Real Madrid team member, Dani Carjaval, “But a week before that massive showdown, he [Carjaval] was a spectator at a *very* unusual venue” (Sun 2016). The degree adverb *very* emphasizes the degree of the abnormality of Carjaval’s appearance at a local football stadium, despite his status as an international football star. The word thus contributes to a heightened depiction of the event being reported on.

Superlative degree adverbs reflect the highest degree to which the adverb or adjective may apply; *most* and *least* are examples of this part of speech. An article from the *Times* published on September 23, 1998 features a useful example of a superlative general adverb. The topic of the article is a one day ban on driving in 35 French cities that is being enacted to help combat pollution. Approximately halfway through the article, a sentence reads,

France is in no danger of losing its reputation for some of the *most* aggressive driving in the world, but at what should have been rush-hour yesterday on Paris streets that are usually packed with traffic, pedestrians and cyclists found they could take to the roads and even walk on zebra crossings without immediate threat to life and limb.
(Macintyre 1998)

Use of the superlative general adverb *most* heightens and specifies the degree to which drivers in France are depicted as “aggressive”: they are not just somewhat aggressive, they are “some of the *most* aggressive drivers in the world.” The superlative degree adverb in effect draws the reader’s attention to the substantial extent to which French drivers are viewed by the journalist as hazardous.

Similar to superlatives, amplifiers can have a heightening effect on the verb, adjective, or adverb being modified. A set of amplifiers was selected for closer examination following the same process used for private verbs. Accordingly, the amplifiers *a lot*, *much*, *totally*, and *deeply* were analysed. An example of amplifiers in the corpus can be drawn from an article published on March 22, 2008 in the *Mirror*. The article reports on a baby accidentally killed by his father while the two slept next to one another on a couch. A local coroner is quoted stating, "I have dealt with all *too* many of these *totally* avoidable deaths" (White 2008). The sentence contains two amplifiers, *too* and *totally*, which heighten impressions of the frequency and preventability of infant death by "co-sleeping" (White 2008), respectively. While the event being reported on, the death of a baby, is itself a tragedy of an outstanding nature, the use of amplifiers heightens particularly upsetting aspects of the event.

General adverbs and general adjectives were selected for analysis in view of their ability to add colour or enhance the verbs, nouns, adjectives, or adverbs that they modify and because of their high frequency in the corpus. An article reporting on a Russian mobster published in the *Times* on January 17, 2013 features an example of a general adverb in its first sentence, which states, "They called him Grandpa, but he was Moscow's Godfather, the Al Capone of Russia's *still* flourishing underworld" (Boyes 2013). The adverb, *still*, draws attention to the ongoing nature of the robust mob scene in Russia, which can be seen to contrast the more diminished presence of mobs in numerous other countries, such as in the UK and the US. An example of an adjective can be drawn from an article published in the *Sun* on March 1, 2001 reporting on a motorist who is accused of causing a train disaster. The motorist's mother is quoted stating, "It's a *terrible* coincidence that Gary's Land Rover landed on the track just as the express was coming along" (Sharpe 2001). The adjective *terrible* gives colour to the type of coincidence that the motorist's mother perceives in the accident; it is a

markedly bad type of coincidence. An adjective is thus seen to enhance the noun, *coincidence*, and add some descriptive flourish to the noun.

Interestingly, the 6 adjective and adverb types selected for examination have been rarely, and in certain instances, to the best of the author's knowledge, not ever before been assessed quantitatively in the journalism or media linguistics literature. In the context of quoted speech in British tabloid and 'quality' newspapers, amplifiers, degree adverbs, and general adverbs and adjectives are examined in Lefkowitz (2018). Predominant declines in general adverbs are identified, along with an increase in amplifiers in the 'quality' publications, a predominant decrease in general adjectives, and growth in degree adverbs in the second half of the period analysed. However, over the course of the years subject to examination in the study, the most prominent finding with regard to these features is dramatic fluctuations in the frequencies of each during the 1970 – 2010 period.

3.5cd. Quotes

The use of quotes as an index of tabloidization draws principally from research by Clark (2013), Landert (2014, 2015) and Lefkowitz (2018). In each of these studies, quotes are directly or indirectly treated as or found to be indexical of the journalistic value of personalization (Landert 2014, 2015; Lefkowitz 2018), or of "familiar" language (Clark 2013, 271). This body of research also shows a recent diachronic increase in the frequency of quotes in newspaper discourse, suggesting that the feature may be understood as indexical of a recent tabloidization of newspapers which is accounted for largely by an ascension of features linked with the journalistic value of personalization.

In Clark's research, quoted speech is identified as characteristic of "conversational, or familiar language" (Clark 2013, 277) and treated as a proxy of the informal discourse seen as

traditionally more representative of tabloid newspapers (Clark 2013). Clark's study attests that increases in other proxies of informal discourse, such as first and second person pronouns, should be accompanied by an augmentation in the number of quotes, which might be expected to contain "these forms [of speech]" (Clark 2013, 277). Over the course of the corpus' timeframe, increases in both first and second person pronouns and quotes are identified, further corroborating the proposed association between personal pronouns and quoted speech in newspapers.

Landert's scholarship (2014, 2015) explicitly treats quotes as a linguistic proxy of personalization, an assertion which aligns with Clark's (2013) treatment of quotes as vehicles for "conversational", "familiar" (Clark 2013, 277) parts of speech, including first and second person pronouns. In two studies, Landert (2014, 2015) examines quoted speech in the *Times* from 1985 and 2010, finding an augmentation in quotes that convey emotion (2015), growth in quotes from non-official sources (Landert 2014), and increases in the identification of sources (2014). An important synchronic finding of Landert's work is the higher frequency of quotes from non-official sources in tabloid newspapers; in this vein, Landert (2014) suggests that the quoted speech of official sources which is more characteristic of 'quality' newspapers is more fact-oriented, while the quoted speech from non-officials that is more characteristic of tabloid titles tends to have more opinion. Accordingly, an ascension of the linguistic markers of personalization – first and second person pronouns, and private verbs – could suggest an augmentation in the quoted speech of non-official sources traditionally characteristic of tabloid newspapers.

Lefkowitz's (2018) study of quoted speech in tabloid and 'quality' British newspapers between 1970 and 2010 similarly identifies increases in the proportion of quotes per article, as well as in linguistic markers of personalization over time. In line with Clark's assertion

(2013), growth is found in the linguistic markers of personalization – first person pronouns, second person pronouns, and private verbs – within this quoted speech. The recent augmentation of quotes seen in tabloid and in particular, ‘quality’ newspapers hereby directly shows that quoted speech is a feature of interest with regard to a possible recent tabloidization of newspapers in the form of an ascension of personalization markers. As this thesis finds longitudinal increases in both markers of personalization and in quotes, the evidence can be seen to support this notion.

Scholarship by Matheson and Allen (2013) is also of relevance to quotes in the context of this thesis. While lacking a quantitative linguistic component, the scholars’ book *Digital War Reporting* (2013) argues that digital technologies have facilitated journalists’ ease of access to quotes in recent years, first through the emergence of the satellite, and amplifying with the mainstream ascendance of the Internet. Accordingly, it is pertinent to note that with the rise of digital technologies, and in particular, the Internet, quotes from more as well as a broader range of individuals can be obtained with greater ease by journalists; indeed, findings from the studies by Landert (2014, 2015), Clark (2014), and Lefkowitz (2018), which show a recent diachronic ascension of quoted speech may be seen to corroborate this concept.

3.5d. Operationalization of Tabloid and ‘Quality’ Newspaper Content Types

Two levels of content analysis were applied to the front-pages subject to examination: the first, a categorization of the story topics covered, and more broadly, the types of story topics covered. Categories used at each of the two levels were selected on the basis of journalism scholarship (MacLachlan and Golding 2000; Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky 2010; Reinemann et al. 2011) as well as on the basis of pilot work. With regards to story topics covered, news articles were classified as one of 11 categories: politics, political scandal, non-political scandal,

crime, human interest, entertainment, sports, weather/disaster, health, finance/economy, or the royal family. In instances where articles might have been interpreted as overlapping across story topic categories, a judgment was made as to which one category most aptly classified the news story.

The 11 article categories were used to constitute 3 broader types of news stories, ‘hard’ news, ‘general’ news, and ‘soft’ news. These 3 classifications, and the types of stories deemed suited as classifiable under each, were identified on the basis of journalism and media literature, and in particular, with regard to Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky’s relevant research (2010). Accordingly, politics, political scandal, and finance/economy-focused articles were selected to comprise the ‘hard’ news category, with non-political scandal, crime, human interest, entertainment, sports, and royal family-focused stories comprising the ‘soft’ news category, and weather/disaster and health comprising the ‘general’ news category.

Table 3.5d. Typology of News Article Types/Categories

‘Hard’ News	‘General’ News	‘Soft’ News
politics, political scandal, finance/economy	weather/disaster, health	non-political scandal, crime, human interest, entertainment, sports, royal family

While the scholarship has often dichotomized classifications of news articles into ‘hard’ news and ‘soft’ news, this binary positioning was deemed insufficiently nuanced on the basis of pilot work. This typology draws from Lehman-Wilzig and Seltzky (2010) which acknowledges the need for a third, intermediate category in order to avoid the tendency to classify as ‘soft’ news any story which fails to qualify as ‘hard’ news. While ‘hard’ news and ‘soft’ news frameworks have been understood by certain scholarship as a function of article framing and style in addition to the topic of focus (Baum 2010; Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky 2010; Reinemann et al. 2011), in the context of this quantitative content analysis, here ‘hard’ news,

'soft' news, and 'general' news, refer strictly to the topic of an article. 'Hard' news refers to 'serious,' public affairs topics with 'news value' (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletzky 2010, 38) which contribute to the public interest, 'soft' news refers to articles focused on topics with "a low level of substantive informational value" (ibid), which prioritize entertainment and salaciousness, and 'general' news refers to "recent economic, social, or cultural news that should be published but not necessarily immediately" and "important news that is relevant or influential, not to society but only for a specific group" (Lehman- Wilzig and Seletzky 2010, 47).

The dissertation's content analytic data is presented through graphs generated in Latec. Each of the 3 results chapters contains graphic visualizations of changes in story topic and story type from one year before and one year after each event/development subject to examination. In line with corpus linguistics findings and results, content analytic data from across the project's entire 1968 – 2016 timeframe is discussed in the thesis' conclusions chapter. It is in this final chapter wherein content analytic results, as well as corpus linguistic ones, are interpreted in greater detail with regard to the dissertation's theoretical framework.

Before summarizing this chapter, the following section provides an overview of the thesis' composite tabloidization measure. As mentioned in the dissertation's Introduction chapter, this measure serves as a heuristic as well as means of triangulation of the project's corpus linguistic and content analytic findings.

3.6. The Composite Tabloidization Measure

The thesis' composite tabloidization measure is both a method through which the thesis' corpus linguistic and content analytic findings are triangulated and a novel contribution to the

tabloidization literature. The measure provides a combined calculation of change across corpus linguistic and content analytic findings for any given publication across any set of years subject to examination, thereby enabling a quick, concrete assessment of the relative magnitude and direction of the salience of 'quality' or tabloid elements at any given time interval. A composite 'quality' elements measure calculates the magnitude and direction - above the publication's average or below the publication's average - of the salience of 'quality' corpus linguistic and content analytic proxies, and a composite tabloid elements measure conducts the same measurement across tabloid indices. In terms of the measurement's heuristic value, the composite tabloidization measure is, to the best of the author's knowledge, the first calculation of its kind to reflect a combination of tabloidization measurements, drawing from both corpus linguistic and content analytic methods.

The composite tabloidization measure was calculated using the mean and standard deviation values for each corpus linguistic and content analytic measure. For each feature, from each publication, at each year subject to analysis, the mean value was calculated. Using the means from each year, the overall mean value of each feature for each publication was calculated. For example, with regard to article length, for each year and publication subject to analysis, the mean article length was calculated; to calculate the overall mean for each feature for each publication, the article length means from each year were added together and divided by the number of years subject to examination. This approach enabled variation across the average length of articles from each year and publication subject to analysis to be accounted for in the measurement calculations.

Subsequently, the standard deviation value for each feature for each publication was calculated, using the overall mean value for each feature from each publication. The standard deviation was then deployed to calculate the scaled value for the feature for each publication

at each year analysed. The scaled value was determined by subtracting the overall mean value of the feature and publication from the mean of the year of interest and dividing this figure by the standard deviation.

In order to create composite 'quality' and tabloid elements measures, the tabloid and 'quality' elements were grouped together respectively. Accordingly, the proxies of personalization and sensationalism, and the percentage of 'soft' news stories comprised the tabloid elements measure, and the proxies of 'information-orientation' and the percentage of 'hard' news stories comprised the 'quality' elements measure. In view of the larger quantity of corpus linguistic features than content analytic ones and so that the larger number of corpus linguistic features would not outweigh the content analytic ones, the scaled value of the percentage of 'soft' and 'hard' news stories were each double-weighted within the calculated 'quality' and tabloid elements measure. The calculation of each measure for each publication and year of interest was determined by adding together the scaled value for each proxy, with the relevant content analytic values double-weighted, with the sum divided by the number of elements incorporated in the calculation. 'General' news stories were excluded from the composite tabloidization measures, as this categorization of news story type falls between 'hard' and 'soft' news on the spectrum of tabloid versus 'quality' content. This type of news was rather identified in order to avoid the tendency identified by the literature (Lehamn-Wilzig and Seltzky 2010) wherein articles that are not classifiable as 'hard' news are mis-categorized as 'soft' news stories.

Several points regarding the interpretation of the scaled values should be noted. Negative values can be understood to indicate a value that is below the overall mean of the publication of interest. For example, the -.9413 composite 'quality' elements value for the *Guardian* from 1998 suggests a below average salience of 'quality' elements for the

publication during this year. Conversely, positive values can be understood to indicate an above average salience of the characteristics of interest for any given year and publication. For example, the .8049 composite tabloid elements value for the *Sun* from 2007 shows that during this year, tabloid proxies are above the mean salience of tabloid elements seen in the publication over time.

Further, while the composite measures can be compared from different years within the same publication, the measures cannot be compared across publications. This is because the mean values which underpin the scaled data vary fundamentally from publication to publication. The composite tabloidization measures are thus a useful touchstone for capturing the relative salience of tabloid or 'quality' characteristics at any given year for any of the publications examined. Cross-publication data analysis is conducted across individual features, as reflected in the tables and graphs showing diachronic change and continuity in the frequencies or average lengths of each proxy, contained in the thesis' results chapters, Chapter 5 – 7, and Conclusions chapter, Chapter 8. Tables and graphs are accompanied by robust analysis, which underscore and unpack change and continuity of importance.

As a heuristic, the composite tabloidization measure is a novel contribution to the tabloidization literature, as the first calculation of its kind to reflect the relative salience of tabloid and 'quality' elements respectively at specific moments in time. The creation of an index of both tabloid and 'quality' features is indicative of this thesis' view of tabloidization as a process which stands to involve elements traditionally characteristic of both tabloids and 'quality' newspapers respectively, particularly as it is a process which may occur in both tabloid and 'quality' publications. In line with discussion in the dissertation's introduction chapter, 'tabloidization' should not only be understood in terms of an augmentation of

tabloid values and/or content but as a process which can also or instead entail a decline in 'quality' elements.

3.7. Summary

This thesis applies a novel combination of corpus linguistic and content analytic methods in order to assess the project's research question, examining a possible tabloidization of British 'quality' and tabloid news publications between 1968 and 2016. The methods are applied to two 'quality' newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Times*, and two tabloid newspapers, the *Mirror* and the *Sun*, with articles from one digital native news publication, the *Huffington Post*, examined from 2014 and 2016. The years selected for examination were chosen on the basis of events and developments of particular relevance to the thesis' hypotheses, with one year before and one year after each event or development subject to both corpus linguistic and content analysis, and with corpus linguistics serving as the principal method of the thesis. A novel composite tabloidization measure was developed and is applied to serve as a heuristic and as a means of triangulation, summarizing the magnitude and direction of overall change across both corpus linguistic and content analytic proxies for tabloid and 'quality' elements respectively. This measure is calculated at each year and for each publication subject to examination.

In the following chapter, key information regarding both the newspapers selected for analysis and the social context in the UK contemporaneous to the thesis' timeframe are discussed in greater detail. Context specific to each arena will serve to assist the reader in a contextualization of the thesis' results, which will be discussed in greater detail in the dissertation's final chapter.

Chapter 4: The News Publications and Social Context

4.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of each of the news publications selected for analysis and discusses the key social changes that took place in Britain during the thesis' 48-year time period. Both sets of discussions help to situate the dissertation's 3 results chapters, which follow this one.

With regards to the publications, the thesis' corpus, 'British Newspapers: 1968 – 2016,' contains articles from 5 news outlets: the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Times*, the *Guardian*, and the *Huffington Post*. The publications were chosen on the basis of their positioning in the British news market, their political ideological alignment, and business model structure. This chapter aims to provide a historical overview of each news outlet so as to give the reader broader context through which to situate the more recent trends specific to each identified through the thesis' data analysis.

In providing abridged historical overviews of the news publications, the chapter highlights the role of newspaper ownership models, the effects of financial difficulty as well as the possible impact of new technologies on the news outlets. The thesis' concluding chapter will also reference pertinent elements of the histories and ethos of the 5 publications in drawing conclusions about the recent change and continuity within and across each news outlet over time identified through the data analysis. Sections of this chapter specific to each of the publications commence with a summary of key junctures of pertinence to the thesis' hypothesis,' data points, and analysis.

In a final section, key social changes that took place during the 1968 - 2016 period are discussed. Key societal shifts of pertinence to this project namely relate to Britain's population size and demographics, in particular, education rates, and socioeconomic status. Discussion

of these trends facilitates a more profound understanding of both possible sources of and implications for the change and continuity in journalistic values and content identified through the thesis. While, similar to cultural shifts, possible effects of social change resist operationalization, these shifts merit attention in order to fully account for the broader context of the 1968 - 2016 time period. Accordingly, social changes of particular pertinence to the thesis' key findings are integrated in the relevant interpretations discussed in Chapter 8.

4.2. The Sun

Formerly named, the *Daily Herald*, the publication was purchased by Rupert Murdoch in 1969. Key points and developments in the *Sun*'s history with regards to the thesis' hypotheses, data points, and analysis include its relaunch in 1969, its relocation to Wapping in 1986, the opening of the Broxbourne printing facilities in 2008, the phone hacking scandal of 2012 – 2013, and changes made to its website in 2013 and 2016.

Founded in London in 1912, the *Daily Herald* was originally a trade union supporting publication and continued to uphold this orientation even when it was relaunched in 1930 in order to rival the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* (Conboy 2004). After it was overhauled and renamed by Murdoch, public affairs coverage, particularly in the context of editorials, quickly decreased and entertainment-oriented, sensationalized elements became increasingly characteristic of the tabloid (Conboy 2004, 2011). The political ideology that was purveyed through the *Sun*, in contrast to that of its previous iteration, became right-wing, in line with the political views of its proprietor (Reid 2020b).

Before it was purchased and relaunched by Rupert Murdoch, the publication was owned by the International Publishing Corporation, IPC, which had purchased and renamed

the publication the *Sun* in 1964 (Conboy and Bingham 2015). Also owner of the *Daily Mirror*, as well as numerous, other newspaper, book, and magazine titles, IPC, presently known as TI Media, has been a major British publishing company, albeit one which has not accrued the same financial or political clout as Murdoch's News Corporation. The 1969 change in ownership at the *Sun*, which is often depicted as a pivotal moment in the history of British journalism, is of particular relevance to this thesis' investigation of a possible tabloidization of British newspapers. However, as digital archives of the *Sun* are not available from before the 1990s, the putative broader impact of the *Sun*'s relaunch is assessed with regard to the *Mirror*, the tabloid with the highest circulation in the country and the newspaper against which the *Sun* specifically positioned itself as a competitor. In the wake of Murdoch's acquisition of the *Sun*, the tabloid became associated with sensationalized, scandal and sex-oriented content (Engel 1998; Conboy 2004, 2011), an approach in turn emulated by the *Mirror* (Engel 1998). Detailed information regarding the *Sun*'s repositioning is featured in Chapter 5, which examines corpus linguistic and content analytic data from one year before and one year after Murdoch's purchase of the newspaper.

The 1970s were a significant decade in the history of British tabloids in view of the predominance established by the tabloid format. Conboy states, "The rise of the tabloid as the dominant contemporary format within journalism was forged in the 1970s and the competition between the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* for the position of leading articulator of the popular" (Conboy 2004, 182). Although the circulation of the *Mirror* continued to drop while the that of the *Sun* continued to grow, the two tabloids were still regarded as the two titans of the popular British newspaper market during this decade.

The 1980s has been depicted as a crucial era for the *Sun* in particular, wherein it established "its ascendancy in the market" (Conboy 2004, 182). Herein, other tabloids,

including the *Mirror*, sought to emulate its strategy, particularly through its signature sexualization of popular culture (Conboy 2002, 2004). This prominence of sexual elements marked a further shift away from political coverage, and an “increasing dependence of sex, sensation, and symbiosis with television’s brand of mass popular culture (Conboy 2004, 183). Kelvin MacKenzie, who has been viewed as a “defining editor of the era” (Conboy 2004, 182), presided as editor of the *Sun* starting in 1981 and through 1994, staying on as a columnist at the tabloid until 2017. MacKenzie and Murdoch reportedly not only wanted the *Sun* to be the dominant paper of its time but to be the “dominant journalism paradigm” (Conboy 2004, 182).

It is significant to note that during the 1980s, Rupert Murdoch established his position in Britain as a premier press magnate. The proprietor’s close relationship with then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher helped his newspapers - which by this time, also included the *News of the World* as well as the *Times*, and the *Sunday Times* - to benefit from increasing industry deregulation as well as tightened restrictions against unions. As discussed in greater detail in the first results chapter of the thesis, the Murdoch newspapers’ 1986 move to Wapping in East London, enabled his publications to adopt computerized printing facilities, marking a landmark shift in the newspaper industry. Hereby, the cost of bulk and colour printing dramatically reduced, and thousands of staff were laid-off as remaining lay-out and printing tasks could be conducted by fewer and less specialized staff. The putative impact of Wapping is tested through the thesis’ second hypothesis, *H2: News outlets with the ability to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*, which is specifically examined against data points from one year before and one year after the Wapping Revolution.

Further, Wapping compounded the war of attrition that had already been sparked by the *Sun*'s popular success, facilitating the spread of intense competition between titles to the 'quality' newspaper arena. This phenomenon was further reflected through the 'price wars' which took place in the 'quality' British newspaper market during the early 1990s (Engel 1996; Behringer and Fillistrucchi 2009), which will be discussed in greater detail in Subsection 4.4 on the *Times*.

During the 1990s, the *Sun* maintained its status as the most popular tabloid, and more broadly, news publication in the UK. The *Sun*'s famous 1992 headline, "IT'S THE SUN WOT WON IT," published in the immediate wake of John Major's election as Prime Minister in line with Kelvin MacKenzie's editorial backing, can be seen to reflect this continued, substantial clout. Despite rising paper costs impacting the newspaper industry at large and even after the departure of Kelvin MacKenzie, the tabloid continued to "set the agenda for the news media more often than any of its rivals" (Engel 1996, 307).

The *Sun* launched its online edition in 2001 under then Editor-in-Chief Rebekah Brooks. In 2005, however, Murdoch acknowledged his failure to properly recognize the importance of journalism in the online context, admitting that he, "didn't do as much as [he] should have" (Murdoch in Tryhorn 2005). Despite this overarching shortcoming, Murdoch reportedly invested more in the digital endeavours of the *Sun* than those of the *Times* (Tryhorn 2005), and while not as popular as the *Guardian* or BBC online, the tabloid ranked in the top 10 most popular online UK news websites (Tryhorn 2005).

Data points from one year before and one year after the launch of online editions will be examined from each of the 4 legacy news publications. Corpus linguistic and content analytic data from these years will be assessed against the hypotheses, *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of*

tabloidization, H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization, and H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization. In view of the *Sun's* reported emphasis on its online version in relation to the *Times*, with regards to H3 and H4, the *Sun* might be expected to show more evidence of tabloidization than its sister publication.

The tabloid introduced social sharing features in 2008. With regards to the *Sun* or to any of the 4 legacy publications subject to examination, the launch of social sharing features remains undiscussed by the literature. However, the emergence of social sharing tools is discussed in more general terms in the scholarship as a pivotal juncture in the evolution of online journalism and in the context of the interactive affordances of journalism online (Chadwick 2013; Kumpel, Karnowski, and Keyling 2015; Bright 2016; Orellana-Rodriguez and Keane 2018). The significance of social sharing features is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 Section 6.7, which prefaces the examination of data points from one year before and one year after the introduction of these features by each of the 4 newspapers.

In January 2008, News International invested £600 million in new technology enabling the *Sun* to become a full-colour publication (Brook 2008; Reid 2020b). On the 22nd anniversary of the publication's move to Wapping, the tabloid, along with News International's *News of the World*, *Times*, and *Sunday Times*, relocated to new printing facilities at Broxbourne. Twenty miles north of London, the Broxbourne facilities became the largest newspaper printing facilities in the world (Editor & Publisher, 2008). In addition to enhanced colour printing capabilities, the greater printing speed of the Broxbourne presses enabled the Murdoch titles to push back daily deadlines, providing the publications with a notable edge over the competition. In view of this development, *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*, will be

addressed across the applicable data points before and after the move to Broxborne, with the *Sun* and also the *Times*, expected to show more evidence of tabloidization than the *Mirror* and the *Guardian*.

The phone hacking scandal of 2012 and 2013 marked a major setback for the tabloid and for News International more broadly. While the possible impact of the phone-hacking scandal is not examined through a hypothesis, the culture of collusion and criminality at News International depicted through the revelations, and which were addressed through the government appointed Leveson Inquiry between 2012 and 2013, was a contemporaneous subject of public discourse and outrage. To summarize, the scandal revealed systematic practices whereby journalists and contractors hired by a number of British newspapers hacked into the phones of ordinary citizens, rival journalists, as well as those of public figures, including politicians, judges, the royal family, and a number of celebrities. In total, an estimated 4,000 phones were hacked by News International employees or contractors (Davies 2014). The revelations and public furore reached a zenith when it emerged that the newspaper was responsible for hacking the phone messages of a 14-year-old girl, Millie Dowler, who had been kidnapped and was subsequently murdered. The scandal resulted in the closure of *News of the World*, and a slew of government inquiries and legal cases, including the Leveson Inquiry into the culture, practices, and ethics of the British press. Former *News of the World* editor and director of communications to former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, Andy Coulson, was convicted of criminal conspiracy and sentenced to prison for 18 months. Possible effects of the scandal will be considered in Chapter 7 wherein data points from 2012 – 2016 are subject to analysis.

In 2013, the tabloid established an online paywall, adopting the approach of its sister publication, the *Times*, which implemented a paywall in 2010. After announcing that free

online access was “untenable” (BBC News, 2013) in August of 2013, weekly online access to the *Sun* became priced at a cost of £2 per week. However, in November of 2015, the tabloid reversed its strategy and demolished the paywall after tests offering a range of online articles for free in July of that year showed promising findings. Murdoch also appointed a new digital editor of the *Sun*, former *Daily Mail* managing editor, Keith Poole, during this same year (Sweeney 2015b). The *Sun* has since remained without a paywall. In June 2016, however, the *Sun*’s website underwent an overhaul, with David Dinsmore, a former editor of the *Sun* and News UK Chief Operating Officer, describing the last 6 years as a “period of experimentation” (Dinsmore in Burrell 2016b). This comment suggests acknowledgment that the tabloid had yet to find a sustainable online model.

The revamped *Sun* online placed greater prominence on video and photography, as well as on celebrity, “football, sport and living” content (Poole in Burrell 2016b). Interestingly, Dinsmore publicly emphasized the tabloid’s national focus, a tactic contrasting the global online strategies of the British legacy newspapers with the largest online circulations, namely the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian* (Burrell 2016b). Expansion of digital staff and increased investment was aimed at a more successful monetization of web traffic, rather than specifically at growth in online readership, as reflected by Dinsmore’s statement, “*Sun* stories have never been read by more people than they are now. My job is to make sure we get paid for it” (Dinsmore in Burrell 2016b). The *Sun*’s online strategy thus suggests a heightened emphasis on tabloid elements as a means to increase the tabloid’s profits, while, however, connection of the means to the end has not been articulated.

4.3. Daily Mirror

From the *Mirror's* recent history, several key points and developments should be highlighted with regards to this thesis. These are Maxwell's purchase of the tabloid in 1984, the publication's merger with Trinity plc in 1999, whereby it became the largest newspaper group by circulation in the UK, and the impact of the 2012 – 2013 phone hacking scandal.

The *Daily Mirror* was founded by Alfred Charles William Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Lord Northcliffe, in 1903. The publication was launched as a middle-class, women's paper (Bingham and Conboy 2009; Reid 2020a), and at its inception was shaped largely through the approaches of its owner, who has been viewed as a founder of the modern newspaper (Chalaby 2000, 33). Northcliffe in fact described the publication in its opening editorial as "entirely new and modern" (Harmsworth 1903 in Reid 2020a).

Northcliffe has been noted for having, "developed specialized news and improved coverage on topics such as agriculture, transport, new technologies, sports, fashion, leisure activities and entertainment" (Chalaby 2000, 35 – 36), in addition to peppering his publications with jingoism, sensationalism, and depoliticized 'hard' news content. Chalaby (2000) depicts the former as a function of Northcliff's *policy of diversity*, whereby the press baron emphasized the importance of providing readers with information on a broad range of topics. The jingoism characteristic of Northcliffe newspapers – which by 1908 included the *Daily Mail*, the *Times*, and the *Observer* – has been seen as a mechanism through which these newspapers garnered public appeal without favouring any one political viewpoint (Chalaby 2000). Rather, through merely tapping into a common sense of nationalism, Northcliffe's newspapers successfully avoided alienating potential news consumers who did not adhere to a political ideology upheld by his newspaper. This is an example of a Northcliffe's commercial savvy as a news proprietor who successfully acted on his "journalistic skill" (Chalaby 2000, 34)

and ability to understand the interests of readers, which contrasted with the political motivations of many of the competing news proprietors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Chalaby 2000).

Sensationalism has been depicted as a particularly salient component of the *Daily Mirror* from upon its launch (Chalaby 2000). Northcliffe was seen to favour sensationalist coverage in the form of extraordinary events, such as disasters, and crime stories, however, sensationalism pervaded editorial columns and photographs, which often occupied entire pages. Sensationalism has and continues to constitute a substantial characteristic of the *Mirror*.

In 1914, Harold Harmsworth purchased the newspaper from his brother, and in 1918, after World War I, the *Mirror's* circulation began to lag. By 1933, the publication's readership consisted predominantly of women from the upper two social classes (Bingham and Conboy 2009). Newly appointed editor Harry Guy Bartholomew, along with Cecil Harmsworth King, Harold Harmsworth's nephew and the publication's Advertising Director, relaunched the newspaper in 1934, adopting a tabloid format, modeled after the New York tabloids, *New York Daily News* and the *New York Daily Mirror* (Bingham and Conboy 2009; Reid 2020a). In the midst of the increasingly competitive popular national newspaper market, Bartholomew identified a gap in the tabloid newspaper market of the time, which predominantly purveyed a right of centre political ideology. The "Bartholomew Revolution" (e.g. Bingham and Conboy 2009), herein repositioned the newspaper to represent the "broad interests of the working class" (Bingham and Conboy 2009, 641).

Also guided by advice from American advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson (Bingham and Conboy 2009, 640), the relaunched tabloid deployed new content, stylistic, and linguistic elements to appeal to a younger and female demographic. For example, the tabloid

published comics and new columns, the latter of which in particular were characterized by sensationalist and abrasive language. The relaunched publication also featured, “signature heavy black bold type for its headlines, pin-ups... and the prominent use of pictures to reach a new readership” (Conboy 2011, 110). Conboy characterizes the tabloid’s rejuvenated vernacular as an “authentic voice,” which was crucial to its populist appeal (2002, 111). Underscored is the importance of language in the positioning and appeal of tabloids, and more broadly, newspapers at large. The author, however, is unaware of any recent empirical studies of language in the *Mirror* or the *Mirror Online*.

The *Mirror*’s relaunch marked the beginning of a “tabloid revolution” in the UK between 1934 and 1937 (Conboy 2011; Reid 2020a). Interestingly, scholars such as Conboy (2002, 2011) and Engel (1996) emphasize the role of the *Mirror*’s language in the publication’s newfound success, with Conboy depicting the tabloid as, “the first to redefine then dominate the market with a proletarian language of specifically commercial appeal” (Conboy 2011, 110). Bingham and Conboy portray the *Mirror*’s coverage of the Spanish Civil War in terms of its ability to appeal to a “non-politically aligned audience of ordinary working-class people” (2009, 653), and while the patriotism characteristic of the Spanish Civil War coverage appeared again during that of the Second World War, the tabloid at this point stoked a more stridently patriotic tone, becoming “a spokesperson for the ordinary people with a hunger for radical change” (Conboy 2011, 112). Bingham and Conboy argue that beginning with the Spanish Civil War, throughout its history the *Mirror* has been known for its crusades and its tendency to take a strong stance on political topics and events (Bingham and Conboy 2009), thus suggesting a deviation from Northcliffe’s apolitical approach towards ‘hard’ news reporting in particular.

By the 1950s and through the 1960s, under editor-in-chief Hugh Cudlipp, elements of the *Mirror's* sensationalist language amplified. With regards to this particular juncture in its history, the *Mirror* has even been criticized for having, “stylized working-class language into parody” (Smith 1975:238, in Conboy 2011, 113). The newspaper’s new chairman as of 1951, Cecil King, began acquiring numerous newspapers and newspaper groups, and in 1962, formed the International Publishing Corporation, IPC, which in 1963 became the world’s “largest publishing enterprise” (Reid 2020a).

While the *Mirror* remained the tabloid with the highest circulation in the country during the 1950s and 1960s, by 1970, the *Sun* surpassed the *Mirror* and has since remained the newspaper with the highest (print) circulation in the UK. As discussed in this chapter’s previous subsection and in Chapter 5, Murdoch’s purchase of the *Sun* was a pivotal event in the history of the British newspaper industry, marking an increase in competition and conglomeration, particularly within the tabloid market. During the 1970s and 1980s, the *Mirror* furthermore experienced resistance from union workers regarding its plans to modernize the tabloid’s production. In 1970, IPC was taken over by Reed, then part owner of the *Mirror*, and IPC was renamed Reed International. Reed divided the company into two separate groups, IPC, which consisted of magazine titles, and Mirror Group Newspapers, which consisted of the company’s newspaper holdings.

A crucial juncture for the *Mirror* arrived in 1984 with Robert Maxwell’s purchase of the Mirror Group Newspapers, for £113 million. Maxwell was a larger-than-life figure in the realm of politics and industry, and the tabloid soon came to be referred to as the *Daily Maxwell* (Conboy 2011, 56). A Labour MP for Buckingham in 1964, and owner of book and journal publisher, Pergamon publishing press, Maxwell often commandeered the *Mirror's* front page and editorials to “promote himself” (ibid). While Maxwell’s finances were often

questioned during his lifetime (Conboy 2011; Davies 2019), Maxwell's reputation for financial mismanagement amplified after his mysterious death in 1991, when it emerged that he had stolen £440 million from his companies' pension funds (Davies 2019), leaving the *Mirror* in a precarious financial position. In 1992, Mirror Group Newspapers was purchased by Sir Peter Parker, a former chairman of British Railways, and in 1999, merged with Trinity plc, creating Britain's largest newspaper group by weekly circulation (Barrie 1999). The £1.55 billion merger marked a vertical and horizontal integration of media holdings, in the form of TV stations and media websites in addition to approximately 150 local newspapers, at the newly minted Trinity Mirror (Barrie 1999). The possible effects of the merger with Trinity plc will also be addressed through assessment of the applicable data points from before and after the merger.

During the 1990s, the *Mirror* is described as having "languished" (Engel 1996, 306) under poor management which "was more interested in short term profits than in long-term investment" (Engel 1996, 306). Circulation of the tabloid continued to decline (Seymour-Ure 1991), and in the first half of the decade, a disjuncture emerged between the political views of the *Mirror's* management and the left-wing views historically associated with the publication. In 1996, Piers Morgan, another larger-than-life figure in the British press, became the editor of the tabloid, a position he occupied until 2004. While Morgan stated that his principal responsibility was to make the *Mirror* a more effective competitor of the *Sun*, he also imparted his aim to restore the tabloid's trademark humour, which was seen as having faded in recent years (Engels 1996). Morgan's tenure at the *Mirror* was marked by numerous controversies, as exemplified through the tabloid's publication of unverified images from the Iraq War and Morgan's own involvement in an insider trading scandal. Morgan himself

captured popular attention through his numerous publicity stunts at the *Mirror*, a tactic that ultimately did not result in increased circulation for the tabloid.

The *Mirror* launched its online edition in 2001. As mentioned in the previous subsection, data from each of the 4 legacy newspapers subject to examination in the thesis are examined from one year before and one year after the launch of each respective newspaper's online edition. *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization* and *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization* are the hypotheses against which the possible impact of the emergence of the publications' online platforms will be assessed.

In terms of online popularity, with regard to its legacy tabloid competition in the British context, the *Mirror Online* has since its inception generally been second only to the *Mail Online*, which came to and continues to draw a large international audience (Newman 2012; Newman and Levy 2013). As displayed in Table 7.2b in Chapter 7, the *Mirror Online's* popularity ranking also fluctuated throughout the 2012 – 2016 period. Web access to the *Mirror* has always and continues to operate without a paywall.

In 2007, the tabloid introduced social sharing features, and in line with the *Sun*, the launch of social sharing features at the *Mirror* has not been examined by the literature. The importance of social sharing features is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 section 6.7., which prefaces the analysis of data points from one year before and one year after the introduction of social sharing features at each of the newspapers.

During the 2012 – 2016 period, Trinity also partook in numerous online experiments. In 2013, the company launched a standalone social media site, UsVsTh3m, the people.co.uk website in 2014, and a data journalism brand, Amp3d, in 2015: by 2015, however, all 6 sites

had been closed (O'Reilly 2016). The Trinity Mirror acquired a local news publisher, Local World, in November 2015 for £187.4 million, expanding Trinity's holdings to nearly 200 newspapers, and increasing its reach by approximately 30 million people (Sweney 2015a; O'Reilly 2016). The acquisition did not result in shifts in management personnel at the *Daily Mirror* (Sweney 2015a), and hereafter, Trinity also launched another short-lived online platform, Perspecs, a standalone news app which aimed to provide 3 sides to each story covered (O'Reilly 2016). While the online experiments were executed by Trinity rather than by the *Mirror* specifically, such endeavours suggest the importance placed on online reach and engagement by the company.

Comments by Trinity Mirror's strategy director, Piers North, also indicate concerns at the organization with regard to online advertising revenues. In 2016, North identifies growing ad blocker use, which grew from 30 million to 181 million users globally between 2012 and 2015, as an arena meriting consideration, mentioning the possibility of addressing this through emphasis on "fewer, better" ads and/or erecting a paywall (O'Reilly 2016). The publisher has also discussed efforts towards audience monetization through the improvement of data mining on its proprietary audiences (Shields 2016). These tactics reflect the company's focus, as stated by North, "... on growing digital revenues" (O'Reilly 2016), which suggests that the *Mirror* has not generated the magnitude of online profits sought after by Trinity.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the *Mirror* was also impacted by fallout from the phone-hacking scandal (Shoop-Worrall 2018), with accusations arising against former editorial staff, such as Piers Morgan, for example (Shoop-Worrall 2018; Greenslade 2020). While not at the centre of the phone-hacking row alongside the *News of World* and Rupert Murdoch's News International, numerous journalists, editors, and managers at the *Mirror*

were accused of phone-hacking (Shoop-Worrall 2018; Greenslade 2020), with Trinity Mirror spending a reported £75 million to settle hacking-related claims (Greenslade 2020). As stated in the previous subsection, while the possible effects of the phone-hacking scandal are not examined through a hypothesis, it is likely that beyond the legal costs incurred by the Trinity Mirror, a decline in public trust in the tabloid may have occurred, at least from certain individuals and demographics. This possible effect will be considered in the interpretation of findings from the 2012 – 2016 period of data points, in both Chapter 7 as well as in the thesis' concluding chapter.

4.4. The Times

Several key events and developments can be identified from the *Times'* history as of particular relevance to this thesis' areas of interest. These include its purchase by Rupert Murdoch in 1981, the Wapping Revolution of 1986, the 'price wars' of 1993 – 1994, and its implementation of an online paywall in 2010.

The first iteration of the *Times*, the *Daily Universal Register*, was founded in 1785 by John Walter, a former coal merchant who "went into newspapers as an offshoot from a failed printing experiment" (Marr 2004, 11). Walter renamed the publication the *Times* in 1788 as his interests shifted away from typography and towards news production and developing a newspaper of record (Reid 2019). Hereafter, the publication began to print commercial news as well as scandal coverage (Reid 2019). Walter became a pioneer of foreign reporting, a point of distinction which helped facilitate the *Times'* early popularity with policy makers and financiers (New World Encyclopaedia 2015). The publication was a leading mid-Victorian era newspaper, becoming a prominent voice of the British establishment (Marr 2004).

John Walter was proceeded by his son, John Walter II in 1803, who was in turn succeeded by Walter III in 1848. During the Victorian era, under the leadership of its first liberal editor, Thomas Barnes, the newspaper became popularly known as the “thunderer” in light of its reputation as an independent newspaper excelling in accuracy and “incredible standards of reporting” (Reid 2019).

In 1908, Lord Northcliffe purchased the *Times*, thus enhancing his stable of publications, which also included the *Daily Mirror*. Upon John Jacob Astor’s purchase of the newspaper in the wake of Northcliffe’s death in 1922, the newspaper entered a period of decline in line with “overspending” (Reid 2019) and the publication of forged news articles. In 1967, the Astors sold the newspaper to a Canadian publishing titan Roy Thomson, and for the first time, the *Times* began to print news, as opposed to ads, on the front page (Engel 1996). While the newspaper improved its dynamism under the editorship of Sir William Haley during the 1950s, it was not until after Rupert Murdoch’s purchase of the publication in 1981 that the *Times* regained stature.

After a period of union disputes, between 1978 and 1979, the publication closed down entirely. Numerous potential buyers, including Robert Maxwell and Lord Rothermere, expressed interest in acquiring the newspaper, however, Rupert Murdoch - in possession of financial power which stood to maintain increasingly costly operations, and the political clout to breakup print unions - emerged victorious. Upon his purchase of the publication, however, Murdoch laid off staff and implemented wage freezes, and a year later, executed another round of redundancies focused on clerical staff (Matthew, 2011). As the *Times* is not subject to examination before 1998 – the year before the newspaper launched its online edition - this particular development is not assessed in the thesis. However, it is important to note that Murdoch’s acquisition of the *Times* provided him with an increasingly “dominant position” in

the UK newspaper market (Tait 2012), a status which was further strengthened through News International's 1990 acquisition of 39% of the British Satellite Corporation, creating British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB). Thus, by the time the newspaper launched its online edition, News International was a uniquely vast and powerful media conglomerate in the UK.

As with Murdoch's *Sun* in particular, the Wapping Revolution was a key juncture for the *Times*, wherein the newspaper relocated from Fleet Street to East London and overhauled linotype presses in favour of computerized printing facilities. While the pricing of the *Times* and the country's competing 'quality' newspapers – namely the *Daily Telegraph*, *Guardian*, and the *Independent* – remained stable in the wake of Wapping, this changed in 1993 when Murdoch lowered the cover price of the *Times* from 45p to 30p, whilst the *Guardian* and *Independent* remained priced at 45p and the *Daily Telegraph* at 48p. Known as the 'price wars' of the 1990s, 'quality' newspapers lacking the financial backing of a major conglomerate such as News International to help compensate for short-term losses, suffered damaging declines in circulation (Behringer and Fillistrucchi 2011). While the *Times* increased its market share from 17% to 28% between 1993 and 1996, during this same period, the *Independent* experienced a decline from 16% to 12%, the *Daily Telegraph* from 49% to 43%, with the *Guardian* also undergoing a small market share decrease (Behringer and Fillistrucchi 2011, 5). The *Times*'s sales in 1996 were in fact the highest in its long history (Engel 1996). Despite complaints issued to and an inquiry conducted by the Office of Fair Trading, News International was not deemed to have engaged in predatory pricing.

In 1999, the *Times* launched its online edition under the editorship of Peter Strothard. As stated in the previous sections of this chapter, corpus linguistic and content analytic data from one year before and one year after the introduction of the newspaper's online addition will be subject to examination against H1 and H2. It can be noted that there is a lack of

literature discussing the emergence of the *Time's* online platform. Another important juncture for the publication arrived in 2003 with the newspaper's introduction of a tabloid as well as a broadsheet formatted print edition. While management denied the publication of more sensationalist content in the *Times'* tabloid version, critics issued such allegations (Matthew 2011); these claims, however, have not been investigated empirically. By 2004, the *Times* published only in tabloid format, a switch emulated by the *Independent* during the same year.

In 2008, the *Times* introduced social sharing features. Similar to the *Sun* and the *Mirror*, the launch of social sharing features at the *Times* has not been discussed in the relevant scholarship. Social sharing features are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 section 6.7, which prefaces analysis of the data points from one year before and after the introduction of these features at each of the 4 newspapers examined in the thesis.

In response to laggard online circulation figures, the newspaper implemented an online paywall in June 2010 charging readers £1 per day of access, or £2 per week of access. While the success of the paywall was doubted at first (Schonfeld 2010; Halliday 2010), with the *Times'* online readership dropping by 62% between May and November 2010 (Schonfeld 2010), in between 2009 and 2014, the newspaper reported a shift from a £70 million year-end loss to a £1.7 million year-end profit (Albeanu 2018). In 2016, the *Times* online transitioned from a hard paywall – allowing access to zero articles without a payment – to a softer one, granting users registered with the newspaper's website access to two free articles per week. The *Times* has described this model as more promising in terms of long-term success (Albeanu 2018).

While, in terms of News International titles, the 2011 – 2013 phone-hacking scandal principally involved staff and outside contractors at the *News of the World* and the *Sun*, in

September 2011, the deputy football editor of the *Times* was arrested on charges of conspiracy to intercept phone voicemail. The editor, Raoul Simons, had been suspended by the newspaper in 2010 after material evidence linked him to the interception of phone communications (BBC News, 2011). Although Simon's arrest made headlines, it did not spark public outrage at the publication, as had been the case in particular at the *News of the World*, but also at the *Sun*, in the wake of the Milly Dowler phone-hacking revelations.

4.5. The Guardian

From the *Guardian's* recent history, several key events and developments of particular relevance to the thesis' hypotheses, data points, and analysis can be identified. These are the Guardian's purchase of the *Observer* in 1993, the appointment of Alan Rusbridger as editor in 1995, and the launch of the *Guardian Unlimited* in 1999.

Founded by a Manchester businessman, John Edward Taylor, the *Manchester Guardian* was launched in 1821. A man of progressive leaning, Taylor pushed for parliamentary reform in the wake of witnessing the Peterloo Massacre on August 16, 1819. After authorities published a set of "alternative facts" on the event (Rusbridger 2018, 19), Taylor endeavoured to spread the "facts of the day" (Rusbridger 2018, 20), and founded the *Manchester Guardian* 18 months later. The founding objectives of the *Guardian* are still today often cited as a point of pride for *Guardian* staff (Rusbridger 2018).

The eponymous Scott of the well-known Scott Trust married into the Taylor Family in the late 1800s, with C.P. Scott serving as newspaper's editor for 57 years. In 1905, in the wake of John Edward Taylor's death, Scott also became the owner of the publication. It was on the 100th anniversary of the newspaper that the editor/owner uttered the *Guardian's* famous

aphorism, “Comment is free, but facts are sacred” (Scott in Rusbridger 2018, 21). The Scott family is said to have taken to heart the newspaper’s public service mission, and upon the death of C.P. Scott and his son Edward in 1936, founded the Scott Trust with the intention of “preserve[ing] and protect[ing]” the *Guardian* “in perpetuity” (Rusbridger 2018, 21). Related to this goal, the Scott Trust was also developed in order to ensure the newspaper’s autonomy from impinging political and commercial influences and enable the publication to pursue its public service values accordingly.

Under C.P. Scott, the *Guardian*’s influence had spread beyond Manchester and more broadly around the UK. Its reputation was largely garnered through the unabashed political stances adopted by the publication during significant junctures in the nation’s history, such as the Boer War at the end of the 20th century with regards to which the *Guardian* voiced opposition. The newspaper often spoke against government actions or stood by unpopular views (Rusbridger 2018), a tendency which continued through the 20th century, for example, in the publication’s opposition to the UK intervention in Suez in 1956. As with the newspaper’s founding objectives, the publication’s long-established ethos of independence and progressivism is still often cited by *Guardian* staff (Rusbridger 2018; Viner 2018).

In 1961, the *Guardian* relocated from Manchester to Fleet Street, London, with approximately 500 new staff hired to support the company’s move. Conboy (2011) attests to the newspaper’s relocation as an acknowledgement of its large readership outside of Manchester, and the adjunct prospect of advertisers’ willingness to pay higher rates to feature ad content in a national title. Upon its move to London, the *Guardian*’s circulation increased substantially, a trend which continued through most of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s

The 1990s can be seen as the beginning of a period of change and innovation at the *Guardian*. In 1992, the newspaper launched its daily features supplement, *G2*, in tabloid

format, a move that was soon after copied by numerous newspapers, including the *Times* and the *Independent*. Despite some opposition by *Guardian* staff to the tabloid insert (Rusbridger 2012), *G2* proved popular with readers and continues to be published in print and online. In 1993, the Guardian Media Group (GMG) purchased the *Observer*, a Sunday newspaper upholding a similar political ideology. The *Observer*, which was essentially rescued financially by the GMG, was largely folded into the *Guardian*, with the publication's editorial department left as the only department that did not merge with its *Guardian* counterpart (Fenby 2009). Tensions between *Observer* and *Guardian* staff reportedly arose in the wake of the merger, which was seen as a cause of an unfavourable wage dispute settlement by some *Guardian* journalists; *Observer* staff also perceived dismissiveness and resentment from *Guardian* staff who emphasized distinctions between staff at the weekly versus those at the daily (Fenby 2009). In 1995, the *Observer's* editor, Jonathan Fenby was asked by the GMG trust to resign (Fenby 2009), and was replaced by Peter Preston, the chairman of GMG.

In 1995, Alan Rusbridger, who has since become known as a major pioneer in the transition online for legacy newspapers, began his 20-year tenure as editor of the publication. Under Rusbridger, the *Guardian* has often been described as a "leader" in the transition online (McNair 2003, 143). The *Guardian Unlimited* was launched in 1999, and soon after became one of the most popular online news websites in the UK. According to Rusbridger, in 1999, the *Guardian Unlimited* was meant to be "an umbrella for deeper wells of specific subjects" (Rusbridger 2018, 58). In particular, the online site focused on topics expected to be popular in the web context, "news unlimited, film unlimited, cricket, football, politics, books and arts, along with work, jobs and skills" (Rusbridger 2018, 58). The reasons for which these topics were expected to draw more interest online are unclear, however, it can be noted that they suggest a shift towards matters constituting the everyday lives of ordinary

citizens, a transition which reflects the integration of the Internet and online journalism into everyday life. As with the *Sun*, *Mirror*, and *Times*, the possible impact of the *Guardian's* launch of an online edition will be assessed through an examination of data points from one year before and one year after this event, with corpus linguistic and content analytic data held against *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization* and *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*.

A “strong proponent” of the transition to online (Rusbridger 2018, 57) at this early juncture in the history of online journalism, Rusbridger realized the significance of the Internet in affording two-way flows of communication online, and the agency of online reader preferences (Rusbridger 2018). Online content from the newspaper has and remains free access.

In the context of the *Guardian's* print edition, during 2005, the newspaper switched from a broadsheet, to a full colour, Berliner format. Sized between a tabloid and broadsheet, the Berliner format measures 470mm x 315mm; while relatively new to the UK, the format had long enjoyed popularity with continental European newspapers (Guardian 2009). Accounting for the construction of new printing presses (£50 million) and buildings to house the new printing facilities (£30 million), the switch from broadsheet to Berliner cost the GMG £80 million (Guardian 2009). According to Rusbridger, this shift stood to yield a visually “distinctive” product in the UK newspaper market (Rusbridger 2018, 96). The *Guardian* ultimately adopted a tabloid format in 2018, at which time, it was retrospectively acknowledged that, “we might have made a different decision” (2018, 96). Rusbridger has stated that by 2018, the *Guardian* had “virtually no” classified ads remaining to print (2018,

96), which thereby removed the hazard of insufficient space available through a smaller, tabloid size.

The *Guardian* introduced social sharing features in 2008, a development of particular pertinence to *H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization*. Similar to the other legacy publications examined in this thesis, the launch of social sharing features at the *Guardian* has not been discussed in the relevant literature. As referenced in previous sections of this chapter, social sharing features are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6 section 6.7. In view of the *Guardian's* particular popularity online with regard to its legacy competitors, the possible effects of the introduction of social sharing tools are of particular interest to this newspaper.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the *Guardian* garnered a considerable number of accolades and international recognition for its investigative reporting (Rajan 2019). These awards are notable with regard to the thesis' interest in the putative relationship between 'quality' newspapers and the public service function of journalism, particularly in the context of the Internet era. The newspaper's coverage of the News International phone-hacking scandal, for example, unearthed after years of investigations by *Guardian* journalist Nick Davies, won the *Guardian* multiple National Press Awards. Revelations published through *Guardian* investigative reporting during the 2010s continued to implicate government transgressions. In 2013, the *Guardian* published the whistle-blower allegations of Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor whose detailed charges of the US and UK governments' regular digital surveillance of ordinary citizens sparked an international discourse on privacy in the Internet era. Despite the condemnation of US and UK government agencies, the newspaper's coverage yielded the publication a Pulitzer prize, as well as numerous other awards. The *Guardian's* subsequent publication of troves of classified

military documents provided by Wikileaks also evoked government ire and marked another collaborative effort between journalists and staff from the *Guardian*, and those of other international news publications, a tactic also exercised through the 2016 publication of the Panama papers. While not a point often explicitly discussed in the scholarship, the Internet has afforded journalists and editors with a facilitated means through which to share large quantities of information which may benefit from editorial and financial resources that extend beyond any one newspaper alone. This is a trend that we may expect to continue into the future.

Alongside media commentary and academic praise of the *Guardian's* online popularity and success, the newspaper's finances in the wake of its launch online have received much critical scrutiny. Numerous sources have attributed the newspaper's success on the Internet to cushioning from the Scott Trust, which reportedly depleted under Rusbridger's tenure. In fact, it was not until the 2018 – 2019 financial year that the *Guardian* reported its first annual profits since 1998 (Rajan 2019). In the final years of Rusbridger's tenure, numerous shifts to the *Guardian's* business model were implemented, such as the launch of a 3-tier membership service in 2014 (Rajan 2019; Durrani 2014). The 3-tier membership service, which did not involve changes to the free cost of online access to the *Guardian*, is an interesting example of brand identity enhancement conducted by a legacy newspaper. Membership grants access to physical extensions of the *Guardian* brand – for example, tours of the newspaper's newsroom, access to the newly constructed Guardian Space, a home to events hosted by the publication – and experiences which “help bring readers closer” (Rusbridger in Durrani 2014). The *Guardian's* decision to invest in this form of membership to the newspaper is indicative of a recent increase in the salience of brands and branded experiences; while this notion is not examined through a specific hypothesis, the possible increase in newspaper brand

salience will be addressed through theoretical interpretations of the thesis' data in Chapter 8.

4.6. Huffington Post

A digital native news publication, the *Huffington Post* has a relatively short history. The *HuffPo*'s launch of a UK edition in 2011, the publication's acquisition by AOL in 2011 and AOL's 2014 merger with Verizon are the events of particular interest to the thesis' hypotheses, data points, and analysis.

Started by Arianna Huffington, Jonah Peretti, Andrew Breitbart, and Kenneth Lerer, the *Huffington Post* launched in the US in May of 2005, with the HuffPost UK launching in July 2011. At its inception, the *Huffington Post* was seen as a left-wing alternative to the popular right-wing digital native news site, the *Drudge Report*. The outlet, largely in line with advice from Andrew Breitbart, aimed to be the first to publish breaking news stories (BuzzFeed Staff 2012), and drawing from Arianna Huffington's rolodex of famous friends, also featured contributions from A-list celebrities (Sarno 2011). In the wake of its US launch, the publication began to feature articles written by unpaid bloggers and content aggregated from around the web, using analytics to track the popularity of its content and tweak its website accordingly (Kiron and Shockley 2011, 60). In exchange for lack of pay, bloggers publishing on *HuffPo* stood to gain visibility through the website's substantial audience reach and have been allowed to produce more opinionated news stories. The *HuffPo* has become known for its "large amount" of opinion and editorial content (Lee and Chyi 2015, 7).

The outlet's aggregation tactics faced early criticism for drawing web traffic away from legacy news outlets (Sarno 2011), although some have argued that news aggregator sites such as *HuffPo* direct traffic to legacy news websites, making them more accessible (Lee and Chyi

2015). In line with legacy news outlets, the *HuffPo* also features a substantial proportion of content from news wires (Shapiro 2012). The publication has furthermore become known for having recognized early on the power of search engine optimization as well as that of social media (Bakker 2012; Shapiro 2012). The publication's dynamism in the online context contributed to its increasing popularity and clout as a "media institution of consequence" (Cohan 2016), with Arianna Huffington also increasingly becoming viewed as a powerful figure in Washington D.C. Huffington herself became a celebrity, perhaps, and as suggested through numerous commentators (Shapiro 2012; Cohan 2016), emphasizing her own personal brand over that of the *Huffington Post*.

Despite the *HuffPo*'s popularity and fame, the outlet did not turn a yearly profit until 2010, when it posted revenues of \$31 million with profits of less than \$1 million (Shapiro 2012). In a headline making deal, the publication was sold to AOL for \$315 million in February 2011. While the news site's clout ostensibly continued to grow, the *HuffPo* reportedly last experienced a profit-making financial year in 2011 (Shapiro 2012). Media coverage on *HuffPo*'s finances have indicated a lack of return on investment in the publication by its parent conglomerates (Shapiro 2012; Cohan 2016), although the outlet's yearly financials have remained opaque behind those of AOL, and subsequently Verizon, after the two conglomerates merged in 2014.

It is also significant to note reports regarding dynamics of Arianna Huffington's role as editor both under AOL and Verizon wherein she has been described as an unexperienced manager who conflicted with numerous management figures at the publication's parent companies as well as with journalists and staff at the *HuffPo* (Anonymous 2015; Cohan 2016; Harwell 2016). Several of Huffington's ventures, such as HuffPost Live, an attempt at live

broadcasting aired online, failed despite substantial financial backing, and “demoralized” staff at the *HuffPo* have been depicted as leaving the outlet in “droves” (Anonymous 2015).

Despite tension in the *HuffPo* newsroom and between management at AOL and Verizon, by 2015, in the UK, the *Huffington Post* was, with the exception of the *Mail Online*, more popular than any legacy newspaper’s online version (see Table 7.2b in the Chapter 7). The news outlet had also continued to attract journalists from legacy news organizations, winning numerous prestigious awards, including a Peabody in 2010 and a Pulitzer in 2012. The increasing precarity of jobs in the newspaper industry at large has been seen to facilitate the relocation of legacy journalists to digital native ventures run under business models that are more tailored to the Internet era, even in cases such as that of the *HuffPo* wherein a digital native outlet has acquired a reputation for having a highly competitive, even “toxic” workplace culture (Anonymous 2015).

Reflecting the significant role of interactivity in the publication’s success, as of 2016, the *HuffPo* had over one million comments per month on the site, and a following of over 8 million users on social media, with Twitter serving as the principle social media platform for followers and distribution (Johnson 2016). *HuffPo* has also been described in terms of its success with distributing mobile content, an arena in which legacy publications have often struggled (Newman, Levy, and Nielsen 2015). Connected to this success is the relative youth of *HuffPo* consumers, particularly in the UK context (Newman, Levy, and Nielsen 2015).

Another juncture of note to the publication came in August 2016, when Arianna Huffington stepped down as editor in chief following years of intermittent speculation. Huffington’s leadership faced a substantial bout of questioning in the months directly preceding, largely in view of her appointment to the board of directors of Uber in April and the announcement of her plans to launch a new start-up, Thrive Global, in November 2016.

Lydia Polgreen, an editorial director at the *New York Times*, was appointed as Huffington's successor in December 2016; the decision to select Polgreen as Huffington's successor can be seen to reflect an emphasis on a global outlook and 'quality' newspaper standards at the publication.

In the following section, key social change taking place during the thesis' timeframe, 1968 – 2016 is discussed, before this chapter is summarized and concluded. As referenced in the introduction to this chapter, an overview of the contemporaneous social developments in Britain provides significant context through which to situate and interpret the thesis' findings.

4.7. Social Change in Britain: 1968 - 2016

The 1968 – 2016 period is one which saw numerous changes of note in British society. These shifts occurred amidst the erosion of the British empire following World War II, the subsequent emergence of global, multinational organizations, and the rise of neoliberalism. Key societal trends occurring in the nation between 1968 and 2016 include increases in the average household GDP, along with rates of higher education, and the size of the overall population. While these changes are contemporaneously common to a number of Western democracies (Oxford Royale Bibliography 2017), the contours and dynamics of these broader shifts are crucial to an informed understanding of the British context during the time period subject to examination in this thesis.

In the wake of the second World War, commencing in the 1950s, Britons, and particularly those in the middle classes, began to experience increased affluence (Vernon

2017). A reconfiguration of dominant industries facilitated the increase in affluence in the country. This shift entailed a slowing of growth in the manufacturing economy alongside dramatic growth of the service industry, in particular, in education and health, and from the 1980s onwards, the financial services sector (Vernon 2017). Herein, an increasingly post-industrial Britain saw higher rates of women enter the labour force, particularly within the service industry, as well as increases in literacy and higher education rates for both men and women.

Between 1975 and 1997, women's participation in the labour force grew from 52% to 71% (Vernon 2017). It should be noted that while women became an increasingly central part of the service industry, they were consistently paid less than their male counterparts, even after the passing of the Equal Pay Act of 1970. Women also increasingly joined trade unions (Vernon 2017) and obtained a secondary education (ONS, 2020). This latter development was also enabled through the creation of polytechnics, starting in the 1960s. Polytechnics focused on practical professional skills, contrasting universities, which were seen as more intellectually-centred and accessible to upper classes.

The 1960s was an era of social protest and reformation, which saw the emergence of identity politics, whereby the traditional centrality of the white, heterosexual, English male in politics was increasingly called into question, if not outright rejected (Vernon 2017). Indeed, this notion is echoed in critiques of the Habermasian public sphere, particularly those proffered by scholars such as Fraser (1992), MacDonald (2000), and Ornebrig and Jonsson (2004); MacDonald and Ornebrig and Jonsson, furthermore, specifically underscore the virtues of traditional tabloid characteristics in representing those demographics historically subject to marginalization. The 1960s were marked by the women's liberation, LGBTQ rights,

and black power movements, each of which were invigorated by youths, as the population of 15 to 24 year-olds grew by more than one million since the previous decade (Vernon 2017).

At this time, and as reflected in the rise of the average household GDP, younger people, as well as older members of the workforce, were also in possession of an increasingly substantial disposable income; in line with this development, Britain saw significant growth in consumer spending. Between 1969 and 1992, a substantial augmentation occurred in the percentage of households in possession of key durable goods, such as cars, washing machines, refrigerators, central heating, televisions, and telephones (Rooney 1998). Breaking the relevant spending down by decade, while consumer expenditures increased by 30% during the 1960s, and by 14% during the 1970s, this figure grew to 106% during the 1980s (Rooney 1998). In a study of shifts in the type of content featured in the *Sun* and the *Mirror*, Rooney (1998, 2000) associates this increase in consumer spending with a shift away from “matters of the public sphere in favour of material which encouraged acts of consumption” (Rooney 1998, 95). While direct causation between increased consumer spending and consumption-oriented content – namely, advertising – is not established, the notion of a connection between an augmented emphasis on consumerism at a macro-, societal level, and at a micro-, newspaper content level, is a useful concept for reference.

Increases in middle class prosperity, higher education, women in the workforce, and consumer spending, are developments which have been seen to contribute to a “reformation of class” (Vernon 2017, 434) in Britain between the 1950s and 1970s. Regarding the increasing affluence of the middle classes, an important point of note is that this shift for the most part did not impact those in the bottom 50% income bracket. Poverty in Britain increasingly gained national scholarly as well as public attention (Vernon 2017). For example, numerous sociological and economic studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s sought to redefine

poverty in relative terms, focusing on its psychological impacts and effects on everyday life (e.g. Rowntree 1951; Abel-Smith and Townsend 1965). Inequalities between upper, middle, and lower classes were further exacerbated through the rise of neoliberalism, starting in the late 1970s and continuing through the end of the thesis' timeframe.

The Thatcher government, in power from 1979 – 1990, embraced neoliberalism, which manifest in economic policies of privatization, helping to facilitate the rise of global conglomerates, and social policies which promoted individualism over social welfare systems. Neoliberal approaches to the State, economics, and society diverged from the greater emphasis placed by previous governments on the insurance of social welfare, by contrast, allowing for the free reign of markets to impact on and shape social life, treating the individual as responsible for their own prosperity and security (Vernon 2017).

The rise and increasing potency of neoliberalism since the 1980s has been linked with numerous economic and social phenomena, one of which is declining public trust in institutions (e.g. Rantanen 2012; Vernon 2017). Recently, the Great Recession of 2008, which resulted in a 6% drop in the GDP and a rise in unemployment for the first time since 1968 (Gregg and Wadsworth 2010), has been associated with an exacerbation of already declining public trust in financial institutions (Rantanen 2012). Between 2008 and 2012, British trust in banks decreased from 30% to 16% (Rantanen 2012). As discussed in the thesis' previous chapter, the rise in global conglomerates and contemporaneous decline of public trust in institutions has also been associated with the emergence of a postmodern cultural context, a notion of theoretical relevance to the dissertation. An adjunct phenomenon of note in British society has been a decline in church attendance and in the moral authority of the Anglican Church (Vernon 2017). Since the 1960s, lower rates of individuals have been married in church, with increases seen in divorce rates (Vernon 2017).

In terms of broader demographic shifts during the 1968 through 2016 period, the British population grew, increasing from approximately 55,213,500 in 1968 to 65,648,100 in 2016 (Office of National Statistics 2020). According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS 2020), natural change, or a higher numbers of births than deaths, is the primary factor of this 19% growth, with migration as a secondary factor. With regard to the thesis, this information is significant in particular with regards to print newspaper circulation figures which, in contrast to this trend towards augmentation, decline in the final decade of the 20th century and the first 16 years of the 21st century. Coupled with the increase in population, as previously discussed, was an increase in rates of higher education (ONS 2020); further, by 2015, Britain reached near universal adult literacy (ONS 2020). These societal trends thus underscore the significance of decreases in print circulation not as a function of a decline in the reading public, but as a function of shifting modes of consumption.

4.8. Conclusions

The abridged histories of each newspaper and the overview of social change in the UK contemporaneous to the thesis' timespan provided in this chapter will be of use to the reader with regards to contextualization of the data analysis, which comprises the next 3 chapters of the thesis. In each of these chapters, corpus linguistic and content analytic data are examined against the thesis' hypotheses, with the key findings discussed in each chapter's conclusions section. The thesis' conclusions chapter will incorporate elements of the news publications' histories and ethos, as well as the social changes, in particular those relevant to education, in an analysis also drawing from the project's principle theoretical frameworks and results.

Analysis of the data from one year before and after the events and developments of interest to this thesis – Murdoch’s purchase of the *Sun* in 1969, the Wapping Revolution of 1986, the emergence of the newspapers’ online platforms in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the introduction of social sharing features in the second half of the first decade of the 21st century, and the 2012 - 2016 Web 3.0 years – are divided across the following 3 results chapters.

In view of the quantity of data and adjunct analysis, examination of two developments and/or events is discussed in the first two results chapters, with the third results chapter discussing the 5 data points constituting the 2012 – 2016 Web 3.0 timeframe. While the results are presented across 3 chapters largely so as to avoid one or two chapters of particularly substantial length, as conveyed through each of the chapters, a distinct grouping of causal factors are examined within each. These groupings can also be categorized temporally in terms of a first, pre-Internet period, a second period wherein the Internet is relatively novel, with newspapers’ online versions and social sharing features newly emerged, and a third, Web 3.0 period, wherein data generated online is used to create “new meaning” in new ways (Barassi and Treré 2012, 1272). The thesis’ conclusions chapter discusses key findings from across Chapters 5, 6, and 7, from over the course of the thesis’ 1968 – 2016 time period.

Chapter 5: Results Chapter, 1968 – 1987

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapters of this thesis have expounded the putative causal factors of tabloidization, a theoretical framework for the process of tabloidization, the methods applied in the dissertation to assess a possible tabloidization of British newspapers, overviews of the newspapers subject to examination, and provided the relevant social context for the 1968 – 2016 time period. This chapter is the first in the thesis to present the methodological findings. As stated at the end of the previous chapter, the project's findings are presented across 3 chapters particularly in view of the largely amount of data and subsequently robust analysis. However, the 3 chapters may also be seen as temporally-distinct groupings of different putative causal factors in line the different events and developments subject to analysis. This first chapter focuses on two such junctures, which constitute the pre-Internet years examined in the dissertation.

In this chapter, data points from before and after two key events at the beginning of the thesis' timeframe are subject to corpus linguistic and content analysis. These events, Rupert Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* in 1969 and the Wapping Revolution of 1986, were selected for examination in view of their standing in the relevant journalism and tabloidization literature as pivotal junctures in the history of British journalism, having been linked to ostensible subsequent shifts in newspaper values and content. Lacking in the scholarship is empirical data to support such claims; the thesis thus contributes to filling these gaps. Further, the two events subject to analysis in this chapter pertain in particular to certain crucial mechanisms discussed in Chapter 2.

The chapter commences with an overview of Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* in 1969 and its significance in the context of this thesis, and then proceeds to present the corpus linguistic and content analytic findings from one year before and one year after this event, with a summary of these findings accompanied by a discussion of the composite tabloidization measures from 1968 and 1970. The same presentational structure is applied to the next event subject to analysis, the Wapping Revolution of 1986. Subsequently, data from the earliest data point from the chapter/thesis, 1968, and from the latest data point analysed in this chapter, 1987, are compared to one another in order to provide an overview of the shifts that have taken place across the years analysed in this chapter.

5.2. Murdoch's Purchase of the Sun in 1969: 1968 and 1970 Analysis

Rupert Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* in 1969 has been identified as a key event in the history of British journalism, particularly in the context of tabloidization (Tunstall 1996; Rooney 2000, 2014; Marr 2004; Conboy 2004, 2006, 2011). Martin Conboy, a British journalism scholar, states, "the most significant, recent development in the history of British tabloid journalism came with the relaunch of the *Sun* in 1969" (2011, 114). The *Sun*, under Murdoch's ownership, imminently came to represent the height of salacious, entertainment-focused tabloid news publications in the UK (Franklin 1997; Wolff 2008).

At the time of Murdoch's purchase of the publication, the *Daily Mirror* was the newspaper with the highest circulation in the UK, a status it had maintained since the 'Tabloid Revolution' of 1934 - 1937. The *Mirror* itself became the principal component of this revolution when it was relaunched in 1934 by then-editorial director Harry Guy Bartholomew, with the guidance of the prestigious J. Walter Thompson (JWT) advertising agency. A core

incentive behind the newspaper's relaunch was financial; its readership had dropped to 800,000 by 1933 (Curran and Seaton 2003, 52), largely due to increased competition in the popular newspaper market. In order to expand its advertising base, Bartholomew reoriented the newspaper's presentation and content to attract the "lower end of the market" (Curran and Seaton 2003, 52). The *Mirror* deployed a new layout, featuring a "heavy black type" (Conboy 2011, 112) and cultivated a demotic style of discourse distinguishing itself from competitors. Political, economic, and domestic public affairs content of the *Daily Mirror* dropped by 50% between 1929 and 1939, accompanied by an increase in sports, crime, sex, and human interest content (Curran and Seaton, 53). Its circulation reached 1.5 million by 1939 (Curran and Seaton 2003, 53), and continued to grow through the second World War, 1950s, and 1960s.

The *Sun*, previously a midmarket broadsheet known as the *Daily Herald*, shut down due to laggard sales in 1964 (Conboy 2011, 146). The publication had been criticized for its "utter failure to appeal to the young" (Richards, 1997: 169 in Conboy 2011, 146), and in Murdoch's view, by the mid-1960s, the publication had become "too highbrow for its readers" (Conboy 2011, 114). Upon its purchase by Murdoch in 1969, the newspaper, which had been shut down, was wholly overhauled (Tunstall 1996) and renamed.

Murdoch's newest acquisition was marketed as a direct competitor of the *Daily Mirror* (Seymour-Ure 1996; Bromley 1998; Rooney 2000, 2014; Conboy 2004; Wolff 2008). Between 1969 and 1970, the *Sun's* circulation increased by 132% up to 1.5 million copies per day (Rooney 2014), and between 1969 and 1978, the tabloid's sales rose consistently (Tunstall 1996, 43). In the winter of 1977 - 78, the *Sun* surpassed the *Mirror* as the country's dominant down-market newspaper (Tunstall 1996, 43) and has since retained its position as the tabloid market leader in hard copy sales. With Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* in 1969, it is also

important to note that Murdoch became the owner of two major British tabloids, the *News of the World*, as well as the *Sun*. Thus, in the wake of increased competition and conglomeration in the UK newspaper market, and in particular, the nation's tabloid newspaper market, drawing from the thesis' theory chapter, the launch of the *Sun* represents a juncture at which journalistic values and content might have become increasingly entertainment, leisure, and apolitically-oriented - particularly in the tabloid context – in view of increased financial difficulty. Accordingly, this development is apt for an examination of, *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.*

In this same vein, media commentary and scholarship reference the rise of 'soft' news content in both the *Mirror* and the *Sun* after the latter's relaunch (Rooney 2000, 2014; Marr 2004). The *Sun's* emphasis on sexualized content, celebrity, and media is the subject of ample media commentary and scholarship (Rooney 2000, 2014; Wolff 2008; Conboy 2011). While sexual language and images were not new to the UK tabloid market, the scholarship identifies 3 facets distinct to the *Sun*: highly sexualized language, page 3 nudes, and a combination of sex and celebrity content. Conboy depicts the "direct" "vulgar" vernacular (2011, 115), such as 'Wot a Scorcher!' and 'Stunner!' (2011, 115) accompanying the publication's nude photographs as a salient expression of the era's loosened sexual mores. Marr (2004) underscores the dynamism of stories portraying the sexual misbehaviours of public figures such as then liberal democratic leader Paddy Ashdown, famous sportsmen, and members of the royal family. The literature referencing the ascendance of sexualized language and content in the *Sun*, however, relies on cherry-picked examples from the tabloid, and the author is unaware of any studies which compare this type of content or a contemporaneous

shift in journalistic values across tabloid newspapers or across tabloid and 'quality' newspapers more broadly.

From its inception, the *Sun* also engaged the media and popular culture through a cross-fertilizing relationship with television (Rooney 2000, 2008; Wolff 2008). The publication introduced television programming supplements (Rooney 2000, 2014) and invested in a large television advertising campaign (Wolff 2008). Articles discussing popular television shows also became a staple element of the *Sun* (Rooney 2000, 2014), which stood to yield further benefits for Murdoch, a part owner of BSkyb (Rooney 2000, 2014).

In two studies of particular relevance to the 1968 and 1970 examination of the *Mirror* and the *Guardian*, through a content analysis of the *Sun* and the *Mirror* at 5-year intervals between 1968 and 1998, Rooney identifies a decline in 'public affairs' editorials, and rise in consumption-related content, particularly in the form of ads, and showbiz and sports content (Rooney 2000, 2014). While Rooney's research is a useful contribution to the small body of scholarship on longitudinal change in British newspapers, the work has several substantial limitations. In contrast to this thesis, it only examines tabloid newspapers, thereby eliding cross-comparative data which would elucidate the extent to which the content of interest, and even other types of content, are characteristic of different tabloid newspapers in comparison to their 'quality' counterparts. Further, while the subject of the content analysis is editorial and advertising content, the rationale for the elision of reporting content is unacknowledged. Thus, although Rooney asserts a shift away from the public service orientation of the two tabloids, it is possible that the reporting in either or both publications became increasingly public service-focused. In turn, while Rooney states that, "there can be no doubt that the *Mirror* and *Sun* have abandoned the public sphere" (2000, 101), regardless

of possible changes in the two tabloids, there is a lack of evidence as to whether these publications ever served the public sphere.

Another gap in the literature involves the *Mirror's* response to the launch of the *Sun*. While scholarship asserts the strategy of the *Sun* to emulate and surpass the *Mirror* in its use of salacious, entertainment-centric content and language, the *Mirror's* strategic response to the introduction and success of the *Sun* remains unacknowledged. This chapter's comparison of the content and language of the *Mirror* one year before and one after the *Sun's* launch, as well as a parallel comparison of one left of centre 'quality' newspaper, the *Guardian*, contributes to bridging this lacuna.

Accordingly, examination of Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* entails consideration of potential economic causal factors. A principal mechanism of interest is the putative process whereby increased financial difficulty results in an amplification of tabloid elements, namely the values of sensationalism and personalization, and content classifiable as 'soft' news. An adjunct consideration is the extent to which newspaper values and content may have homogenized, or converged, or become increasingly differentiated. Implications of the results with regard to these considerations are discussed in this chapter and in greater detail in the thesis' conclusions chapter.

5.3. Corpus Linguistic Findings: 1968 - 1970

As discussed in the thesis' methodological overview chapter, articles from 1968, 1970, 1985, and 1987 were selected from the front-page using a two-constructed week sampling approach. Herein, with the exception of Sunday, for each day of the 7-day week, two dates within each year subject to examination are selected at random: two Mondays, two Tuesday,

and so on. The two-constructed week approach was selected in view its capacity to generate a statistically representative sample of newspaper articles from the year of interest (Riffe, Aust, and Lacy 1993; Lacy, Riffe et al. 2001; Wang 2006; Hester and Dougall 2007). As also discussed in Chapter 3, while the proportional configuration of article topics on the front-page has not been shown to strictly align with that constituted across the newspaper as a whole, of any one page or section within the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, the front-page contains the most concise cross-representation of articles featured across the newspaper.

Due to the poor OCR quality of the digitized newspaper articles from these years, the articles selected for analysis were transcribed into .txt formatted articles by a third-party company.¹² In view of budget and time constraints, two page one articles from each date selected, from each of the two publications, were chosen for examination and transcription. The .txt formatted articles were subsequently run through the part of speech tagger, and subjected to quantitative linguistic analysis.

Following the literature reviews from Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, personalization and sensationalism are examined as traditional tabloid values, whereas ‘information-orientation’ is analysed as a proxy of traditional ‘quality’ newspaper values. The linguistic and textual features examined as markers of each value were identified on the basis of linguistic and media linguistic scholarship (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1998; MacLachlan and Golding 2000; Westin 2001). The rationale for the selection of each linguistic proxy was expounded in Chapter 3 section 3.5c.

One of the thesis’ hypotheses, H1, is applicable to the 1968 and 1970 data points:

¹² Transcription was enabled thanks to funding from the ESRC.

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

As advertising and yearly revenues for the two newspapers were not available from these years, the circulations of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* available from 1965, 1968, and 1970 are referenced as barometers for the publications' finances during the two data points of interest. The relevant scholarship on British newspapers from this period similarly references circulation or readership figures due to the absence of contemporaneous advertising or broader revenue data (Seymour-Ure 1996; Tunstall 1996; Rooney 2000, 2004). This thesis uses circulation figures in view of its relative accuracy; whereas readership estimates the number of people who read a given publication, circulation is a count of the number of publication copies distributed.

Table 5.1. Circulation of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, 1965 – 1970

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>
1965	270,000	5.019 million
1968	285,000	5 million
1970	304,000	4.57 million

During these years, while the circulation of the *Mirror* is always at least 14 times higher than that of the *Guardian*, the *Mirror* sees small but significant declines in circulation, whereas the circulation of the *Guardian* increases. In particular, between 1965 and 1970, the *Guardian's* circulation increases by 12.6%; this figure is 6.7% between 1968 and 1970. For the *Mirror*, between 1965 and 1970 a 9% decrease occurs; this figure is 8.6% between 1968 and 1970. However, the circulation of the *Mirror* was much higher than that of the *Guardian* at each of these intervals: in 1965, the circulation of the *Mirror* is approximately 18 times higher than that of the *Guardian*, in 1968, it is approximately 17 times higher, and in 1970, it is

approximately 14 times higher. During the 1968 through 1970 period, the *Mirror* is still the newspaper with the highest circulation in the UK.

Accordingly, despite the high circulation of the *Mirror*, the launch of the *Sun* as well as drops in the *Mirror's* circulation can be identified as likely agents of possible increases in pressure at the market, newsroom, and journalist level, resulting from increased financial strain. Further, the *Sun's* positioning as a tabloid newspaper and as a direct competitor to the *Mirror* suggests a lack of resulting pressure on the *Guardian*, a newspaper with an entirely different market positioning as a 'quality' newspaper and, in addition, one underpinned by foundation model funding. Further, with regards to the *Mirror* and the *Sun*, Rooney states, "The years 1969 to 1974 represented the period of fastest circulation growth in the history of the *Sun*. For the *Mirror*, this period was one of circulation decline... Clearly from 1969 onwards the *Sun* and the *Mirror* were competing for the same market" (Rooney 2000, 93). Thus, in the context of the 1968 and 1970 data points, the *Mirror* is a good test of *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*.

Certain considerations, however, stand to hedge this hypothesis. In particular, and as noted above, throughout the 1965 – 1970 period, the *Mirror* remained the newspaper with the highest circulation in the UK. Further, as yearly revenues from the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* from these years are unavailable, it is possible that trends in the newspapers' revenues contrast to those observed in the two publications' circulation figures. While it should not be assumed that the *Guardian* did not experience any degree of financial difficulty and resulting pressures during this period, the available data of pertinence suggests that the *Mirror* experienced greater financial pressure during this time.

It should be noted that the first year examined in this section – 1968 – is given particular attention as it is the first year in the corpus' timeframe, and useful comparisons

stand to be made between future data points. A 10% error threshold is applied to interpretations of both the corpus linguistic and content analytic data, whereby shifts of less than this margin are considered negligible. While statistical research methods have often used a 5% error margin, the decision to apply a 10% threshold for error draws from a more conservative body of the research, wherein this standard has been used to account for wider margin potential error (Blank, Dutton, and Lefkowitz 2019).

5.3a. Analysis: Markers of 'Information-Orientation'

Markers of 'information-orientation' are more salient in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror* at the beginning of the thesis' period of study. In 1968, articles in the *Guardian* are longer, with longer sentences and words, and have a higher reading difficulty level. The 14.5 point gap in reading levels observed between the two publications represents the difference between a high school reading difficulty level, as seen in the *Guardian*, and a middle school one, as observed in the *Mirror*. Thus, 'information-orientation' is initially more characteristic of the 'quality' newspaper than of the tabloid.

As shown in Table 5.3a., between 1968 and 1970, the *Guardian* undergoes decreases in two of the 5 markers of 'information-orientation,' while the *Mirror* sees an increase one of the proxies. In particular, a 12.7% decrease in average article length occurs in the *Guardian* and a 16.1% increase is seen in in the *Mirror*. The other change of statistical significance is a 12% decrease in sentence length in the *Guardian*. Accordingly, 'information-orientation' findings with regard to H1, which anticipated the *Mirror* to show more evidence of a shift towards tabloid characteristics than the *Guardian*, are not supported, and even suggest a reversal of the hypothesis.

Table 5.3a. 'Information-Orientation,' 1968 & 1970

	1968	1970	% change
Average Article Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	330 words/article	288 words/article	12.7% decrease¹³
<i>Mirror</i>	261 words/article	303 words/article	16.1% increase
Flesch-Kincaid Readability Metric ¹⁴			
<i>Guardian</i>	53.5	55.6	4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	68	67.9	.2% decrease
Average Sentence Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	17.7 words/sentence	15.6 words/sentence	12% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	11.1 words/sentence	11.9 words/sentence	7.2% increase
Average Word Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	1.6 syllables/sentence	1.6 syllables/sentence	No change
<i>Mirror</i>	1.5 syllables/sentence	1.5 syllables/sentence	No change

Table 5.3ab. Flesch-Kincaid Readability, Scale Interpretation

Flesch-Kincaid Readability Score	Reading Level
100.0 – 90.0	An average 11 year-old student
90.0 – 80.0	An average 12 year-old student
80.0 - 70.0	An average 13 year-old student
70.0 – 60.0	An average 13 – 15 year-old student
60.0 – 50.0	An average 15 – 18 year-old student
50.0 – 30.0	College student level
30.0 - 0	Graduate student level

5.3b. Analysis: Markers of Personalization

At the beginning of the thesis' timeframe, the indices of personalization are more salient in the *Mirror* than in the *Guardian*. In the *Mirror*, first person pronouns are 27.9% higher, second person pronouns are 110% higher, and private verbs are 15.7% higher in the *Mirror* than in the *Guardian* during 1968. Accordingly, and in line with the journalism scholarship (Bromley 1998; Esser 1999; Conboy 2011; Skovsgaard 2014), personalization is shown to be more characteristic of the tabloid.

¹³ Shifts of more than 10% or more are bold-typed as a means to indicate that the values therein surpass the 10% threshold for error applied in the data analysis.

¹⁴ Higher Flesch-Kincaid Readability levels reflect lower reading levels, and vice versa.

Table 5.3b. Personalization, 1968 & 1970

	1968, pmw ¹⁵	1970, pmw	% Change
1 st Person Pronoun			
<i>Guardian</i>	5052	3762	25.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	7006	5085	27.8% decrease
2 nd Person Pronoun			
<i>Guardian</i>	758	1158	52.7% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	1592	1100	30.9% decrease
Private Verbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	2905	2171	25% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	3362	4398	30.8 increase

Between 1968 and 1970, shifts of a larger magnitude occur amongst the markers of personalization than amongst those of ‘information-orientation.’ While two of the 3 personalization indices decrease in both publications, the increase seen in the *Guardian’s* second person pronouns roughly equals the magnitude of the decreases seen in first person pronouns and private verbs combined (see Table 5.3b). With regard to second person pronouns, a convergence occurs whereby the feature increases dramatically in the *Guardian* while decreasing substantially in the *Mirror*. This reconfiguration is likely attributable to the contemporaneous increase in quotes observed, which is discussed later this section. In contrast to the trends observed amongst the other personalization markers, a divergence across the two publications is seen in private verbs, whereby the feature decreases substantially in the *Guardian* and increases substantially in the *Mirror*.

Drawing from across the trends seen in markers of personalization, findings thus contradict H1, which anticipated a greater shift towards tabloid values in the *Mirror*. Neither publication sees an overall increase in indices of the value, while the *Guardian* sees overall stability and the *Mirror* sees a decline in proxies of personalization.

¹⁵ Pmw = Per million words.

5.3c Analysis: Markers of Sensationalism

Interestingly, 5 of the 6 markers of sensationalism are initially more frequent in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror*. This configuration of adjectives and adverbs calls into question the assumed traditional predominance of sensationalism in tabloids referred to by tabloid and tabloidization scholarship. Rather, it is possible that sensationalism is constituted by other elements of journalistic discourse, such as article headlines and/or topics.

Table 5.3c. Sensationalism, 1968 & 1970

	1968, pmw ¹⁶	1970, pmw	% change
Superlative General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	0	145	n/a (increase)
<i>Mirror</i>	478	0	n/a (decrease)
Superlative Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	632	579	8.4 % decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	319	0	n/a (decrease)
Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	4547	2315	49% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	4140	3024	27% decrease
Amplifiers			
<i>Guardian</i>	758	145	81% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	159	412	159% increase
General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	22231	18955	14.7% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	19427	21166	9% increase
General Adjectives			
<i>Guardian</i>	75281	70323	6.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	57642	60885	5.6% increase

Superlative degree and degree adverbs, amplifiers, general adverbs, and general adjectives each occur with higher frequencies in the *Guardian* than the *Mirror* in 1968. Two of these features, superlative degree adverbs and amplifiers occur with dramatically higher frequencies in the *Guardian*: this difference is 98.1% for superlative degree adverbs and 376.7% for amplifiers.

¹⁶ Pmw = per million words.

Between 1968 and 1970, different overall trends are seen in markers of sensationalism across the two publications. In the *Guardian*, the predominant trend is a shift away from markers of sensationalism, as seen through decreases in degree adverbs, amplifiers, and general adverbs. While the *Mirror* experiences a decline in degree adverbs, this shift is dwarfed by the 159% increase seen in amplifiers in the publication. Thus, in contrast to findings from ‘information-orientation’ and personalization, those from sensationalism support H1.

5.3d. Analysis: Quoted Speech

In 1968, quotes occur with 44.5% higher frequency in the *Mirror* than in the *Guardian*, suggesting that quotes are indeed more characteristic of the tabloid than of a ‘quality’ newspaper. Between 1968 and 1970, however, the frequencies of quoted speech converge, with a 10.5% increase seen in the *Guardian* alongside a 13% decrease in the *Mirror*. Linguistic elements salient in spoken discourse, such as first and second person pronouns, could thus be expected to reconfigure in prominence accordingly: while second person pronouns in fact increased in the *Guardian* and decreased in the *Mirror*, first person pronouns decreased in both newspapers. Further, convergence observed in quoted speech does not support H1 and, as with markers of ‘information-orientation,’ in fact suggest a reversal of the hypothesis.

Table 5.3d. Quotes, 1968 – 1970

Quotes	1968, pmw ¹⁷	1970, pmw	% change
<i>Guardian</i>	14149	15627	10.5% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	25490	22129	13% decrease

¹⁷ Pmw = per million words.

5.4. Overview

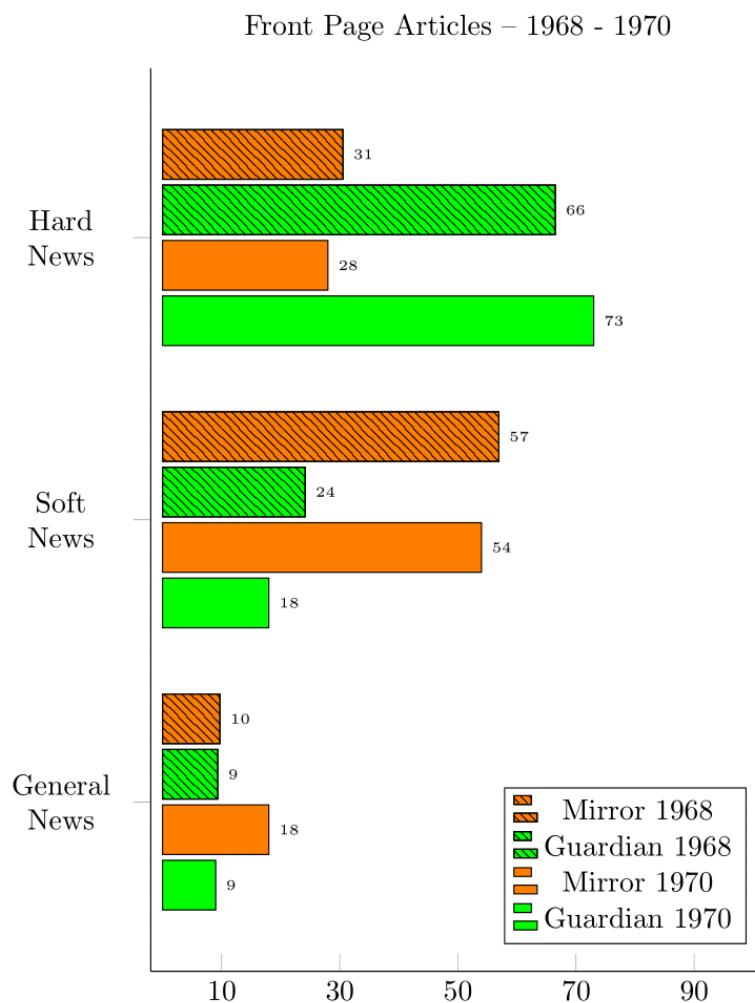
In view of Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun* and pre-occurring as well as contemporaneous declines in the circulation of the *Mirror*, it was hypothesized that an amplification of tabloid values would occur in the publication between 1968 and 1970. However, to the contrary, a slight shift towards 'information-orientation' was seen in the tabloid, alongside a decline in markers of personalization and a slight increase in proxies of sensationalism. Thus, with the exception of sensationalism proxies, corpus linguistic findings from 1968 and 1970 contradict H1, which anticipated greater evidence of tabloidization in the *Mirror* as the publication under more financial strain during this period.

While the *Guardian* exhibits more evidence of a shift towards tabloid values than the *Mirror*, this shift, however, is of a small magnitude, occurring across a limited number of features. In the *Guardian*, a shift away from the markers of 'information-orientation' was seen in the form of a decrease in article and sentence length, both of which increased in the *Mirror*, growth was seen in one marker of personalization, second person pronouns, alongside an increase in the 'quality' publication's quotes, which declined in the *Mirror*.

5.5. Content Analysis Findings: 1968 - 1970

The same dates from the corpus linguistic two-constructed week sampling approach were subject to front-page content analysis. This is to say that the entire front-pages containing the two articles selected from each publication for the corpus linguistic analysis were subjected to content analysis.

Figure 5.5a. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1968 & 1970, Percentage of Articles by Category



At the beginning of the thesis' timeframe, 'hard' news stories, in the form of politics and economics coverage, are the most characteristic of the *Guardian's* front-page reporting, while 'soft' news is the most characteristic of the *Mirror's* page one reporting. Politics, finance/economy and political scandal articles, which as indicated in Table 5.5 comprise 'hard' news topics, constitute approximately 66% of front-page stories in the *Guardian*, whereas this figure is 31% for the *Mirror*. While politics stories are the most prevalent type of story on the *Guardian's* front-page, constituting 52% of page one articles, the distribution of topics in the *Mirror* is relatively pluralistic, with crime stories constituting 22%, human interest 13%, and politics and political scandal each comprising 12%. Thus, the types of articles most salient in

the *Mirror*, with the exception of politics, have a minimal quantitative presence in the *Guardian*, with human interest stories constituting 7% of the *Guardian's* page one articles, and crime stories constituting 6% of the newspaper's front-page coverage.

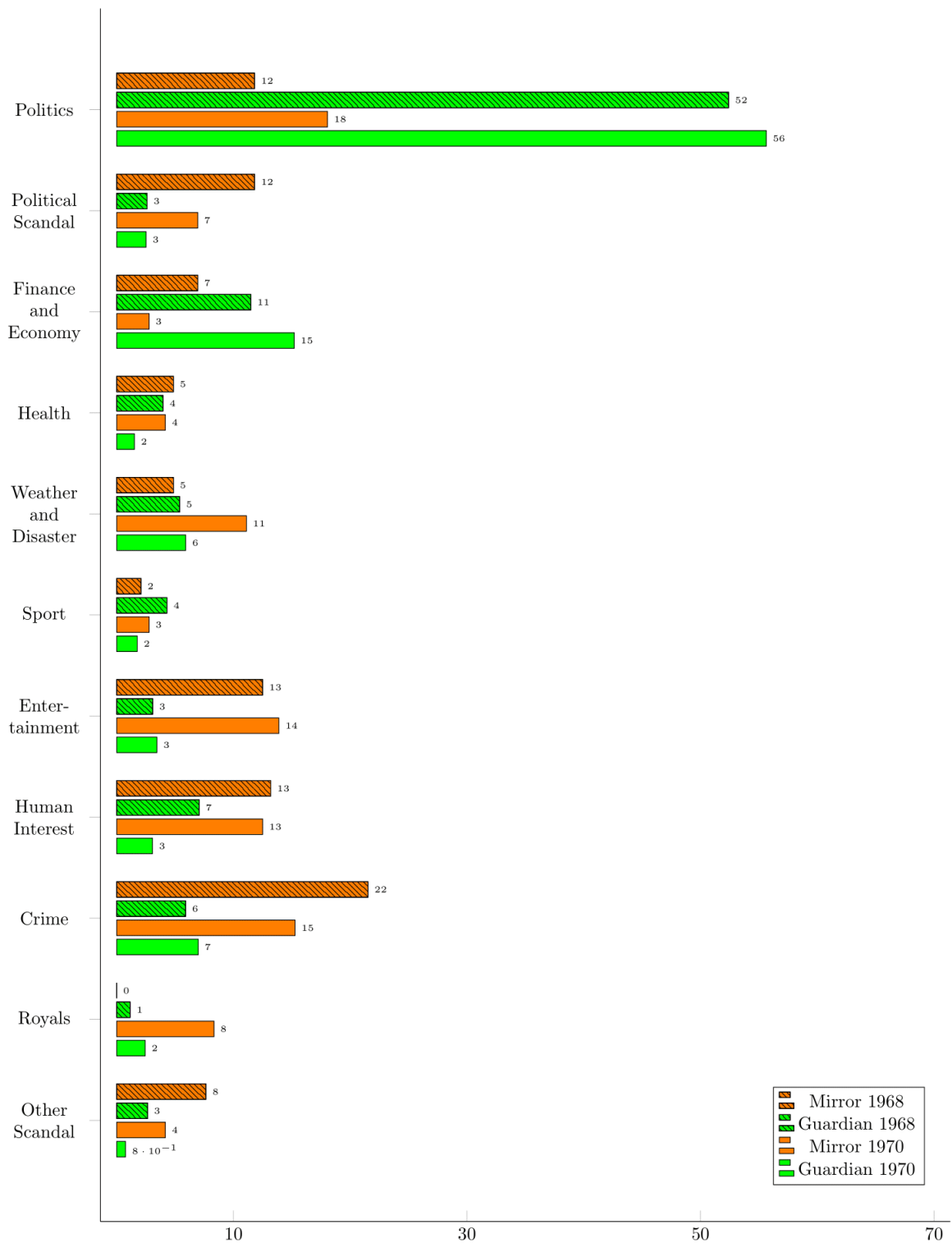
Table 5.5. Typology of News Story Types

	'Hard' News Stories	'General' News	'Soft' News
Article Topics	Politics, Finance/Economy, Political Scandal	Health, Weather/ Disaster	Non-Political Scandal, Crime, Human Interest, Entertainment, Sports, Royal Family

Between 1968 and 1970, stability is the overarching trend across publications, types of content, and article topics. Across each of the 3 news article types, 'hard' news, 'general' news, and 'soft' news, as well as within each of the article topics categorized within each of these broader categories, shifts that surpass the 10% threshold do not occur. Thus, in terms of content analytic findings, H1 is neither supported nor refuted with regards to the 1968 and 1970 data points.

Figure 5.5b. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1968 & 1970, Percentage of Articles by Topic

Front Page Articles – 1968 - 1970



5.6. Summary and Composite Tabloidization Measure: Corpus Linguistic and Content Analysis Findings, 1968 – 1970

The thesis' composite tabloidization measure was designed to capture the relative potency of 'quality' and tabloid elements respectively at any given year, for any publication of interest. As discussed in Section 3.6 of Chapter 3, the measure reflects the extent to which those features traditionally characteristic of 'quality' news publications and those traditionally characteristic of tabloids are salient in comparison to the thesis' other data points for the particular publication at hand. The measure is also a useful means through which to identify overall change across markers of 'quality' and tabloid newspapers respectively, between specific data points.

The predominant trend across the composite tabloidization measures during 1968 and 1970 is towards a relative lack of salience of tabloid elements in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, and slight shifts towards 'quality' characteristics in both publications. With the exception of 'quality' elements in the *Mirror* during 1968 and 1970, each measure has a negative value. Two points of note regarding disjuncture between the composite tabloidization measure findings and those derived from the feature-by-feature analysis. One is the slight increase in the composite 'quality' measure seen in the *Guardian*, which contrasts the slight decrease in markers of 'information-orientation' and stability in the configuration of content types seen in the publication; composite 'quality' elements data suggests that accumulated shifts falling under the 10% error threshold accumulated to yield an overall slight shift towards 'quality' characteristics. A similar disjuncture is seen with regard to the *Guardian's* composite tabloid elements measure and the publication's feature-by-feature findings: while the former declines, feature-by-feature corpus linguistic analysis identifies an increase in tabloid elements, alongside stability in content analytic findings, again suggesting

that accumulated declines in tabloid characteristics falling under the 10% error threshold yielded an overall decrease in tabloid elements. Such disjuncture underlines the usefulness of the composite tabloidization measure as a means of data triangulation.

Table 5.6. Composite Tabloidization Measures, 1968 and 1970

Composite Tabloidization Measure	<i>Guardian</i> 1968	<i>Guardian</i> 1970	<i>Mirror</i> 1968	<i>Mirror</i> 1970
'Quality' Elements	-.318	-.009	.111	.358 ¹⁸
Tabloid Elements	-.167 ¹⁹	-.912	-.395	-.907

With regards to the trends observed across the corpus linguistic and content analyses from these data points, these differ from one another, most broadly, in that shifts occur with regard to the former, while stability is the overarching trend seen across the latter. With regard to corpus linguistic findings in the *Mirror*, a shift occurs towards the proxies of 'information-orientation' and slightly towards sensationalism, and away from markers of personalization and in quotes. With regard to the *Guardian*, a decrease in 'information-orientation,' personalization, and sensationalism markers occurs, with growth seen in quotes.

As the *Mirror* was anticipated to show more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian* for H1, the data thus provides minimal partial support for this hypothesis. This

¹⁸ As expounded in section 3.6 of Chapter 3, positive composite tabloidization measure values are indicative of above-average salience of the type of elements, either tabloid or 'quality' respectively, therein for the particular publication of interest. Accordingly, the .358 composite 'quality' elements value of the *Mirror* from 1970 indicates that the salience of tabloid characteristics is greater than that of the mean for tabloid elements across each of the years subject to examination from the *Mirror*.

¹⁹ In line with footnote 16, negative composite tabloidization measure values reflect below-average salience of the type of elements of interest. Accordingly, the -0.167 composite tabloid elements value of the *Guardian* in 1968 reflects that the salience of tabloid characteristics is below that of the mean of tabloid elements in the *Guardian* from across each of the years subject to examination from the newspaper.

minimal support comes from markers of sensationalism, which increase longitudinally in the *Mirror*. Content analytic data neither supports or refutes H1, while proxies of ‘information-orientation’ and personalization, as well as quotes suggest a reversal of the hypothesis.

5.7. The Wapping Revolution: 1985 and 1987 Analysis

On January 23 1986, Rupert Murdoch moved his stable of UK newspapers, including the *Sun*, the *News of the World*, *Times*, and the *Sunday Times* to facilities equipped with computerized printing technologies located in Wapping, East London. The move to Wapping introduced a streamlining of printing and production processes, resulting in mass lay-offs and novel material properties for the printed newspaper products. Imminently thereafter, other major UK titles replicated Murdoch’s approach, marking a revolutionary shift in the country’s newspaper industry. The developments of 1986 have been referred to as the ‘Newspaper Revolution’ and the ‘Death of Fleet Street’ (Tunstall 1996).

The Wapping Revolution entailed several crucial technological shifts which were further enabled by the political and economic climate of the Thatcher era (Seymour-Ure 1996; Tunstall 1996; Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams 1997; McKnight 2003; Conboy 2011). Historically, highly skilled printers operated ‘linotypes,’ which used molten lead to form letters and words, producing the ‘lines of type’ constituting newspaper texts (Franklin 1997, 101). While the computer-based technologies adopted at the Wapping plant were developed in the 1970s, the country’s strong print unions had successfully deterred the introduction of rivalling computerized technologies until 1986. Under a government administration which favoured employers and opted to introduce anti-union legislation to facilitate practices empowering large corporations, Murdoch, a Conservative and a strong Thatcher-supporter,

prevailed despite highly public protests and demonstrations that lasted months. An estimated 1,000 police were deployed to the 'Fortress Wapping' (Eldridge, Kitzinger, and Williams 1997) during the first 300 days of the dispute (Tunstall 1996); on the year anniversary of the plant's opening, 12,000 people demonstrated at the facility (Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams 1997).

The computerized technologies adopted enabled journalists and editors to input content directly, and approximately 5,000 printers were laid off (Franklin 1997; Conboy 2011). A popularization of individually-negotiated contracts between journalists and press institutions, which limited journalists' benefits, has also been associated with Wapping (Conboy 2011). Even in spite of sharp increases in pagination and colour-images enabled by the modernized printing facilities, costs decreased and profits rose (Seymour-Ure 1996; Tunstall 1996; Franklin 1997; Conboy 2011).

In terms of material shifts, Wapping facilitated the production of additional newspaper sections and the ability of journalists to update stories up until deadline. In the context of the 1980s' booming advertising market, an expansion of editorial and non-editorial content linked to consumerism in the form of new lifestyle and entertainment sections and columns, followed the 1986 revolution. Media scholarship and commentary links Wapping with a steep augmentation in the value of speed and economic profits in an increasingly corporatized, competitive newspaper market (Franklin 1997; Conboy 2011; Rusbridger 2018). The event was also seen as an enhancement of the power and notoriety of Murdoch, the proprietor of Britain's largest newspaper group, which now owned 3 major publications: the *News of the World*, the *Sun*, and the *Times*, the latter of which Murdoch purchased in 1981 (Tunstall 1996; Eldridge, Kitziner and Williams 1997).

The Wapping Revolution thus entails potential causal factors in the form of economic as well as technological forces. Economic pressures - generated through increased

competition in an increasingly concentrated newspaper industry and one wherein a single conglomerate, News Corporation, acquired a significant edge through its growing repository of major newspapers and through ushering in the revolutionary Wapping technologies - stood to impact at the market, newsroom, and news output levels. The Wapping Revolution rendered the technological means to cheaply produce more content, a process that, as suggested through H2 (*News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*), has been associated with a subsequent increase in tabloid elements. This was true particularly in terms of journalistic practices, which were both reoriented to deploy computerized technologies and redistributed amongst journalists and editors to account for the slews of employee layoffs.

As with Murdoch's purchase of the *Sun*, a mechanism of interest is the putative process whereby increased conglomeration and competition results in a heightening of tabloid values and content. Table 5.8 in the following subsection shows contemporaneous declines in the *Mirror's* circulation during this period, suggesting an associated increase in financial difficulty at the publication. Particularly in view of the possible impact of augmented conglomeration and competition, an adjunct consideration is the extent to which newspaper values and content may have homogenized, or converged, as often suggested by the pertinent literature (Murdoch and Golding 1973; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Franklin 1997; Rooney 2000, 2004; Conboy 2004, 2011), or become increasingly differentiated (Fu 2003; Skovaag 2014).

Further, potential cultural factors, while not as cogent as the economic and technological ones, also merit consideration in view of the ostensible emergence of post-modernism during the 1980s (Jameson 1983, 1984; Whitley 2011). As referenced in Chapter 2, Wapping can be seen as a development embodying the amplified commercialization of

news and media that is associated with the 1980s (Herman and Chomsky 1994; Conboy 2002; McKnight 2010), and more broadly, the heightening of capitalist logics associated with the decade and with the era's postmodern traits. The cultural components of thesis' theoretical framework will be addressed and interpreted with regards to results in greater detail in the dissertation's final chapter.

Another contemporaneous development merits note within the proceeding analysis. After the purchase by Reed International, a magazine and book trade publisher, of the *Mirror* and subsequent formation of the Mirror Group Newspaper in 1971, the publicly-listed company was purchased by Robert Maxwell in 1984. Specific changes, in particular, redundancies, at the tabloid accompanying Maxwell's acquisition, are discussed alongside the introduction of H1 in the following subsection.

5.8. Corpus Linguistic Findings: 1985 and 1987

Two of the thesis' hypotheses can be examined through data from 1985 and 1987:

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

The financial standing of the *Mirror* in 1986 differed substantially from that of the tabloid in 1968 and 1970. By 1986, circulation and readership of the *Mirror* had declined to roughly 3 million, down from 5 million in 1968 (Rooney 2000). In fact, circulation of the *Mirror* had

dropped each year since 1968 (Tunstall 1996). By 1987, the *Sun* had surpassed the *Mirror* as the tabloid with the highest circulation in the country more than 10 years ago (Rooney 2000). Further, under new management and a new ownership model, in 1985, 2,000 members of the Mirror Group Newspapers were laid off, cutting the company's workforce by one third (Tunstall 1996). Maxwell, the *Mirror's* new proprietor, quickly gained a reputation for bombast and editorial interference, frequently commandeering the tabloid's front page to promote himself and his business and political interests, often in the form of pictures (Conboy 2011). The 1985 through 1987 period was one of substantial editorial and financial change at the *Mirror*.

Table 5.8. Circulation of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, 1983 - 1987

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>
1983	455,000	3.15 million
1985	487,000	3.03 million
1987	480,000	2.9 million

By contrast, the ownership model of the *Guardian* remained unchanged and the newspaper's circulation had experienced dramatic growth during the past two decades. From a circulation of 270,000 in 1965, the *Guardian's* sales had grown to 487,000 by 1985 (Tunstall 1996). While the newspaper experienced a slight, 4.4% decline in sales between 1985 and 1987, more broadly, the newspaper was in the midst of a period of growth. Further, as discussed in Chapter 2, tabloids are more reliant on circulation for revenues than 'quality' newspapers which to a larger extent sustain revenues through maintaining and not diffusing a readership of high socio-economic status. As booms occurred in the advertising market during the 1980s, a drop in advertising revenues, particularly at the *Guardian*, is unlikely.

In view of these developments at the *Mirror* and *Guardian*, and in the wake of the Wapping Revolution, theoretical considerations would appear to anticipate evidence to support H1, with the *Mirror* showing more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian*.

As the Wapping Revolution impacted on the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* at the same time, and differences in the precise technologies adopted by each have not been specified in the scholarship, H2 will be tested in terms of possible longitudinal shifts. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* will show more evidence of tabloidization after adopting Wapping technologies, which allowed for cheaper production of more content. H2 will be tested similarly in the following chapter wherein data points before and after the launch of the newspapers' online editions are examined.

5.8a. Analysis: Markers of 'Information-Orientation'

Stability is the predominant trend seen in proxies of 'information-orientation' between 1985 and 1987. The only shift of significance is a 15% increase in article length in the *Guardian*. Interestingly, despite the potential to print more words at a lower cost as a result of Wapping, stability is seen in average article and sentence length in the *Mirror*. With the exception of the increase observed in article length in the *Guardian*, the overall lack of change seen in markers of 'information-orientation' across the two publications do not support H1, which anticipated that the *Mirror* would show more evidence of a tabloidization. These same findings also do not support H2, with findings from the *Guardian* even suggesting a reversal of the hypothesis, with the publication becoming more 'information-oriented.'

Table 5.8a. 'Information-Orientation,' 1985 & 1987

	1985	1987	% change
Average Article Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	322 words/article	370 words/article	15% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	274 words/article	273 words/article	.4% decrease
Flesch-Kincaid Readability Metric			
<i>Guardian</i>	53.6	54.2	1.1% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	69	68.3	1% decrease
Average Sentence Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	17.6 words/sentence	17 words/sentence	3.4% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	11.5 words/sentence	11.5 words/sentence	No change
Average Word Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	1.6 syllables/word	1.6 syllables/word	No change
<i>Mirror</i>	1.5 syllables/word	1.5 syllables/word	No change

5.8b. Analysis: Markers of Personalization

As seen in the 1968 and 1970 data points, each of the 3 proxies of personalization undergo a shift of statistical significance between 1985 and 1987. Further, between 1985 and 1987, convergence is the overarching trend seen across the markers of personalization. While a slight shift towards proxies of personalization is observed in the *Guardian*, a substantial shift away from these proxies is seen in the *Mirror*. As also seen in the 1968 and 1970 data points, the greatest convergence occurs across second person pronouns, where a decrease of 63.5% is seen in the *Mirror* alongside a 24.8% increase in the *Guardian*. A similar convergence, however, is also seen across first person pronouns, which decline by 63.3% in the *Mirror* and grow by 16.3% in the *Guardian*. Private verbs are the one proxy of personalization which decrease in the *Guardian*, however, the magnitude of this decline is outweighed by the magnitude of the increases seen in first and second person pronouns in the publication. Accordingly, findings from personalization data do not support H1, instead suggesting the reverse of the hypothesis. As personalization becomes more prevalent in the *Guardian* but declines in the *Mirror*, partial support is provided for H2 in the form of evidence from the *Guardian*.

Table 5.8b. Personalization, 1985 & 1987

	1985, pmw ²⁰	1987, pmw	% change
1 st pp			
<i>Guardian</i>	5546	6451	16.3% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	14340	5259	63.3% decrease
2 nd pp			
<i>Guardian</i>	1248	1557	24.8% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	5169	1889	63.5% decrease
Private Verbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	2496	2113	15.3% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	6099	2855	53.2% decrease

5.8c. Analysis: Markers of Sensationalism

The overarching trend seen across markers of sensationalism is a decline in proxies of the value; 5 of the 6 markers decrease in the *Guardian* and in the *Mirror*. Superlative degree adverbs in the *Guardian* are the one exception to this trend, as the feature increases by 35% in the publication. Of the decreases seen in proxies of sensationalism, amplifiers, which drop by 54.5% in the *Guardian* and by 63.5% in the *Mirror*, experience the largest decreases. Accordingly, findings from sensationalism data also do not support H1 or H2. With regards to H2, findings suggest a reversal of the hypothesis, whereby a marker of tabloidization has become less prominent rather than more prominent.

²⁰ Pmw = per million words.

Table 5.8c: Sensationalism, 1985 & 1987

	1985, pmw ²¹	1987, pmw	% change
Superlative General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	139	113	18.7% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	0	0	No change
Superlative Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	416	562	35.1% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	659	0	n/a (decrease)
Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	3189	2362	25.9% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	3956	3306	16.4% decrease
Amplifiers			
<i>Guardian</i>	832	337	54.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	824	301	63.5% decrease
General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	16778	16421	2.1% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	23735	17731	25.3% decrease
General Adjectives			
<i>Guardian</i>	69329	60623	12.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	63788	59955	6% decrease

5.8d. Analysis: Quotes

An amplification of the trends seen between 1968 and 1970 occurs between 1985 and 1987, whereby quotes increase dramatically in the *Guardian* and decline in the *Mirror*. The increases in first and second person pronoun observed in the *Guardian* can most likely be attributed to the surge in quoted speech, and conversely, the drop in these features seen in the *Mirror* is likely due to the decline in quotes seen in the tabloid. The shifts in the prominence of quotes in the two publications during this two-year period are of a greater magnitude than the shifts seen between 1968 and 1970: while an increase of 10.5% occurs in the *Guardian* between 1968 and 1970, this figure is 92.7% between 1985 and 1987, and the 13% decrease seen in the *Mirror* between 1968 and 1970 grows to 23% between 1985 and 1987. Thus, findings from quoted speech do not support H1, and instead suggests the reverse of the hypothesis;

²¹ Pmw = per million words.

with regard to H2, the hypothesis is supported by evidence from the *Guardian* and refuted by data from the *Mirror*.

Table 5.8d. Quotes, 1985 & 1987

Quotes	1985, pmw ²²	1987, pmw	% change
<i>Guardian</i>	17601	33915	92.7% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	44491	34203	23% decrease

5.9. Overview

The most prominent trends from the 1985 to 1987 period are the convergence in markers of personalization and quotes across the two publications, and the decline in markers of sensationalism also observed in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, which is slightly more marked in the tabloid. Accordingly, in contrast to H1, the *Mirror* becomes less tabloid-like; rather, it is the *Guardian*, which sees an increase in personalization and in quotes, that undergoes a greater amplification of tabloid values. Thus, a reversal of H1 is suggested by corpus linguistic findings. The publication's increase in personalization, and quotes, however, supports H2 whereby the newspaper has become more tabloidized in the wake of Wapping. Interestingly, findings from the *Mirror* do not support H2, and instead suggest a reversal of this hypothesis.

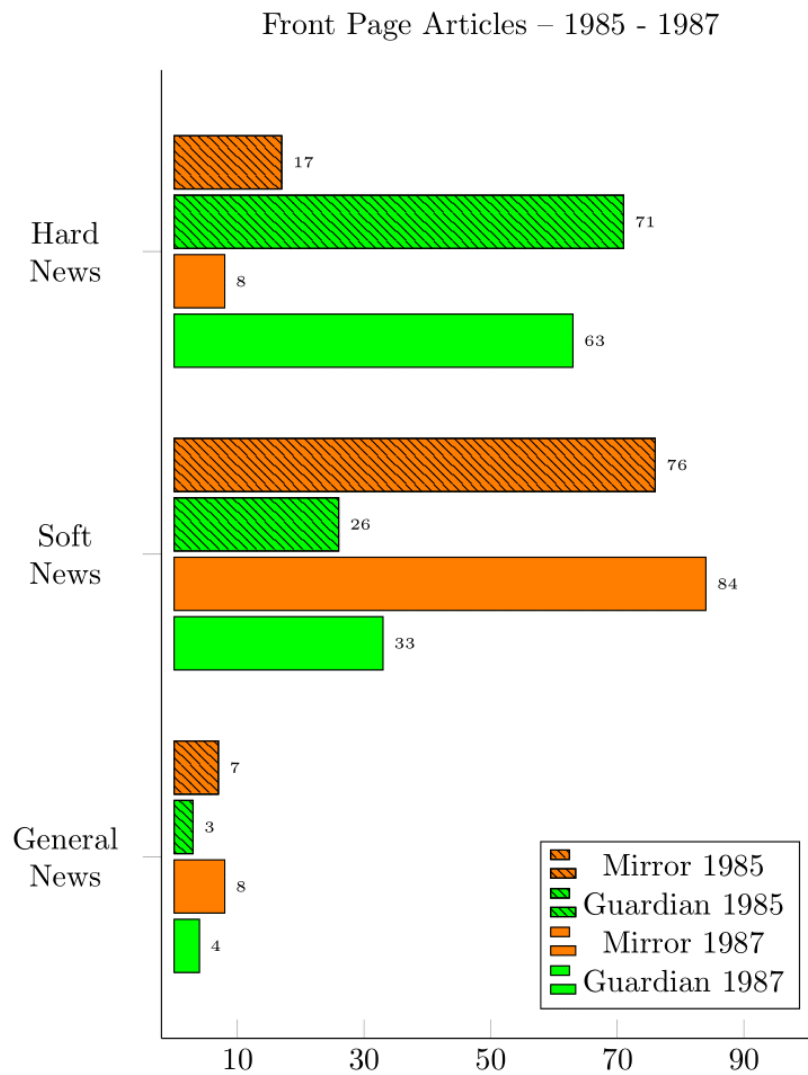
5.10. Content Analysis Findings: 1985 - 1987

The broader stability seen across types of news articles observed during the 1968 and 1970 data points occurs across the 1985 and 1987 data points as well. Similarly, longitudinal change of statistical significance does not occur for 'hard' news, 'general' news, or 'soft' news stories

²² Pmw = per million words.

between 1985 and 1987. Shifts, however, do arise across several of the article topic categories.

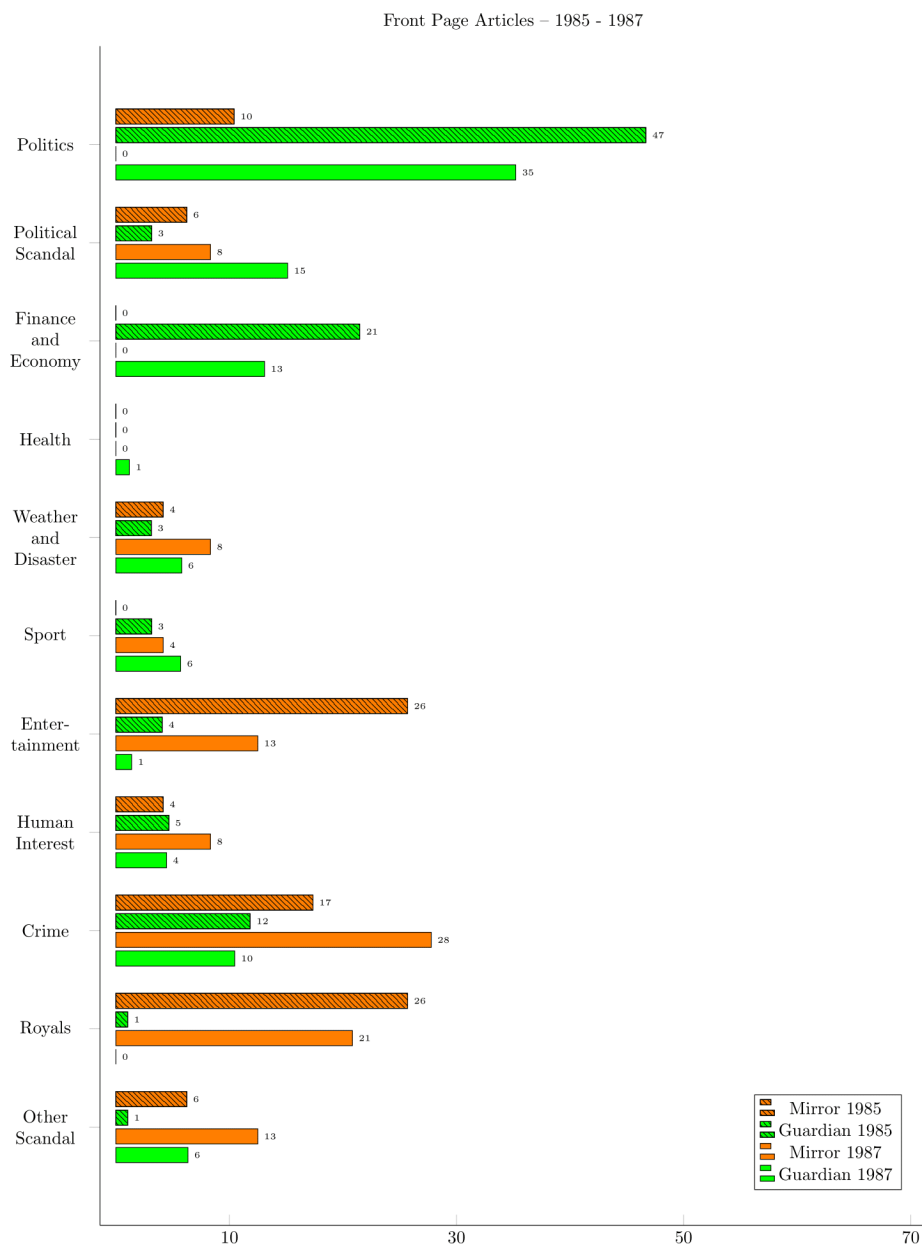
Figure 5.10a. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1985 & 1987, Percentage of Articles by Category



As in 1968 and 1970, politics articles are the most predominant news article topic in the *Guardian* in both 1985 and 1987. However, between 1985 and 1987, a 12% decrease occurs, whereby the percentage of politics stories on page one drops from 47% to 35% respectively. Interestingly, this decrease is accompanied by an increase in political scandal coverage in the *Guardian*, which sees growth in this category in the form of a 12% rise, from 3% to 15%. When combined with non-political scandal coverage, scandal stories more generally grow from 4%

of the publication's front-page reporting in 1985 to 21% of page one coverage in 1987. While finance and economy articles comprise the second most predominant category in the *Guardian* during both 1985 and 1987, only one other article topic, crime, comprises 10% or more of articles on the front-page of the newspaper in both of these years.

Figure 5.10b. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1985 & 1987, Percentage of Articles by Topic



In comparison, the 3 most predominant article topics in the *Mirror* in 1985 and 1987 are crime, entertainment, and royal family coverage. However, during neither 1985 nor 1987 is

there an article topic as dominant in the *Mirror* as political reporting is in page one of the *Guardian* during these years; by contrast, once again a broader range of articles are more characteristic of the *Mirror* at both of these data points. In terms of longitudinal change, political and entertainment coverage drop in the tabloid, with political coverage dropping from 10% in 1985 to 0% in 1987, and entertainment reporting declining from 26% in 1985 to 13% in 1987. Longitudinal growth is seen in crime stories, which rise from 17% in 1985 to 28% in 1987. Further, while royal family coverage comprised just 1% and 8% of page one stories in the *Mirror* in 1968 and 1970 respectively, in 1985 and 1987, this value is 26% and 21% respectively.

Despite shifts seen in particular ‘hard’ news and ‘soft’ news article topics between 1985 and 1987, overall stability across news article types is the most significant content analytic trend from this period. Similar to content analytic findings from the previous data points subject to examination, the overarching lack of change across types of articles provides evidence which neither supports or refutes H1 or H2.

5.11. Summary and Composite Tabloidization Measures: Corpus Linguistic and Content Analysis Findings, 1985 – 1987

The composite tabloidization measures indicate a relative lack of salience of both ‘quality’ and tabloid values at the 1985 and 1987 data points for both publications. Tabloid elements in the *Mirror* during 1985 are the only data point for which a positive value is generated for a measure, and moreover, this value differs substantially from that of the *Mirror*’s previous data point, from 1970, wherein this figure was -0.907. Hereby, it can be noted that despite the

drop between 1985 and 1987, during the 1970 through 1985 interval there has been an augmentation in tabloid values in the *Mirror*.

Table 5.11. Composite Tabloidization Measure, 1985 & 1987

Composite Tabloidization Measure	<i>Guardian</i> 1985	<i>Guardian</i> 1987	<i>Mirror</i> 1985	<i>Mirror</i> 1987
'Quality' Elements	-.061	-.455	-.183	-.757
Tabloid Elements	-.530	-.490	.993	-.757

Interestingly, while the composite measure for tabloid elements from the *Guardian* reflects the increase in tabloid elements discussed in Section 5.8 on corpus linguistic data from the period, the composite measure for 'quality' elements suggests an overall shift in a different direction from that suggested through Section 5.8. Whereas the discussion of individual 'quality' value proxies in Section 5.8 indicates an increase in 'information-orientation' in the form of a 15% increase in sentence length, the composite measure for 'quality' characteristics shows that 'quality' elements have in fact become less salient in the *Guardian* during this period. Thus, despite the increase seen in sentence length, the number and magnitude of the decreases under the 10% threshold for change combined across both corpus linguistic and content analytic findings reflects a shift away from 'quality' elements, rather than towards them.

Across the 1985 and 1987 data points, for both publications, H1 is not supported by either corpus linguistic or content analysis findings. While corpus linguistic findings instead suggest a reversal of H1 whereby tabloid elements, in particular, proxies of personalization, are ascending more in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror*, content analytic findings neither support nor refute either hypothesis. With regards to H2, corpus linguistic findings from the

Guardian support the hypothesis and those from the *Mirror* refute the hypothesis, with content analytic findings similarly neither supporting nor refuting H2. Accordingly, H2 has the most support from 1985 and 1987 data points, in the form of corpus linguistic findings from the *Guardian*.

Within these findings, with regards to the *Guardian*, growth in scandal coverage, markers of personalization, and quotes are trends of note during the 1985 through 1987 period. As scandal stories tend to focus on elements of the private, rather than the public sphere, the increase in first and second pronouns and quotes can likely be connected to the over 400% growth in scandal stories seen in the *Guardian*. While sensationalism has often been associated with the traditional scandal-oriented characteristic of tabloids, interestingly, proxies of sensationalism decline in both the *Guardian*.

While the *Mirror* sees a decline in tabloid values in the form of decreases in markers of personalization, sensationalism, and quotes, the tabloid undergoes an increase in crime stories, and features substantially more coverage of the royal family during both 1985 and 1987 than in either 1968 or 1970. These shifts indicate a lack of sensationalism in stories on both 'soft' news topics. A lack of amplifying, descriptive language in royal family reporting in particular could reflect a fear of libel charges from the royals, which became increasingly frequent alongside more prevalent and scrutinizing coverage of the family in the wake of Prince Charles and Diana's 1981 marriage (Montgomery 1999; Conboy 2015).

The broader similarities in longitudinal trends observed in the two publications, as reflected in corpus linguistic findings for H1 and content analytic findings for H1 and H2, suggest the impact of similar causal factors on the two newspapers. Interestingly, the greatest divergence between the two publications is seen with regards to H2, which suggests that the putative causal factor captured in this hypothesis, the ability to produce more content more

cheaply, had a more tabloidizing impact on the *Guardian* than on the *Mirror*. The lack of a tabloidizing impact directly attributable to financial factors is a point of note, particularly within a decade, the 1980s, a time renowned for emphasis on economic capital.

5.12. Overview: 1968 – 1987

During this 19-year timeframe, the two publications see contrasting trends in terms of circulation: while substantial growth is seen in the *Guardian*, the *Mirror* sees a dramatic decline. Between 1968 and 1987, the circulation of the *Guardian* increases by 68.4% and the circulation of the *Mirror* drops by 42%. This divergence reflects the broader trend seen in the British newspaper industry during this period, wherein ‘quality’ newspapers experienced growth in sales while tabloids saw declines (Seymour-Ure 1996; Tunstall 1996). It is worth considering the *Guardian*’s growth in circulation in the context of the scholarship’s assertion that tabloid elements result in higher newspaper circulation. Personalization and quotes are the features augmenting in the *Guardian* hence indicating the augmenting salience of tabloid characteristics in the publication.

Table 5.12. Circulation of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, 1968 - 1987

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>
1968	285,000	5 million
1970	304,000	4.57 million
1975	319,000	3.968 million
1980	379,000	3.625 million
1985	486,000	3.033 million
1987	480,000	2.9 million

5.12a. Corpus Linguistics: 1968 & 1987

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

In summary, several key shifts occur within the 19-year period subject to examination in this chapter. Data discussed in this subsection is featured in Appendix 1 Table 5.12., which displays the corpus linguistic data from the two newspapers from 1968 and from 1987.

On a broader level, during this time, the *Guardian* sees overall increases in markers of ‘information-orientation’ and personalization, and in quotes alongside a slight decrease in proxies of sensationalism, while the *Mirror* sees an overall decrease in both indices of personalization and sensationalism. Accordingly, while the *Guardian* sees a slight shift towards proxies of tabloid values, a shift away from these values is observed in the *Mirror*. Corpus linguistics findings from the 1968 – 1987 period thus refute H1 and provide partial support for H2, with support from the *Guardian* and a suggested reversal of the hypothesis from the *Mirror*.

In terms of specific markers, the two largest changes are seen in the *Guardian*, where a 140% increase in quoted speech occurs alongside a 105% growth in second person pronouns. Further, personalization, of which second person pronouns are a linguistic proxy, is the only value set which undergoes a convergence in markers across the two publications. Personalization and quotes are thus arenas of particular interest between 1968 and 1987.

Another shift of note pertains to article length. In the wake of the Wapping Revolution, which lowered printing costs, more substantial increases in article length might have been anticipated across both publications. Interestingly, an increase of only 12% is seen in the

average word count of the *Guardian's* front-page articles while stability is observed in the *Mirror*. Apart from this one increase, the overarching trend for markers of 'information-orientation' is stability.

Thus, personalization and quotes emerge from corpus linguistics findings as arenas which undergo particularly dramatic, transformative shifts; each will be discussed in terms of causal factors and theoretical implications in the final section of this chapter.

5.12b. Content Analysis: 1968 & 1987

While stability is seen across types of news stories in the *Guardian*, the *Mirror* sees substantial shifts in the categories of 'hard' news and 'soft' news. 'Hard' news coverage in the *Mirror* drops by 23%, from 31% in 1968 to 8% in 1987, with a 27% increase in 'soft' news stories seen in tabloid, whereby the proportion of this type of news grows from 57% in 1968 to 84% in 1987. Thus, content analysis findings from the 1968 – 1987 period provide support for H1, with findings from the *Mirror* also providing support for H2. The lack of change seen across the proportional configuration of types of news stories seen on the front-page of the *Guardian* provides evidence which neither supports nor refutes the second hypothesis.

Trends of interest can also be identified in terms of the specific article topics subject to examination. Across the two publications, declines are seen in the proportion of politics stories. Specific to the *Guardian* is growth in political scandal coverage, up from 3% in 1968 to 15% of the front-page in 1987, and specific to the *Mirror* is a surge in royal family coverage, which was absent on the front page in 1968 and occupied 21% of page one coverage by 1987.

Figure 5.12a. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1968 & 1987, Percentage of Articles by Category

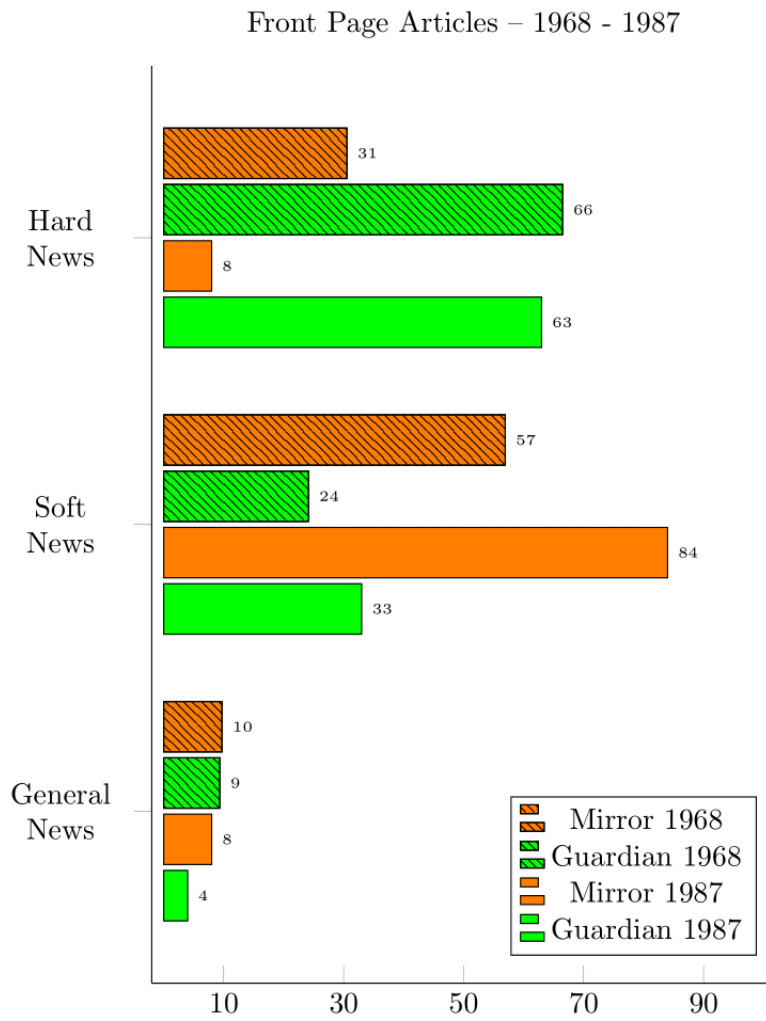
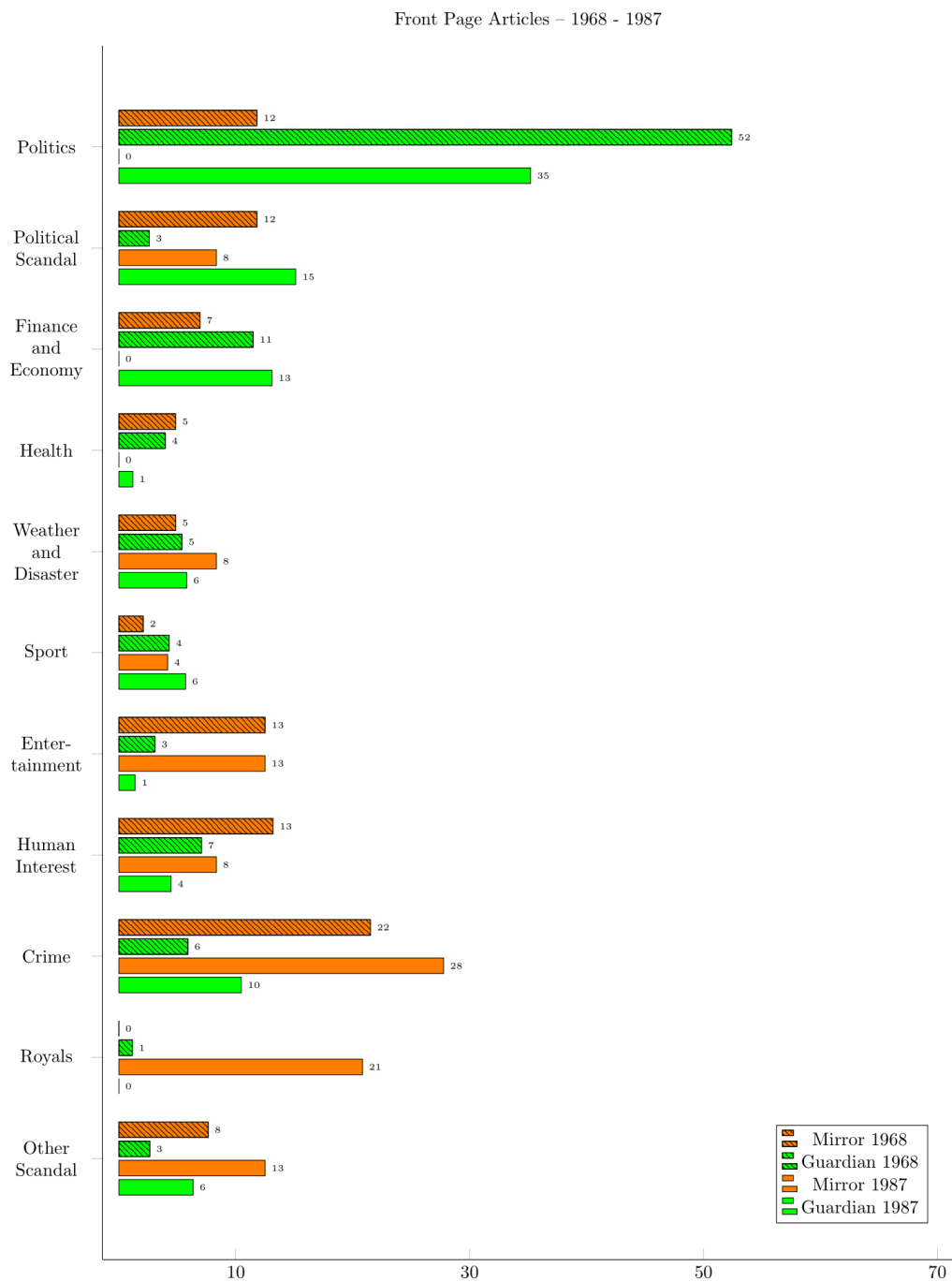


Figure 5.12b. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1968 & 1987, Percentage of Articles by Topic



5.13. Conclusions and Composite Tabloidization Measures: 1968 & 1987

Composite tabloidization measure values suggest several differences from those indicated in corpus linguistics and content analytic analyses when examined proxy by proxy. In particular, in the *Guardian*, despite a number of significant increases in specific tabloid features, such as

second person pronouns and quotes, the composite tabloidization measure indicates an overall shift away from tabloid elements during this period. Similarly, despite the increase seen in sentence length in the publication, the composite tabloidization measure indicates a simultaneous shift away from ‘quality’ characteristics in the *Guardian*.

Table 5.13. Composite Tabloidization Measures, 1968 & 1987

Composite Tabloidization Measure	<i>Guardian</i> 1968	<i>Guardian</i> 1987	<i>Mirror</i> 1968	<i>Mirror</i> 1987
‘Quality’ Elements	-.318	-.455	.111	-.757
Tabloid Elements	-.167	-.490	-.395	-.757

By contrast, the composite tabloidization measure reflects the same overall findings for the *Mirror* as indicated in particular through Section 5.12’s discussion of corpus linguistics findings, which identified shifts away from both ‘quality’ and tabloid elements. It can also be noted that the composite tabloidization measure values for both ‘quality’ and tabloid elements are particularly low – approximately -.758 for both categories – for the *Mirror* during 1987.

When assessing the data in terms of specific proxies, while the *Guardian* undergoes a shift towards tabloid values and sees stability across types of content, the *Mirror* sees an increase in tabloid content and decline in tabloid values. In particular, in the *Guardian*, growth in tabloid elements is comprised of increases in markers of personalization and quotes, and in the *Mirror*, a growth in tabloid elements is accounted for by a large increase in ‘soft’ news stories. Thus, corpus linguistic and content analytic findings somewhat contrast one another; corpus linguistic findings refute H1, and content analytic findings support this hypothesis.

Further while corpus linguistic findings from the *Guardian* support H2, those from the *Mirror* refute the hypothesis, thereby precluding a broader finding in support of or opposition to H2.

This conclusions section now turns to a fuller discussion of the findings from this chapter with regard to the possible role(s) of the potential causal agents of tabloidization. From the 1968 – 1970 period, causal factors draw from the economics arena, in particular from increased financial difficulty connecting to increased competition in the wake of the *Sun's* launch. Due to both continued declines in circulation and the *Sun's* positioning as a direct competitor of the tabloid, it was hypothesized that the *Mirror* would to a larger extent than the *Guardian* shift towards tabloid values and content. By contrast, personalization, sensationalism, and quotes declined in the *Mirror*, with stability seen across the percentage of 'hard' news, 'general' news, and 'soft' news stories. Rather than the *Mirror*, the *Guardian* underwent a growth in tabloid elements in the form of increases in personalization and in quotes.

Between 1965 and 1995, 'quality' newspapers in the UK experienced significant growth in sales (Seymour-Ure 1996; Tunstall 1996), and the *Guardian* stands as a particularly strong example of this surge. The publication's success may be considered in view of several market and newsroom level factors which are separate from the *Sun's* launch. After the *Manchester Guardian* moved to London in 1961, the newspaper experienced substantial turbulence, with "modest resources" available (Tunstall 1996, 52) in spite of its new, broader and more prominent status as a national newspaper. Further, between 1965 and 1966, management imposed a slew of newsroom layoffs. It is thus possible that a shift towards tabloid values stemming from a slimming of resources and increased newsroom stress incidentally resulted in the promulgation of journalistic language and values that attracted a larger readership.

The *Guardian's* success during this period can also be attributed to its recently acquired position in the national newspaper market. When the publication relocated to London, it became the only left of centre 'quality' newspaper in the country. Further, and in contrast to its 'quality' competitors, the *Guardian* thereafter achieved a notably young readership, endowing it with a demographic niche covetable to advertisers (Tunstall 1996). Accordingly, the *Guardian's* unique standing in the market as the 'quality' newspaper of choice for young and left of centre readers, yielded a strong advantage to the publication in terms of circulation as well as advertising. This edge applied to the *Guardian* at each of the data points subject to analysis in this chapter. Interestingly, the *Guardian's* advantageous market position, however, is not a characteristic which stood to impact at the newsroom level: it is rather a beneficial standing which the newspaper acquired through default gaps in the country's newspaper market. The lack of economic pressure at the *Guardian* during this period makes the newspaper's shift towards tabloid values, and specifically, towards personalization, particularly interesting.

By contrast, during these years, the *Mirror* lost its competitive edge, a decline which has been attributed to failures in management at the newspaper in addition to the launch of the *Sun* (Tunstall 1996; Conboy 2011). Thus, while increased competition might have contributed to a shift towards tabloid values and tabloid content at the *Mirror*, the publication's shift away from tabloid values while maintaining continuity in the proportional configuration of content types can be considered an unexpected finding. As noted by the scholarship (Richards 1997; Conboy 2011) by the mid-1960s, the chairman of the *Mirror*, Hugh Cudlipp, had begun to reorient the tabloid to "a more serious market" "if not upmarket" (Conboy 2011, 114) positioning. Findings from this chapter show this shift as manifest in the language and therein represented values of the tabloid, as opposed to the content. This

finding underscores the significance of language in attracting or disinteresting newspaper audiences.

The gap in the tabloid market resulting from the *Mirror's* repositioning can be understood to have facilitated the popular success of the *Sun*, whose new proprietor was well aware of the *Mirror's* shift (Conboy 2011). In this way, the *Mirror*, or its management, paved the path towards its decline between 1968 and 1970 in particular.

While possible causal factors during the 1968 – 1970 period draw from the economics arena, articles from the 1980s data points stand to be impacted by technological and cultural causal factors as well as economic ones. The largest shifts observed during the 19-year period also involve the 1980s data points. Changes across these data points can thus be attributed to a larger set of factors, which stood to interweave with one another.

Causal factors stemming from the Wapping Revolution most directly pertain to the realm of economics and technology: members of newsrooms were reduced in number, due to lay-offs, and forced to adopt new skills and practices in view of recently introduced computerized technologies. While the resulting impact of financial difficulty and the capacity to cheaply produce more content was hypothesized to be an ascension of tabloid values and content, such an impact was partial, manifesting in a rise in certain tabloid values at the *Guardian*, and in a rise in 'soft' news at the *Mirror* and decline in 'hard' news at the tabloid. With regard to the *Guardian*, one possible explanation relates to the small drop in the publication's circulation between 1985 and 1987; it is possible that an augmentation of personalization was deployed in order to attract readers back to the newspaper, or to attract new ones. Accordingly, a point of interest is the rationale behind the publication's decision to select personalization as expressed largely through language, rather than content, as a means to entice more readers. This pertains to another possible explanation which draws from

broader cultural factors and will be discussed shortly within this section and addressed further in the thesis' final chapter.

In view of Murdoch's cementing status as the dominant player in the British tabloid industry (Tunstall 1996), the competitive advantage his newspapers gained as the first to transition to computerized production technologies, and the *Mirror's* continued decline in sales, it would have been logical to expect the *Mirror* to shift towards more tabloid content and values, particularly, in relation to the *Guardian*. The subsequent continuation of the *Mirror's* shift away from tabloid values and towards tabloid content thus suggests the continuation of a reconfiguration of the newspaper's positioning ongoing since the beginning of the thesis' timeframe, and possibly preceding 1968.

Similarities between certain changes that occur both in the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* during the 1980s data points, however, also suggest the impact of factors at a broader, cultural level. These shifts are the surge in second person pronouns, private verbs, and quotes. The common thread across each is the personal, or elements representative of the 'private' rather than 'public' sphere. Subsequently suggested is a co-existing or blurring of the 'public sphere' and the 'private sphere,' and 'quality' and tabloid values and content, a convergence characteristic of an ascendance popular culture and postmodernity; applying the cultural diamond framework, this ascendance can be understood to have impacted at the societal, news production, and news reception levels. The *Guardian's* augmentation of tabloid values, namely in the form of personalization, suggests the publication's alignment with a broader zeitgeist of the era. Again, the shifts regarding cultural factors will be further addressed with regard to the thesis' theoretical framework alongside the relevant findings from Chapters 6 and 7 in the dissertation's final chapter.

As discussed in Chapter 1, augmentation of tabloid values in a 'quality' newspaper has indeed been depicted as salutary for democracy by a camp of pro-tabloidization scholars (MacDonald 2000; Bas and Grabe 2015; Umbricht and Esser 2017), and accordingly, the contemporaneous growth in the *Guardian's* circulation can be appreciated as widening the access points of 'quality' news to a somewhat larger audience. In the context of the *Mirror*, however, between 1968 and 1987, the simultaneous shifts away from 'hard' news articles and lack of overall increase in 'information-orientation' could indicate a pronounced predominance of tabloid elements. While personalization and sensationalism decline in the publication, the substantially increased prevalence of 'soft' news stories suggests a heightening of capitalist focus, as embodied through the Wapping Revolution itself.

In summary, the Wapping Revolution is seen to have contributed more to a tabloidization of newspapers than the launch of the *Sun*, and it is the 1980s data points, which pertain to economic and technologically-derived pressures as well as cultural shifts, which undergo the most change. Differences between corpus linguistic and content analytic findings are a point of interest which will be examined further in the proceeding chapters.

Results from this chapter underscore the importance of addressing an eclectic range of putative causal factors, rather than one or two possible agents, or a limited set of factors from the same thematic arena. However, certain additional points should be noted for consideration alongside these results. While results from this chapter suggest an exaggeration of the effects of Wapping on British newspapers by the relevant scholarship, it is possible that the effects of the Wapping Revolution did not impact the *Guardian* and *Mirror* to a greater extent until after 1987. It is also possible that different tabloid and 'quality' newspapers

exhibited different effects of Wapping. For example, the *Sun*, which was owned by Murdoch, adopted the computerized production facilities before the *Guardian* or the *Mirror*.

Due to time and budget limitations, the articles and newspapers subject to analysis in this chapter constitute the broadest possible sample from these years, and represent the first study of journalistic values and content from this period. The thesis' next chapter subjects additional newspapers, the *Times* and the *Sun*, to examination in view of the availability of each publication in digital format from the years of interest. Data points from the 4 newspapers were selected in order to capture the possible impact(s) of shifts pertaining to ascension of the Internet and the emergence of interactive online features.

Chapter 6: Results, 1998 - 2009

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter of this thesis examined two newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, at 4 data points pre-dating the 1990s. Corpus linguistic and content analysis were applied in order to determine possible shifts in tabloid and 'quality' newspaper values and content. Across the 19-year 1968 – 1987 time period, article length, personalization, and quotes increased in the *Guardian*, while markers of tabloid values declined in the *Mirror* alongside an increase in tabloid content.

This chapter identifies and analyses corpus linguistic, content analytic, and composite tabloidization measure findings, from before and after two key developments in the late 1990s and mid-2000s. In addition to the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, the *Times* and the *Sun* are subject to the same analyses. An overview of the genesis of Internet-powered journalistic resources is provided so as to fill the gap between the 1987 and 1998 period. For each of the two periods, a historical introduction is followed by a brief discussion of the hypotheses subject to examination during each period, alongside a reflection on the contemporaneous print circulation figures for each of the newspapers.

Summaries of the 1998 – 2002 and 2006 – 2009 findings, wherein both the composite tabloidization measure data and the feature-by-feature findings are discussed, follow the presentation of the corpus linguistic and content analyses from each of the 4 newspapers. After the 2006 – 2009 analyses are presented, an overview of findings from across 1998 and 2009 is provided. A final conclusions section discusses the composite tabloidization measures and key findings from the chapter in view of the thesis' hypotheses and theoretical framework.

6.2. Launch of Online Editions: 1998 – 2002: Brief History of the Internet and the Ascendance of Nonprint Newspapers

While the birth of the Internet is commonly dated to 1969 and the first ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) connection between two computers based in California, it was not until two decades later, alongside the proliferation of personal computers in offices and homes, when newspapers began to adopt Internet-powered technologies and platforms. The 1980s has been understood as a period of experimentation for “nonprint [newspaper] delivery vehicles” (Boczkowski 2004a, 20). Several principle electronic modes of news delivery were appropriated by daily newspapers in the UK – as well as in the US - during this decade; however, it was not until the 1990s and the introduction of the World Wide Web when nonprint newspaper editions flourished and became mainstream.

Videotex, developed by the British Post Office in the 1970s, has been viewed as the earliest print alternative deployed by newspapers (Aumente 1987; Bockowski 2004a). Aumente (1987) provides a useful definition for videotex, stating, “*Videotex* refers to various computer-based interactive systems which deliver screen text, numbers, and graphics via the telephone or two-way cable for display on a television set or video monitor” (Aumente 1987, 14). While research indicates that news was the primary type of information accessed by audiences through videotex, the technology did not take mainstream hold. Neither did teletext, a “one-way system for the transmission of text and graphics via over-the air broadcasting or cable channels for display on a television set” (Aumente 1987, 19). In the early 1980s, numerous newspapers, both in the US and the UK, offered teletext editions (even including the prestigious *Washington Post*), however, like videotex, teletext was not a commercial success. The reasons for the failure of videotex and teletext to gain mainstream traction have remained unexplored by the scholarship.

While videotex experienced a brief resurgence during the early 1990s alongside growth of personal computers in offices and homes, the invention of Mosaic, the first graphical browser, made publicly available free of cost in 1993, enabled a proliferation of online newspaper sites during the second half of the decade. In the late 1990s, with the rise of commercial web browsers such as Netscape and Microsoft's Internet Explorer, newspapers began launching online editions (Scott 2005). US-based newspapers were the first to publish editions online (Carlson 2003; Salaverria 2019), starting in 1994 with the local *Palo Alto Weekly*. By the end of 1994, nearly 450 U.S. newspapers and magazines were publishing online editions (Allan 2006).

The *Electronic Telegraph* was the UK's first newspaper website, launched in 1994 (Meek 2006), 5 years before the launch of the *Guardian Unlimited*. BBC News Online launched in 1997 (Allan 2006). Two years after its launch, in 2001, the *Guardian Unlimited* became the most popular newspaper site in the UK with an estimated 2.4 million visitors (Meek 2006). The contemporaneous editor of the *Guardian*, Alan Rusbridger, emphasized the values of the newspaper in the context of the digital age, "There should be a high premium on transparency, collaboration, and open discussion" (Rusbridger in Singer and Ashman 2009, 4).

As with Videotex, the early years of legacy publications' online news sites were a time of experimentation. A common central element of these early ventures, however, was a product free to consumers: with the exception of the *Financial Times*, which implemented a paywall as early as 2002, mainstream legacy British newspapers did not charge readers for online access. In contrast to their print counterparts, in particular, 'quality' ones, early business models of online newspapers relied heavily if not solely on advertising profits (Thurman and Herbert 2007).

The economic context of the newspaper industry preceding and accompanying the launch of online newspaper editions was one of financial downturn. During the course of the 1990s, the circulation of newspapers and the share of readership revenue over advertising revenues declined steadily (Behringer and Filistrucchi 2009). A subsequent attempt of the *Times* to increase its value to advertisers in this context has been proposed as a rationale behind the newspaper's decision to drop its cover price from 40p to 35p in 1993, initiating a 'price war' in the British 'quality' newspaper market. While the circulation of the *Times* more than doubled between June of 1993 - in the immediate wake of its cover cost cut - and 1998, the circulation of the *Guardian*, which did not adjust its cover price during this period, dropped substantially. In a chapter on the 'tabloidizing' of 'quality' British newspapers in the 1990s, Behringer and Filistrucchi (2009) depict the 'price war' of 1993 as representative of the extent to which 'quality' British newspapers became subject to the same degree of competition as their tabloid counterparts (Bromley 1998). Alongside, or perhaps even due in part to the 'price war,' during the 1990s, the salary and experience of 'quality' newspaper staff also declined, and journalists became increasingly younger (Bromley 1998). While the circulation of the *Guardian* once again began to increase starting in 1998, these shifts are still important to note in terms of financial context for the newspaper industry during the 1990s.

Interestingly, it was during the 1990s that the term 'tabloidization' was coined (Esser 1999), a development reflected in the introduction of the word to the Oxford English Dictionary in 1991. Research has noted a surge in discourse asserting a decline in 'quality' newspapers and spreading of tabloid values and content to 'quality' newspapers during this decade (Franklin 1997; Bromley 1998; Esser 1999; Sparks and Tulloch 2000). Suggested is a possible association between increased financial strain, as indicated through declines in print circulation, and an ascendance of tabloid values and content in 'quality' newspapers. The

emergence of concerns over tabloidization preceding the Internet's ascendance is a point of note.

Scholarship depicts the viewpoints of legacy news staff regarding the rise of the Internet and online journalism as a mix of hope and anxiety. Perhaps in contrast to the broader optimistic and often utopian views characteristic of academic and media commentary with regard to the rise of the Internet, news outlets greeted early incarnations of Internet-powered technologies with a mixture of gloom and optimism. For example, alongside the mainstream emergence of online newspaper editions, Boczkowski states, "the idea that new media would inevitably transform newspapers was coupled with a strong sense of uncertainty regarding the future of the industry" (2004a, 38). Boczkowski also usefully notes an air of inevitability whereby it was assumed that the Internet would impact on journalism and the newspaper industry in ways unknown to the producers, editors, and owners of news outlets (2004a). The sense of an impending transformation, however, was not in general at this point in time infused with acute concern over a potential demise of newspapers, an anxiety which became more common with and following the newspaper crisis of 2008 – 2009.

6.3. Corpus Linguistics Findings: 1998 - 2002

Two of the dissertation's hypotheses can be examined through the 1998 – 2002 data points:

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

Drawing from H1, the *Times*, the *Sun*, and the *Mirror* should show more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian*, which, in contrast to the other 3 newspapers, sees increases in circulation during this time period.

As with the 1985 – 1987 data points, H2 applies to the newspapers longitudinally: possible shifts before and after the launch of online newspaper editions are apt to the assessment of this hypothesis. Thus, in line with H2, the second, later set of data points from (2000 for the *Times* and *Guardian*, 2001 for the *Sun*, and 2002 for the *Mirror*) should show more evidence than the first, earlier set of data points (1998 for the *Times* and *Guardian*, 1999 for the *Sun*, and 2000 for the *Mirror*).

Evidence of tabloidization is drawn from both corpus linguistic and content analytic indices of tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers respectively, with overall increases in tabloid elements seen as representative of a tabloidization. As in the thesis’ previous chapter, with regard to tabloid elements, linguistic proxies of personalization, sensationalism, and quotes have been identified as characteristic of tabloid values, with ‘soft’ news stories identified as characteristic of tabloid content. Likewise, indices of ‘information-orientation’ have been identified as traditionally distinctive of ‘quality’ newspaper values, with ‘hard’ news stories seen as traditionally characteristic of ‘quality’ newspaper content.

Corpus linguistic and content analytic data from the 1998 – 2002 data points are examined first, followed by a discussion of the composite tabloidization measure values. This same presentational format is applied to the 2006 – 2009 data points and the subsequent comparison of data from 1998 and 2009. The chapter ends with an analysis of the 1998 and 2009 composite tabloidization measure values and a discussion wherein the key findings from the chapter are interpreted in terms of the relevant causal factors and theoretical frameworks.

Table 6.3. (Print) Circulation of the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Sun*, 1998 - 2002

Year	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Sun</i>
1998	385,000	790,000	2.31 mil	3.6 mil
1999	391,000	750,000	²³	3.73 mil
2000	402,000	726,000	2.270 mil	3.557 mil
2001	410,000	734,000	2.149 mil	3.637 mil
2002	411,000	711,000	2.164 mil	3.503 mil

6.3a. Analysis: Markers of 'Information-Orientation'

Stability is the overall trend seen in markers of 'information-orientation' between 1998 and 2002. Across the 4 proxies of the value and the 4 newspapers, the *Guardian* is the only newspaper to experience any shifts; further as the publication sees a 10% increase in article length and an 11% decrease in sentence length, the opposing direction and similar magnitude of these shifts in effect cancel out one another. To iterate, this is because both article length and sentence length are 'quality' newspapers elements, and neither are double-weighted in the composite 'quality' elements measure. Accordingly, across each of the publications, H1 and H2 are neither supported nor refuted by 'information-orientation' data.

²³ Print circulation figure for the *Mirror* from 1999 could not be located.

Table 6.3a. 'Information-Orientation,' 1998 - 2002

	1998/1999/2000	2000/2001/2002	% change
Average Article Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	478 words/article	525 words/article	9.8% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	293 words/article	275 words/article	6.1 % decrease
<i>Times</i>	461 words/article	472 words/article	2% increase
<i>Sun</i>	233 words/article	252 words/article	8.1% increase
Flesch-Kincaid Readability Metric ²⁴			
<i>Guardian</i>	57.2	57.3	.2% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	67.2	66.7	.7% decrease
<i>Times</i>	56.3	56.9	1.2% increase
<i>Sun</i>	67.5	68.6	1.7% increase
Average Sentence Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	14.9 words/sentence	13.4 words/sentence	10.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	12.5 words/sentence	13.0 words/sentence	3.8% increase
<i>Times</i>	16.4 words/sentence	16.1 words/sentence	2.3% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	12.3 words/sentence	12.1 words/sentence	1.6% increase
Average Word Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	1.5 syllables/sentence	1.6 syllables/sentence	7.5% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	1.5 syllables/sentence	1.5 syllables/sentence	.6% increase
<i>Times</i>	1.6 syllables/sentence	1.6 syllables/sentence	1.1% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	1.5 syllables/sentence	1.5 syllables/sentence	No change

6.3b. Analysis: Markers of Personalization

Between 1998 and 2002, the predominant trend seen in markers of personalization is a shift away from proxies of the value. As indices of personalization are elements of tabloids, shifts away from these markers indicates a lack of tabloidization. This trend is particularly marked in the *Guardian*, which sees decreases in each of the 3 linguistic indices of the value in the form of a 20% decrease in first person pronouns, a 28% decrease in second person pronouns, and a 15% decrease in private verbs. These drops contrast with the overall increases seen in the *Guardian* for the 1968 – 1987 period, wherein first and second person pronouns grew substantially in the publication.

²⁴ Higher FKR levels reflect lower reading levels, and vice versa.

The *Mirror* and the *Sun* each see shifts in one of the linguistic proxies of personalization: a 12% decrease in second person pronouns is observed in the former and a 12% increase in private verbs is seen in the latter. With regard to the *Times*, none of the linguistic proxies of the value undergo a change surpassing the 10% threshold for error applied in the thesis. During the 1998 – 2002 period, the *Mirror* is the only publication which undergoes an overall increase in personalization.

Accordingly, H1 is supported by data from the *Mirror* and the *Sun*, each of which undergo less of a shift away from markers of personalization than the *Guardian*. It should be noted again that while the *Sun* merely shows less of a shift away from personalization, the *Mirror* experiences an augmentation in the value. Personalization data from the *Times* neither supports nor refutes H2, as stability is the overarching trend observed in the newspaper. Data from the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* refutes H2, even suggesting a reversal of the hypothesis, while data from the *Sun* supports H2.

Table 6.3b. Personalization, 1998 – 2002

	1998/1999/2000, pmw ²⁵	2000/2001/2002, pmw	% change
1 st PP			
<i>Guardian</i>	8175	6546	19.92% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	14304	15284	6.86% increase
<i>Times</i>	7208	6745	6.43% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	19243	17542	8.84% decrease
2 nd PP			
<i>Guardian</i>	4147	2976	28.23% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	4151	4143	.2% decrease
<i>Times</i>	3079	3026	1.74 % decrease
<i>Sun</i>	4947	4355	11.97% decrease
Private Verbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	1121	954	14.94% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	1503	1676	11.49% increase
<i>Times</i>	1071	1079	.7% increase
<i>Sun</i>	1800	1835	1.91% increase

²⁵ Pmw = per million words. The per million-word barometer has been used in linguistic scholarship, including Clark’s study of linguistic change in British newspapers (2013).

6.3c. Analysis: Markers of Sensationalism

Two of the newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Sun*, see decreases in markers of sensationalism, while the *Mirror* and the *Times* see increases in indices of the value. As the *Guardian* and *Mirror* experienced decreases in proxies of sensationalism during the 1968 – 1987 period, growth in language indexing the value seen in the *Mirror* contrasts with the trend seen earlier. Further, the pattern seen across markers of sensationalism contrasts with the predominant stability seen across markers of ‘information-orientation’ and the shift away from proxies of personalization seen in the newspapers during the 1998 – 2002 period.

The most substantial drops in sensationalism indices are seen in the *Guardian*, wherein each of the 6 proxies decreases between 1998 and 2000. With the exception of general adjectives, the declines observed in the *Guardian* are always over 20%, and in the case of superlative degree adverbs are 30%. Superlatives also decrease markedly in the *Sun*: superlative general adverbs drop by 20% and superlative degree adverbs by 31%. By contrast, the *Mirror* is the only publication which sees an increase in superlative adverbs, experiencing 15% growth in superlative degree adverbs. The tabloid also sees increases in degree adverbs of 12%, amplifiers by 14%, and of general adjectives by 11%. While the *Times* undergoes decreases in superlative general adverbs, superlative degree adverbs, amplifiers, and general adverbs, the magnitude of the surge observed in the newspaper’s general adjectives, 95%, surpasses that of decreasing markers combined.

In terms of the hypotheses, H1 is supported by each publication as the *Guardian* sees the largest shift away from markers of sensationalism. H2, however, is supported by sensationalism data from the *Mirror* and the *Times*, which experience increases in proxies of the value, while refuted by data from the *Guardian* and the *Sun*.

Table 6.3c. Sensationalism, 1998 - 2002

	1998/1999/2000, pmw ²⁶	2000/2001/2002, pmw	% change
Superlative General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	221	173	21.7% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	200	205	2.5% increase
<i>Times</i>	193	170	12% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	215	173	19.5% decrease
Superlative Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	710	490	31% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	386	445	15.3% increase
<i>Times</i>	623	503	19.3% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	409	284	30.6% decrease
Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	3446	2744	20.4% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	3199	3567	11.5% increase
<i>Times</i>	3175	2903	8.6% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	3767	3563	5.4% decrease
Amplifiers			
<i>Guardian</i>	968	697	28.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	660	751	13.8% increase
<i>Times</i>	835	744	10.9% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	790	721	8.7% decrease
General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	25790	19824	23.1% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	19978	21759	8.9% increase
<i>Times</i>	23598	21246	10% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	22738	21730	4.3% decrease
General Adjectives			
<i>Guardian</i>	34069	28704	15.8% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	49070	54328	10.7% increase
<i>Times</i>	31314	60630	94.6% increase
<i>Sun</i>	61993	56569	8.8% decrease

6.3d. Analysis: Quotes

Whereas both of the publications examined during the 1968 – 1987 period experienced substantial growth in quotes, only one of the 4 newspapers examined between 1998 and 2002 undergoes a shift in the feature. This shift occurs in the *Mirror*, which sees an 11% increase in quotes. Accordingly, evidence from the *Mirror* supports H1 and H2, while quoted speech data from the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Sun* neither support nor refute either of the two hypotheses.

²⁶ Pmw = per million words.

Table 6.3d. Quotes, 1998 - 2002

Quotes	1998/1999/2000, pmw	2000/2001/2002, pmw	% change
<i>Guardian</i>	17507	17754	1.4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	32155	35557	10.6% increase
<i>Times</i>	26007	25486	2.0 % decrease
<i>Sun</i>	38586	35129	8.96% decrease

6.4. Overview

H1 hypothesized that the *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Sun* would exhibit more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian*. While the *Mirror* shows more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian*, undergoing growth in markers of personalization and sensationalism, and in quotes, the *Sun*, like the *Guardian*, experiences a decline in indices of both tabloid values. The *Times* experiences declines in proxies of sensationalism and stability in markers of personalization, thus undergoing more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian* in terms of one of the two values indexical of those traditionally characteristic of tabloids. H1 is thus supported by corpus linguistic evidence from the *Mirror*, while data from the *Times* and the *Sun* do not support these hypotheses.

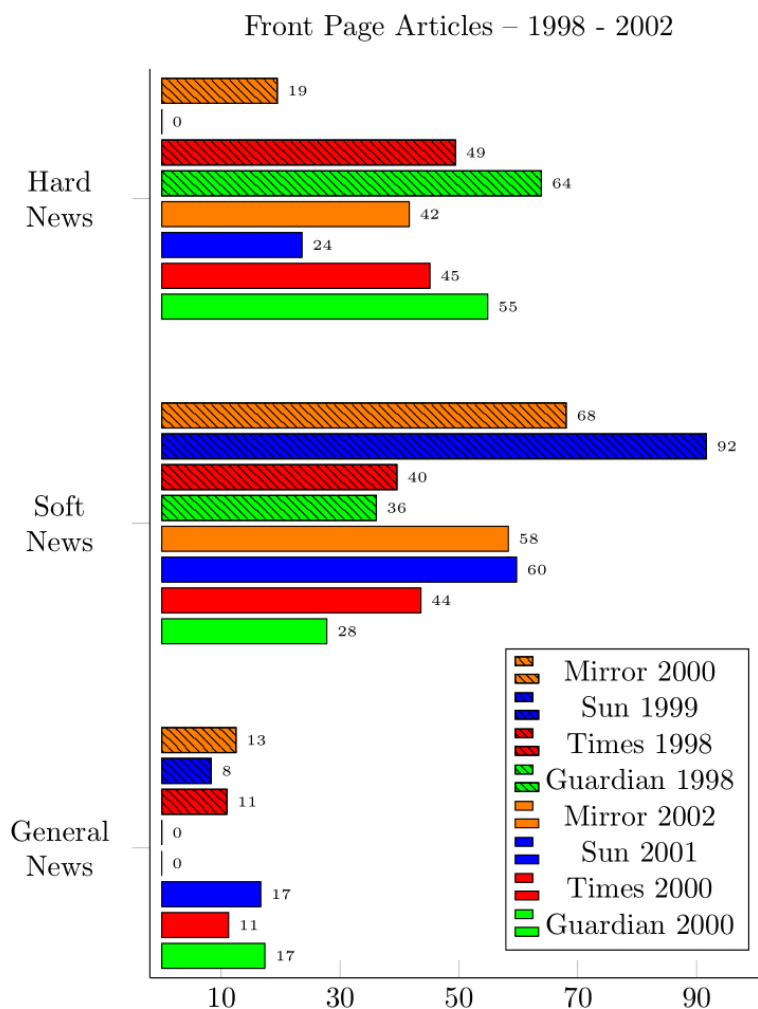
H2 anticipated growth in markers of tabloidization across each of the newspapers between the first and second set of data points; data from the *Mirror* is the only evidence exhibiting such a shift. Corpus linguistic findings from the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Sun* instead suggest a reversal of the hypothesis whereby news outlets with the means to cheaply produce more content become *less* tabloidized, rather than more tabloidized.

6.5. Content Analysis Findings: 1998 - 2002

Shifts in the configuration of article types and topics are important indicators of a potential ascension of tabloid elements, with increases in 'soft' news stories indicative of a

tabloidization. The configuration of types of articles – ‘hard’ news, ‘soft’ news, and ‘general’ news – as well as of article topics falling under each of the 3 article type categories, are also assessed in order to provide more detail as to possible shifts in the publications’ news coverage over time.

Figure 6.5a. *Guardian, Times (1998 & 2000), Sun (1999 & 2001) and Mirror (2000 & 2002), Percentage of Articles by Category*



In the first set of data points from the 1998 – 2002 period, ‘hard’ news articles are the most characteristic of the *Guardian* and the *Times*, whereas ‘soft’ news stories are the most characteristic of the two tabloid publications (see Figure 6.5a). While stability is the

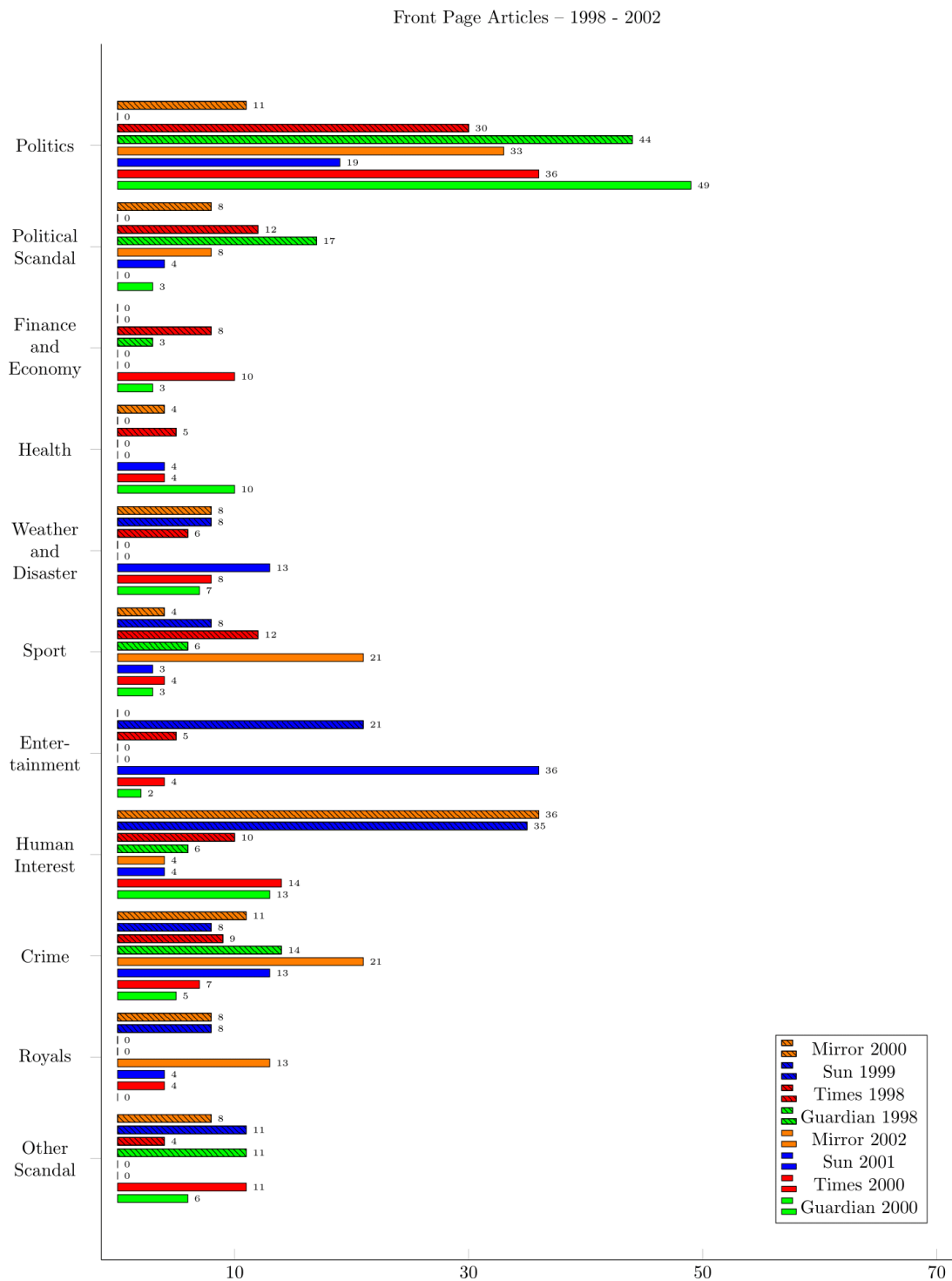
overarching trend seen across the 'quality' publications, the tabloids undergo a reconfiguration whereby 'hard' news coverage increases and 'soft' news coverage declines (see Figure 6.5a). Within this broader pattern are several more specific shifts of note.

For the first set of data points, uniformity of predominant article topic occurs across the two 'quality' and two tabloid newspapers respectively. In the *Guardian* and the *Times*, political stories are the most prominent, whereas human interest articles are the most prominent in the *Mirror* and the *Sun*.

In 1998, the *Guardian* is the newspaper with the highest proportion of 'hard' news articles, accounting for 64% of its front-page coverage; this figure is 49% in the *Times*. By contrast, in the *Sun*'s first data point, 1999, 'hard' news stories are absent altogether from the front-page, with 92% of the publication's front-page coverage dedicated 'soft' news articles. While 19% of the *Mirror*'s front-page consists of 'hard' news stories in 2000, 'soft' news still accounts for a dramatic 68% of the tabloid's front-page articles, with 'general' news comprising the remaining 13% of page one coverage.

As noted, longitudinally, the most significant trend observed is substantial growth in 'hard' news coverage and an adjunct drop in 'soft' news coverage within the two tabloids. Whereas in 1999, 'hard' news stories were absent from the *Sun*'s front page, this figure increases to 24% in 2001. Similarly, a 23% increase in 'hard' news articles is seen in the *Mirror*, where the proportion of 'hard' news coverage rises from 19% to 42% of page one stories. It can also be noted that 'general' news stories disappear altogether from the *Mirror* in 2002, down from 13% in 2000. By contrast, in the *Guardian* and the *Times*, across the 1998 and 2000 data points, the only change of significance seen is a 17% growth in 'general' news stories in the *Guardian*.

Figure 6.5b. *Guardian*, *Times* (1998 & 2000), *Sun* (1999 & 2001) and *Mirror* (2000 & 2002), Percentage of Articles by Topic



Accordingly, there is no data to support H1, which hypothesized that the 3 other newspapers would show more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian*. The *Mirror* and the *Sun*, by contrast, become more 'quality'-like than the *Guardian*. Further, H2 is not supported by

evidence from any of the newspapers. Empirical data from the *Mirror* and the *Sun* moreover indicate a reversal of the hypothesis, whereby the two newspapers increasingly feature the type of coverage traditionally characteristic of ‘quality’ newspapers.

6.6. Summary and Composite Tabloidization Measure: Corpus Linguistic and Content

Analytic Findings 1998 - 2002

The composite tabloidization measure is applied as a means of data triangulation and as a heuristic. It is calculated to reflect the overall direction and magnitude of change across the individual markers of tabloid and ‘quality’ characteristics respectively, within each publication at each year subject to analysis. As in the dissertation’s previous chapter, negative composite measure values are indicative of below average salience of the value-set – either tabloid or ‘quality’ – for the specific publication and year of interest, while positive composite measure values indicate above average salience of the value-set for the particular publication and year therein.

With the exception of ‘quality’ elements in the *Times*, longitudinal changes seen across the composite measure for tabloid and ‘quality’ elements directly align with the findings discussed in the previous subsections, which focus on these elements measure-by-measure. Accordingly, for the *Guardian*, the composite tabloidization measure indicates that both ‘quality’ and tabloid elements have become less salient in the publication. It can also be noted that ‘quality’ elements are particularly absent from the *Guardian* during this period, with values of -.941 and -1.080 for the years 1998 and 2000 respectively. With regards to the *Mirror*, both ‘quality’ and tabloid elements become more salient during this period. In the *Sun*, ‘quality’ elements become more salient while tabloid elements become less so. A

particular polarization of values in the *Sun* during 1999, whereby ‘quality’ elements are relatively lacking, at -.928, and tabloid elements are particularly prominent, at .805, can also be noted.

The values for both ‘quality’ and tabloid elements in the *Times* are moderate, not exceeding .268 away from the publication’s average for each measure. While the drop in tabloid features as seen through the decline in markers of sensationalism in the *Times* is also reflected in the composite measure of tabloid values, despite the lack of change of statistical significance seen across the individual ‘quality’ features, the composite measure of ‘quality’ elements shows a longitudinal drop. Further, this value declines from a positive value, thus above the average measure for the newspaper, to a negative value, thereby below the average for the publication.

Table 6.6. Composite Tabloidization Measures, 1998 - 2002

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Guardian</i> 1998	-.941	.614
<i>Guardian</i> 2000	-1.080	-.370
<i>Mirror</i> 2000	-.756	.063
<i>Mirror</i> 2002	.797	.251
<i>Times</i> 1998	.268	.231
<i>Times</i> 2000	-.029	.154
<i>Sun</i> 1999	-.928	.805
<i>Sun</i> 2001	.287	-.266

Tables 6.6a and 6.6b show results from the 1998 – 2002 period with regard to H1 and H2. The composite tabloidization measures, and corpus linguistic and content analytic data from the 1998 – 2002 period predominantly do not support either hypothesis, with corpus linguistic data from the *Mirror* serving as the only evidence which does not refute both of the hypotheses. Of the 4 newspapers, a shift distinct to the *Mirror* is its recent acquisition, in the form of its purchase by Trinity plc in 1999. Further, this purchase transpired in the context of

the *Mirror*'s declining position in the tabloid market, whereby it came to lag behind not only the *Sun*, but also the *Daily Mail*.

Table 6.6a. Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 1998 – 2002

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sun</i>
Trends Observed	Drop in CQM ²⁷ Drop in CTM ²⁸	Increase in CQM Increase in CTM	Drop in CQM Drop in CTM	Increase in CQM Decrease in CTM
H1	Not Supported	Supported by CTM	Not Supported or Refuted	Refuted
H2	Not Supported	Supported by CTM	Not Supported	Refuted

Table 6.6b. Feature-by-Feature Findings, 1998 – 2002

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sun</i>
Trends Observed	Decreases in 'IO,' personalization and sensationalism.	Increase in CL ²⁹ tabloid indices Increase in 'hard' news	Decrease in sensationalism	Decreases in CL tabloid indices, Increase in 'hard' news
H1	Not Supported	Supported by CL	Not Supported	Refuted
H2	Not Supported	Supported by CL, not supported by CA³⁰	Refuted by findings	Refuted

6.7. Introduction of Social Sharing Features: 2006 – 2009

During the second half of the first decade of the 21st century, newspaper websites began to incorporate social sharing features, enabling news audiences to share news stories through social media accounts with the click of a button. The emergence of social sharing tools has been associated with pivotal changes in journalism, such as in the visibility of audience preferences, shifts in the dynamics of traditional gatekeeping roles, concerns over accuracy and fragmentation, and reconfigurations of journalistic values. The academic literature

²⁷ CQM = Composite 'Quality' Measure

²⁸ CTM = Composite Tabloid Measure

²⁹ CL = Corpus Linguistic

³⁰ CA = Content Analytic

acknowledges the introduction of social sharing features as a key development in the evolution of online journalism (Chadwick 2013; Kumpel, Karnowski, and Keyling 2015; Bright 2016; Orellana-Rodriguez and Keane 2018).

Preceding the introduction of social sharing tools was a period of substantial growth in Internet and social media use. Alongside this period of technological growth, the newspaper industry continued to experience an economic downturn, which reached a *dénouement* in the 2008 – 2009 newspaper crisis. An overview of the Internet and social media's growth, as well as of the newspaper crisis of 2008 – 2009 merits discussion.

The first decade of the 21st century saw a dramatic uptake of the Internet in the UK. While Britain initially lagged behind other developed countries in terms of Internet adoption trends, by 2005, the uptake of the Internet in the UK came to resemble that largely characteristic of other developed countries (Helsper, Dutton, and Gerber 2009). This growth is reflected in the statistics of Internet use in the UK between 2000 and 2009, detailed in Table 6.7a. While income, or economic variables, were initially more of a determinant of Internet access in the country (as well as in other developed nations), this association has been diluted with the increasing integration of online activities into everyday life, a trend which has coincided with the lowering cost of online technologies and Internet access (Dutton and Helsper 2007; Dutton, Helsper, and Gerber 2009). It is in this context that newspapers contemplated ways by which online journalism could be more successfully monetized, a point which will be revisited later in this section.

Here it is pertinent to reference an important paradigm shift in Web capabilities and usages: the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. While definitions of each framework have been fraught (Cormode and Krishnamurthy 2008), there is broad concurrence as to the static network capabilities characteristic of Web 1.0, the paradigm associated with Internet

functions from 1989 through 2005, and the widespread availability of interactive features enabled through the emergence of Web 2.0 in the second half of the 2000s. With the rise of Web 2.0, two major social media platforms for news sharing, Facebook and Twitter, became available for use in the UK, and have since grown in popularity to become the principal social media sites through which news sharing is conducted (Boczkowski 2017; Orellana-Rodriguez and Keane 2018).

2005 and 2006 were crucial years for introduction of Facebook and Twitter into the UK context; in 2005, Facebook extended its membership to 21 UK universities, and in 2006, Twitter launched globally. By December 2006, Facebook reported 1.35 million users in the UK; by May 2007, this figure reached 3.5 million (Kiss 2007).

Table 6.7a: Internet use in the UK, 2000 – 2010*³¹

Year	# of Users	Percentage of UK Population
2000	15,789,163	26.8%
2002	33,493, 338	56.5%
2004	39,265,209	65.6%
2006	41,738,538	68.8%
2007	45,918,902	75.1%
2008	48,358,493	78.4%
2009	51,992,005	82.8%

In the arena of newspaper economics, between 2000 and 2009, UK newspapers experienced a period of substantial decline, which, alongside the global financial crisis, compounded during the final two years of this period. Between 2000 and 2009, sales of the *Mirror* dropped by 55%, sales of the *Sun* by 15.7%, those of the *Guardian* by 23.4%, and the *Times* by 22.5% (Greenslade 2009). In the 2008/2009 fiscal year, the Guardian Media Group, the parent company of the *Guardian*, reported a pre-tax loss in revenue of £89.8 million (GNM Press Office 2009). The *Times* also reported a £51.3 million loss during this same period (Robinson

³¹ Statistics from Internet Live Stats (<https://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users/uk/>).

2009). Between 2006 and 2009, and as reflected in Table 6.8a, circulation declines of 16.6% are seen in the *Guardian*, 14% in the *Times*, 20.3% in the *Mirror*, and 2.8% in the *Sun*. Interestingly, between 2008 and 2009, the News International subsidiary, News Group, owner of the *Sun* and the *News of the World*, reported £55.1 million in profits.

Thus, the ascension of the Internet, social media platforms, and social news sharing functions coincides with a period of growing financial crisis in the newspaper industry. Herein, the visibility of news consumers' preferences and demographic profiles stood as a resource with the potential to contribute towards an end goal of financial gain. In the wake of the launch of social sharing tools, news outlets began to "rely on" (Kumpel, Karnowski, and Keyling 2015, 1) social sharing statistics to "improve website traffic, article views, and ultimately their economic success" (ibid, 1). Accordingly, however, particularly during the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, the rise of social sharing tools began to give way to the rise of web metrics, whereby journalists and editors could quantify the popularity of news content through the immediate availability of reading and sharing statistics.

The introduction of social sharing tools has also been associated with a rise in incidental news consumption in the online context. While news has always been consumed incidentally (Downs 1957; Tewsbury, Weaver, and Maddex 2001; Lee 2009), for example, through exposure to the range of publications on display at a newsstand, with the ascendance of the online sphere, scholars such as Boczkowski (2017), for example, have argued that incidental news consumption has moved from a peripheral means of news exposure to a central one. While this phenomenon continued to grow in the second decade of the 21st century, having been shown in particular to become a substantial source of news for younger demographics (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, and Matassi 2018), with the initial rise of social

media sharing tools, incidental news consumption has emerged as an important means of news exposure to the growing number of individuals getting news online.

The emergence of social sharing functions and the rise of incidental news consumption in the online context reflect the extent to which the online sphere, and the interactivity afforded through Web 2.0, both empowers news consumers with a role in gatekeeping processes while also rendering news consumers more exposed to the gatekeeping roles conducted by professional and non-professional journalists. Related to this notion, online news sharing has been identified as an important facet of the hybrid media system (Chadwick 2013), wherein professional and amateur actors, as well as social and editorial ones, are key agents of news distribution and agenda-setting. The increased visibility of an increasingly plural range of news consumers yielded through the ascendance of social sharing features has been seen both to broaden the public sphere and supersede the public interest function of professional journalistic and/or editorial judgements.

For example, social motivation and demographic positioning have been shown to play a role in determining which news consumers share which news stories (Bright 2016; Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, and Matassi 2018). As noted by the scholarship, news sharing can augment social capital (Bright 2016; Geber, Scherer, and Hefner 2016): as social capital is conceptualized and comprised differently on the basis of variations in one's *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984), differences will arise across the types of reporting seen as potentially enhancing to one's own social capital in accordance with differences arising across individuals' demographic profiles and tastes. For example, while a 22-year-old master's student from an upper middle-class family might view a story from the *Guardian* on climate change as potentially enhancing to their sense of social capital and share such a news story on Facebook accordingly, this type of news story might not be seen to serve this same function by a 50-

year-old, lower middle-class mechanic. This is not to draw definitive lines between the news preferences of individuals of different habitus', but to say that associations can often be identified between news consumers in line with certain demographic characteristics, and to further highlight the potential for news obtained online to reify a news consumers' views and interests.

Social media networks and social sharing tools are also important features related to the phenomena of so-called *echo chambers* and *filter bubbles*. Algorithms which present social media, as well as search engine, users with content tailored to align with their views and interests, have rendered echo chambers and filter bubbles the subject of debates regarding the advantages, and often to a greater degree, the perils of journalism and more broadly, obtaining any information in the online context. It can be noted that while echo chambers and filter bubbles are often conflated, echo chambers can be seen as a result of filtering (Fletcher 2020), with the former being understood as "... what might happen when we are overexposed to news that we like or agree with, potentially distorting our perception of reality because we see too much of one side, not enough of the other, and we start to think perhaps that reality is like this" (ibid). These phenomena, the *de facto* validity of which are still debated, are important and salient considerations in the wake of social sharing features' ascendance.

In view of fundamental technological developments and the increasing degree of financial hardship impacting on the newspaper industry as a whole, the 2006 – 2009 period is one that merits close consideration with regards to this thesis' objectives.

6.8. Corpus Linguistics Findings: 2006 - 2009

Two hypotheses are tested against the 2006 – 2009 data points: as with the 1998 – 2002 period, H1 is examined, however, in place of H2, H4 is subject to assessment. While H2 assessed the potential impact of a newspaper's ability to cheaply produce more content, in line with the 4 newspapers' introduction of online sites between 1998 and 2002, H4 examines the possible effect of the emphasis placed on interactivity with audiences, in line with the emergence of social sharing features on the newspapers' online platforms between 2006 and 2009.

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.

With regard to the first two hypotheses, it is of use to note that up until 2010, none of the 4 publications implemented a paywall (however, starting in 2010, the *Times* introduced one, and from 2013 – 2015, the *Sun* implemented a paywall as well). Figures regarding the online circulation/access of the 4 newspapers from these years are also, to the best of the author's knowledge, unavailable. Accordingly, print circulations of the 4 newspapers are discussed in terms of the implications regarding the extent to which the publications' may or may not be experiencing a period of financial difficulty. H1 and H4 are also introduced in the context of the 2006 and 2009 data points with regard to each of the 4 newspapers.

With regards to print circulations, in distinction to the substantial declines seen across the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Mirror* between 2006 and 2009, the *Sun* experiences only a slight decline in circulation. As indicated in Table 6.8, while the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Mirror* see circulation drops of 16.6%, 14%, and 20.3% respectively, that of the *Sun* declines by just 2.8% during this period. This would suggest that the *Sun* experiences less financial difficulty than the other 3 publications between 2006 and 2009.

An additional shift of note to this period and the theses' hypotheses is the relocation of News International's printing presses from Wapping to Broxbourne in 2008. The move to Broxbourne cost News International roughly £600 million (Editor and Publisher 2008), and as a result of this substantial investment, it can be hypothesized that newsrooms of News International publications, including the *Sun* and the *Times*, might have experienced some added pressure to increase profits accordingly. As a printing facility on this scale, however, is also a long-term investment – the presses at Wapping having lasted for 22 years – any pressure to augment profits in the short-term would likely not be substantially acute.

Thus, with regard to H1, the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Mirror* would still be expected to show more evidence of tabloidization than the *Sun*. As with H2, H4 is tested longitudinally: that is, rather than compare synchronic data points across the different newspapers, within each publication, data from before and after the introduction of social sharing features is subject to comparison. The second set of data points will thus be expected to exhibit more evidence of tabloidization than their initial counterparts.

Table 6.8. (Print) Circulation of the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Sun*, 2006 – 2009

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Sun</i>
2006	326,000	623,000	1.48 million	2.96 million
2006 – 2007 % Change	4.6% Decline	3.4% Decline	4.4% Decline	1% Decline
2007	311,000	602,000	1.42 million	2.93 million
2007 – 2008 % Change	3.2% Decline	2.7% Decline	8.1% Decline	2.2% Decline
2008	301,000	586,000	1.30 million	2.867 million
2008 – 2009 % Change	9.6% Decline	8.5% Decline	9.4% Decline	.4% Increase
2009	272,000	536,000	1.179 million	2.88 million
2006 – 2009 Change	16.6% Decline	14% Decline	20.3% Decline	2.8% Decline

6.8a. Analysis: Markers of ‘Information-Orientation’

In line with the 1998 – 2002 period, stability is the overarching trend seen in markers of ‘information-orientation’ during the 2006 – 2009 period. Only one of the 4 publication experiences a shift; this is the *Sun*, which further, only sees a change in one of the proxies, sentence length, which decreases by 18.8%. With regards to the two hypotheses, the ‘information-orientation’ data does not support H1, which anticipated the *Sun* to show the least evidence of tabloidization. H4, which anticipated a longitudinal tabloidization across each of the publications, is only supported by the *Sun*, with data from the other publications neither supporting nor refuting the hypothesis.

Table 6.8a. 'Information-Orientation,' 2006 - 2009

	2006/2007	2008/2009	% change
Average Article Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	527 words/article	494 words/article	6.3% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	241 words/article	238 words/article	1.2% decrease
<i>Times</i>	379 words/article	376 words/article	.8% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	222 words/article	212 words/article	4.5% decrease
Flesch-Kincaid Readability Metric			
<i>Guardian</i>	56.6	56.3	.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	67.2	67.6	.6% increase
<i>Times</i>	57.2	57.8	1% increase
<i>Sun</i>	68.1	68.7	.9% increase
Average Sentence Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	15.7 words/sentence	15.6 words/sentence	.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	12.5 words/sentence	12.2 words/sentence	2.4% decrease
<i>Times</i>	15.2 words/sentence	14.7 words/sentence	3.3% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	11.7 words/sentence	9.5 words/sentence	18.8% decrease
Average Word Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	1.6 syllables/word	1.6 syllables/word	No change
<i>Mirror</i>	1.5 syllables/word	1.5 syllables/word	No change
<i>Times</i>	1.6 syllables/word	1.6 syllables/word	No change
<i>Sun</i>	1.5 syllables/word	1.5 syllables/word	No change

6.8b. Analysis: Markers of Personalization

As seen in the 1998 – 2002 period, the trend observed in markers of personalization is one of decline. While a lack of overall change is seen in the *Guardian* and the *Sun*, the *Times* and the *Mirror* see overall decreases in proxies of the value.

Three of the publications, with the *Guardian* as the exception, experience drops in first person pronouns; the decline seen in the *Mirror* is a substantial 90.7%. The *Times* is the one publication which sees decreases in more than one feature: in addition to first and second person pronouns, the newspaper also sees a drop in private verbs. While the *Sun* experiences a 10.6% decrease in first person pronouns, the 15.7% increase in second person pronouns observed in the tabloid more broadly cancels out any overall shifts in proxies of the value.

Thus, the personalization data largely does not support H1 or H4. As the *Sun* does not show less evidence of tabloidization than the *Mirror* or the *Times*, evidence from the two

newspapers refutes H1, with data from the *Guardian* neither refuting nor supporting the hypothesis. As longitudinal increases in personalization do not occur in any of the publications, H4 is neither supported nor refuted by data from the *Guardian* and the *Sun*, with evidence from the *Mirror* and the *Times* suggesting a reversal of the hypothesis.

Table 6.8b. Personalization, 2006 – 2009

	2006/2007, pmw ³²	2008/2009, pmw	% change
1 st PP			
<i>Guardian</i>	8664	8942	3.2% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	14264	1326	90.7% decrease
<i>Times</i>	8820	7432	15.7 % decrease
<i>Sun</i>	16784	15008	10.6% decrease
2 nd PP			
<i>Guardian</i>	3218	3528	9.7 % increase
<i>Mirror</i>	4361	4363	.06% increase
<i>Times</i>	3593	3172	11.7% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	4235	4904	15.8% increase
Private Verbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	1050	1102	5.1% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	1796	1658	7.7% decrease
<i>Times</i>	1226	1088	11.2% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	1811	1688	6.8% decrease

6.8c. Analysis: Markers of Sensationalism

While indices of sensationalism decline in the *Mirror* and the *Times*, proxies of the value increase in the *Sun*, and remain the same in the *Guardian*. The overall magnitude of shifts seen is minor, with each of the 3 newspapers experiencing shifts only undergoing a change of statistical significance with one linguistic marker. For example, the *Mirror* sees a 12% decrease in amplifiers, the *Times* a 12% decrease in general adverbs and a 13% decrease in general adjectives, and the *Sun*, a 29% increase in superlative general adverbs. Accordingly, while the broadest trend seen is an overall shift away from markers of sensationalism, the degree of this shift is relatively minor. It should be noted, however, that the sensationalism data from

³² Pmw = per million words.

each of the publications suggests a reversal of H1, with data from the *Sun* supporting H4, data from the *Mirror* and the *Times* suggesting a reversal of H4, and evidence from the *Guardian* neither supporting nor refuting H4.

Table 6.8c. Sensationalism, 2006 – 2009

	2006/2007, pmw ³³	2008/2009, pmw	% change
Superlative General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	204	196	4.3% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	222	222	No change
<i>Times</i>	189	199	5.6% increase
<i>Sun</i>	182	237	29.3% increase
Superlative Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	547	582	6.4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	334	317	5.5% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	570	561	1.6% decrease
<i>Times</i>	326	319	2% decrease
Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	3341	3389	1.4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	3428	3193	6.9% decrease
<i>Times</i>	3359	3076	8.5% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	3361	3212	4.4% decrease
Amplifiers			
<i>Guardian</i>	859	846	1.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	707	626	11.5% decrease
<i>Times</i>	806	743	7.8% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	668	609	8.9% decrease
General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	24060	24061	.003% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	20610	19891	3.5% decrease
<i>Times</i>	23077	20334	11.9% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	21450	19970	6.9% decrease
General Adjectives			
<i>Guardian</i>	60931	61577	1.1% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	54218	52898	2.4% decrease
<i>Times</i>	64005	55556	13.2% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	56000	54126	3.2% decrease

6.8d. Analysis: Quotes

Two of the newspapers experience a decrease in quotes; this is the first longitudinal drop in quotes seen in the data analysis thus far. It is the *Times* and the *Sun* that experience this decline, the former with a drop of 16% and the latter with a drop of 13%. This finding is

³³ Pmw = per million words.

particularly surprising in view of the increased ease through which a quote may be obtained with the ascendance of the Internet, Web 2.0, and social media. With regard to the hypotheses, data from the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* support H1, with evidence from the *Times* and the *Sun* suggesting a reversal of H4. Data from the *Times* neither supports or refutes H1, with data from the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* neither supporting or refuting H4.

Table 6.8d. Quotes, 2006 – 2009

Quotes	2006/2007, pmw ³⁴	2008/2009, pmw	% change
<i>Guardian</i>	28921	27570	4.7% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	33475	32189	3.8% decrease
<i>Times</i>	28513	23969	15.9% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	37060	32430	12.5% decrease

6.9. Overview

The predominant corpus linguistic trend seen across publications during the 2006 – 2009 period is a shift away from markers of tabloidization; 3 of the 4 publications experience declines in markers of personalization and sensationalism, while stability is seen in indices of each value in the *Guardian*. In terms of the *Sun* and *Times*' move from Wapping to Broxbourne, the only shift towards tabloid elements seen in corpus linguistic data is a slight increase in sensationalism in the *Sun*; the predominant shifts seen in the two publications are ones away from tabloid values. Accordingly, H1, which anticipated greater evidence of tabloidization in the *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Guardian* than the *Sun*, is not supported by corpus linguistic data, as data from the other 3 publications predominantly shifts away from tabloid values. With the exception of the *Sun*, findings also do not support H4: in contrast to the

³⁴ Pmw = per million words.

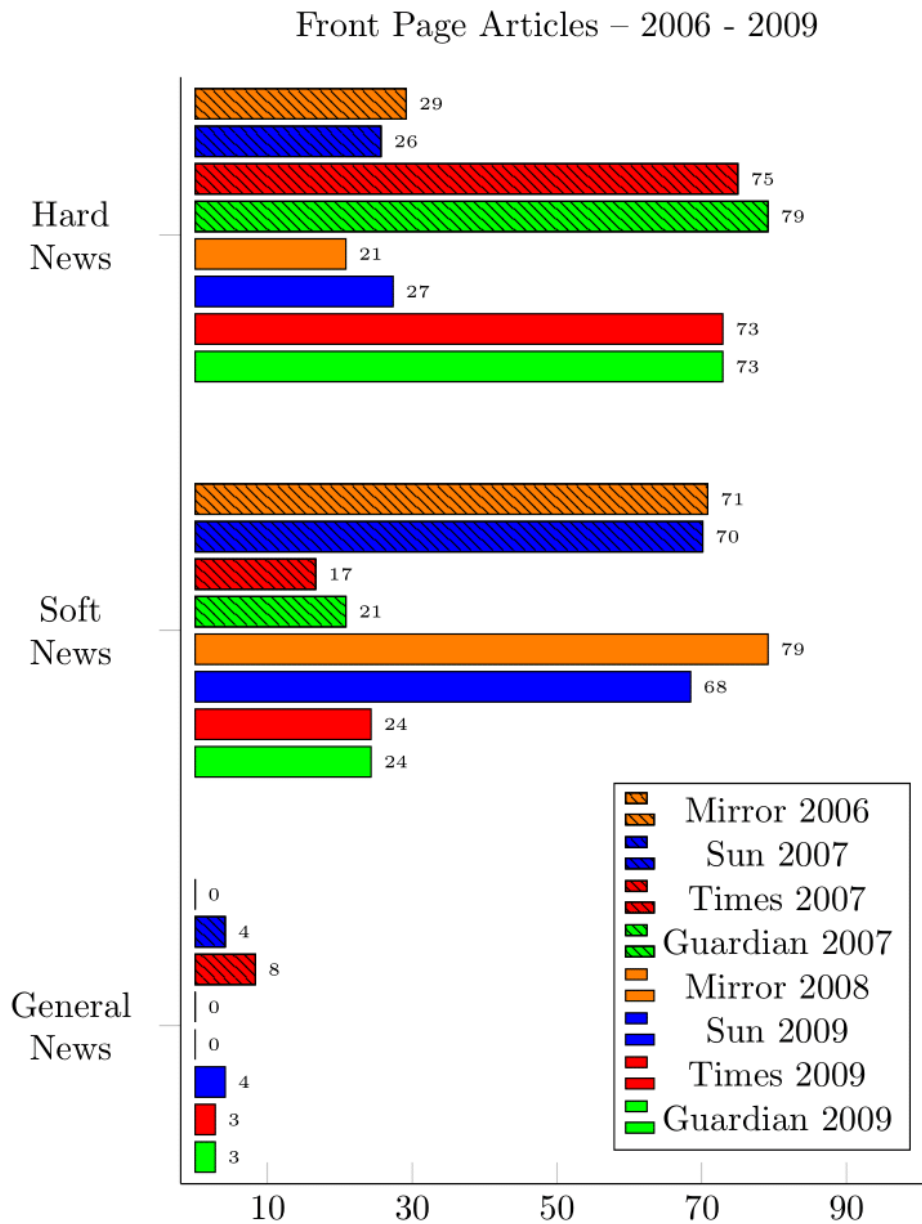
anticipated longitudinal growth in markers of tabloidization across the publications, such increases do not occur in the *Guardian*, *Times*, or *Mirror*.

6.10. Content Analysis Findings: 2006 – 2009

Across the 2006 – 2009 period, (see figure 6.10a), the configuration of article types in each of the 4 newspapers remains the same (see figure 6.10a). A point of note with regard to similarities across article types is the similarity between article type data from the *Guardian* and *Times* from 2009; the configuration of news article types is the same across publications, despite variation in the topics of stories covered therein.

Thus, with regard to the hypotheses, content analytic data neither supports nor refutes H1, which anticipated the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Mirror* to show more evidence of tabloidization than the *Mirror*. Similarly, as none of the publications undergo a diachronic increase in tabloid content or a decline in ‘quality’ content, H4 is neither supported nor refuted. Accordingly, in terms of News International’s relocation to Broxbourne, shifts in content configurations are not seen in the *Sun* or in the *Times*.

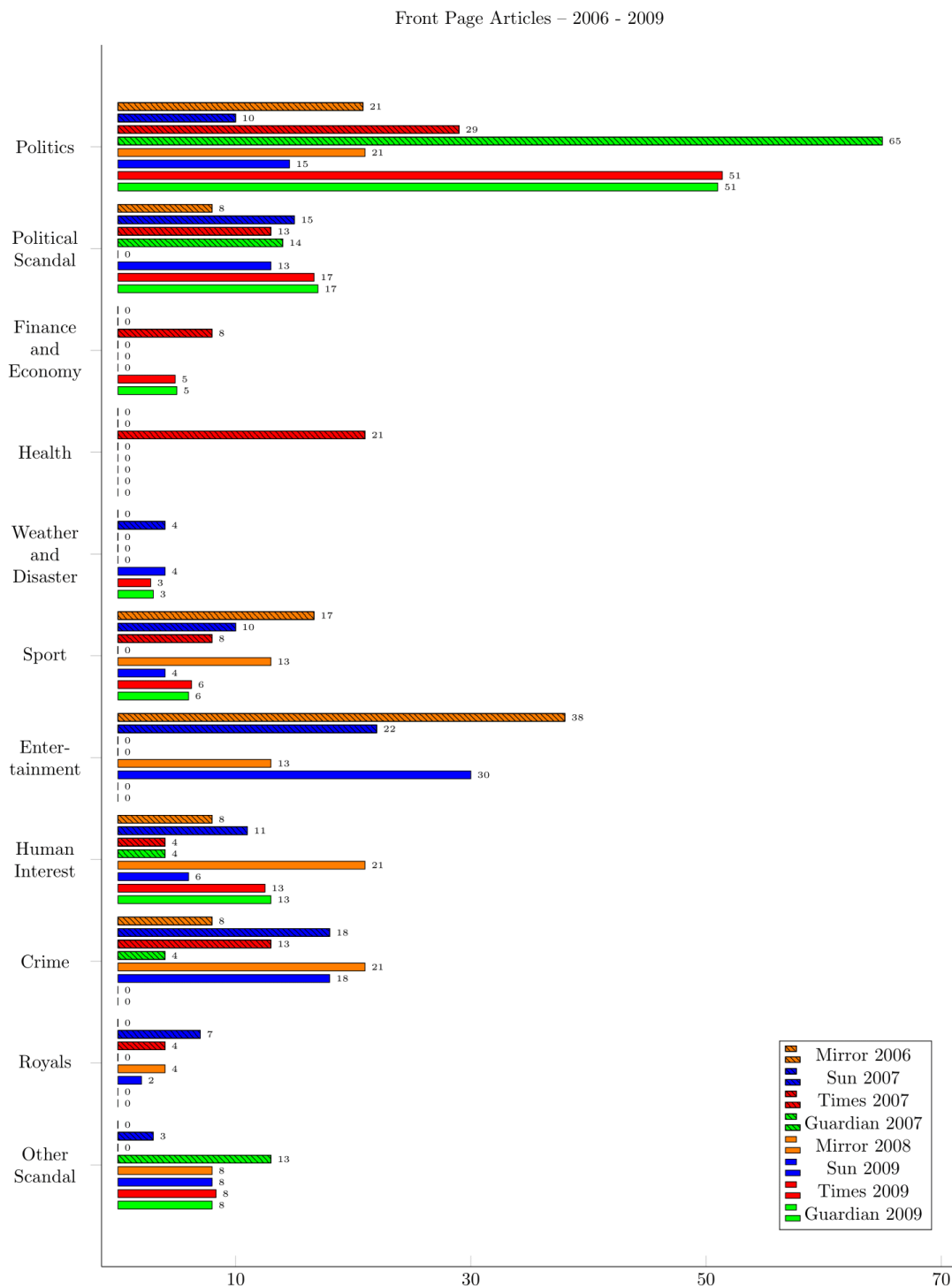
Figure 6.10a. *Guardian, Times, Sun (2007 & 2009), and Mirror (2006 & 2008)*, Percentage of Articles by Category



With regard to article topics, substantial increases and declines are seen in specific types of stories in each of the publications. Within the ‘hard’ news topics, political stories increase by over 20 percentage points in the *Times* and decrease by 14 percentage-point in the *Guardian*. With regard to ‘soft’ news article topics, entertainment stories decline substantially in the *Mirror*, dropping from 38 percent to 13 percent of stories across 2006 and 2008, while human

interest stories grow by 12 percentage points and crime stories grow by 13 percentage points in the tabloid during this period. The only change seen in 'general' news story topics occurs in the *Times*, which sees a 21 percentage point drop in health stories.

Figure 6.10b. *Guardian, Times, Sun (2007 & 2009), and Mirror (2006 & 2008), Percentage of Articles by Topic*



6.11. Summary and Composite Tabloidization Measure: Corpus Linguistic and Content Analytic Findings, 2006 – 2009

In general, for the 2006 – 2009 period, the overall shifts indicated through the analyses by individual feature are reflected in the composite tabloidization measures. An exception to this trend is the increase in ‘quality’ elements seen across data points in the *Times*, contrasting with the stability seen across the publication’s markers of ‘information-orientation’ and ‘hard’ news coverage. The decline in tabloid elements seen in the publication, however, aligns with the drops seen across the corpus linguistic proxies for tabloid characteristics. In the *Mirror*, the decline seen across markers of tabloid values is also seen in a decrease across the corresponding composite measures. Interestingly, in 2006, both the ‘quality’ and tabloid elements composite measures are positive, or above the average observed over time in the publication, and dip below zero, or below the average observed over time in the tabloid, in 2008. As shown in Table 6.11, both the *Mirror* and the *Times* see longitudinal shifts for both tabloid and ‘quality’ composite measures which cross 0, or the mean value for each across the thesis’ data points, suggesting that substantial shifts are seen across tabloid and ‘quality’ elements for the two newspapers during this period.

Table 6.11. Composite Tabloidization Measures, 2006 - 2009

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Guardian</i> 2007	.773	.225
<i>Guardian</i> 2009	.268	.408
<i>Mirror</i> 2006	.101	.219
<i>Mirror</i> 2008	-.452	-.008
<i>Times</i> 2007	-.136	.479
<i>Times</i> 2009	.959	-.138
<i>Sun</i> 2007	-.129	-.099
<i>Sun</i> 2009	-.148	-.237

While a lack of change is seen across each of the 4 corpus linguistic categories and each of the news type categories in the *Guardian*, the composite ‘quality’ and tabloid elements measures

show a slight decline in the former and slight growth in the latter. In the *Sun*, shifts of a small magnitude are seen, with ‘quality’ elements declining from -.129 to -.148 reflecting the small decline seen in markers of ‘information-orientation’ in the publication. While tabloid elements, in the form of an increase in sensationalism and a decline in quotes, conflict one another, the composite measure of tabloid elements indicates a small shift away from tabloid values.

Table 6.11a. Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 2006 - 2009

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sun</i>
Trends Observed	Decline in CQM ³⁵ Increase in CTM ³⁶	Decline in CQM Decline in CTM	Increase in CQM Decline in CTM	Decline in CQM Decline in CTM
H1	Supported	Not Supported or Refuted	Not Supported	Not Supported
H4	Supported	Not Supported	Refuted	Not Supported

Drawing from the analysis across individual features, corpus linguistic and content analytic data predominantly do not support H1 or H4, and composite tabloidization measure data predominantly resonate these results. A finding of particular note during this period is the stability observed in the *Guardian* across corpus linguistic and content analytic data. During this time period, changes are not seen in any of the values or in the proportional configuration of news story types. This consistency is remarkable particularly in view of the combination of financial and technological flux occurring during the 2006 – 2009 years.

³⁵ CQM = Composite ‘Quality’ Measure

³⁶ CTM = Composite Tabloid Measure

Table 6.11b. Feature by Feature Findings and Hypotheses, 2006 - 2009

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sun</i>
Trends Observed	Stability across CL ³⁷ and CA ³⁸ findings	Decrease in CL tabloid indices, stability across CA findings	Decrease in CL tabloid indices, stability across CA findings	Decrease in 'IO,' increase in quotes, decrease in sensationalism. Stability across CA findings.
H1	Not Supported or Refuted	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported
H4	Not Supported or Refuted	Not Supported	Not Supported	Not Supported

6.12. Overview: 1998 – 2009

6.12a. Corpus Linguistics: 1998 – 2009

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.

Table 6.12. (Print) Circulation of the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Sun*, 1998 – 2009

Year	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Sun</i>
1998	385,000	790,000	2.31 mil	3.6 mil
1999	391,000	750,000	³⁹	3.73 mil
2000	402,000	726,000	2.270 mil	3.557 mil
2001	410,000	734,000	2.149 mil	3.637 mil
2006	326,000	623,000	1.48 million	2.96 million
2007	311,000	602,000	1.42 million	2.93 million
2008	301,000	586,000	1.30 million	2.867 million
2009	272,000	536,000	1.179 million	2.88 million
1998 – 2009 % Change	29.4 % decrease	32.2 % decrease	49.0% decrease	20.0% decrease

³⁷ CL = Corpus Linguistic.

³⁸ CA = Content Analytic.

³⁹ Print circulation figure for the *Mirror* from 1999 could not be located.

In line with the print circulation figures for the 4 publications, and due to the absence of annual revenue data for the publications from the years of interest, the *Mirror* can be seen experience the greatest financial difficult during the 1998 – 2009 period. A substantial 49% drop is seen in the publication’s print circulation during the course of this 12-year period, a decline which is approximately 17 percentage points higher than the newspaper with the second largest decline during this period, the *Times*. Accordingly, H1 anticipates the *Mirror* to show more evidence of tabloidization than the other 3 newspapers between 1998 and 2009.

The predominant trend seen across the different values and publications is towards a decline in the linguistic markers of ‘information-orientation’ and personalization, with declines also seen in quotes in two of the publications. Corpus linguistic data largely does not support H1, H2, or H4, with the exception of sensationalism data with regard to H2 and H4. Table 6.12a listing diachronic change in each of the corpus linguistic features is contained in Appendix 2.

Over the course of this period, a shift away from markers of ‘information-orientation’ is another trend seen across the 3 of newspapers. With the *Guardian* as the exception, each of the publications experiences an overarching decline in proxies of the value. The *Times* experiences the greatest drops, undergoing an 18% decrease in article length and an 11% decrease in sentence length. The *Mirror* also sees a similar decline, of 19%, in article length, and the *Sun* sees a similar 23% decrease in the proxy. Shifts seen across ‘information-orientation’ markers across the 3 newspapers are roughly equal to one another, thus neither supporting nor refuting H1, and suggesting a reversal of H2 and H4. The shift towards shorter articles is a particularly notable one, suggesting an association between the ascendance of the Internet and news texts that are briefer.

Decreases are also the prominent trend observed in proxies of personalization, wherein 3 of the 4 newspapers experience overall declines in the value. A particularly sharp drop is seen in the *Mirror*, wherein a 91% decrease in first person pronouns occurs. The magnitude of this decline dwarfs the one increase that is seen across the indices examined in the publication, which is the 10% increase that takes place in the *Mirror's* private verbs. A decrease in first person pronouns is also seen in the *Sun*, at 22%, and the decrease seen in the *Guardian* takes place within second person pronouns, which drop by 15%. As the *Mirror* undergoes the most significant drops in markers of personalization, proxies of this value suggest a reversal of H1, whereby the *Mirror* becomes less tabloid-like; personalization data also suggests a reversal of H2 and H4. The *Times* is the one publication wherein overall shifts in markers of personalization do not take place during this 11-year period.

In contrast to trends seen across markers of 'information-orientation' and personalization, the shifts seen across the tabloid and 'quality' newspapers' proxies of sensationalism diverge from one another. While indices of the value decrease in the tabloids, an overall increase occurs in the 'qualities.' Interestingly, the increases observed in the *Guardian* and the *Times* derive from a surge in general adjectives: in the former, this increase is 90%, and in the latter, 77%. The magnitude of these changes outweigh the moderate decreases seen in the *Guardian's* use of superlative general adverbs, superlative degree adverbs, and amplifiers combined, as well as those seen in the *Times's* superlative degree adverbs, amplifiers, and general adverbs combined, respectively. In the tabloid newspapers, interestingly, increases are also seen in one marker, superlative degree adverbs, across both publications, and this shift is of the same magnitude, 11% in both the *Mirror* and the *Sun*. These small shifts, however, are outweighed by the number of decreases seen across other markers of sensationalism - superlative degree adverbs, degree adverbs, amplifiers, general

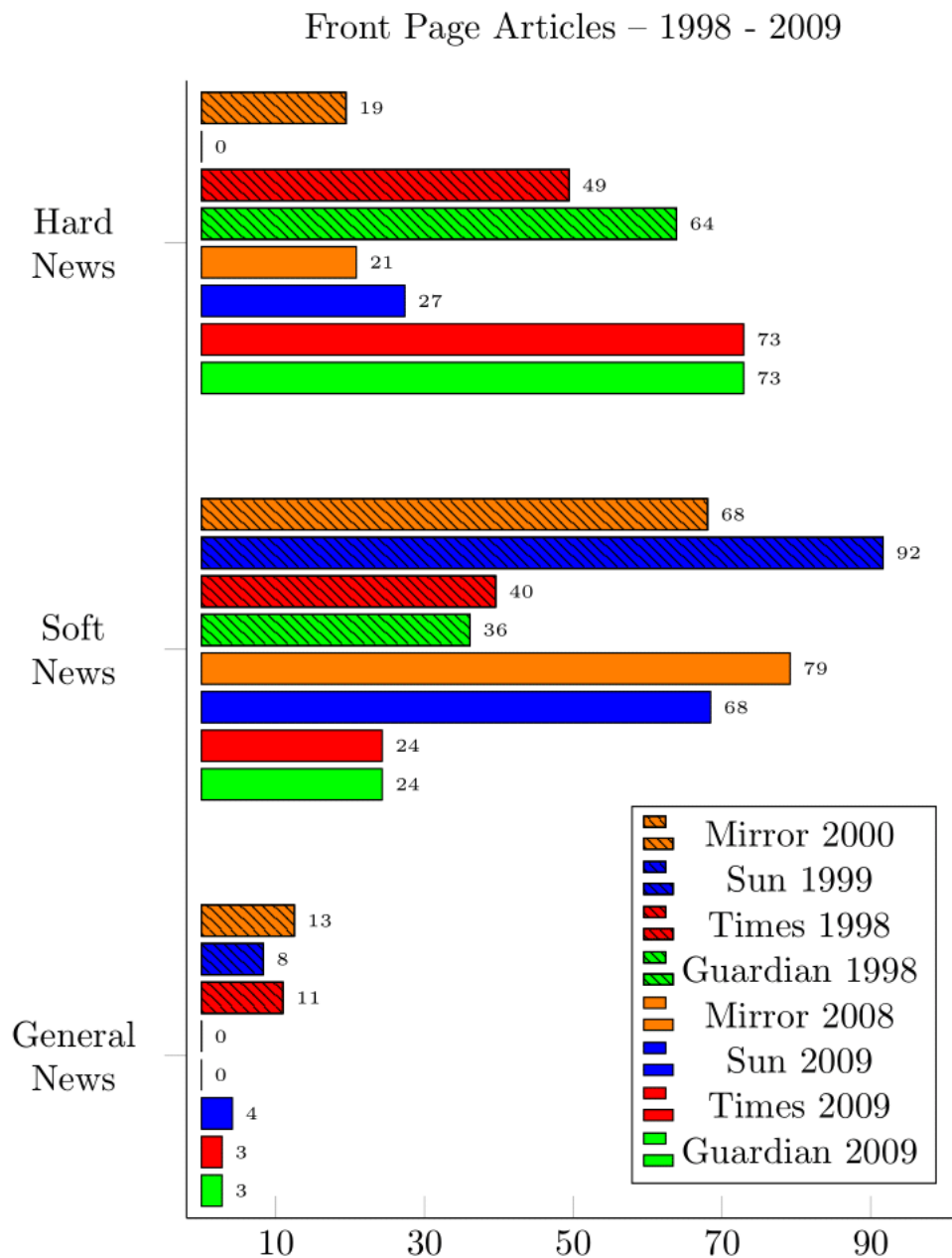
adverbs, and general adjectives - combined. Accordingly, sensationalism data from the *Guardian* and the *Times* suggest a reversal of H1 and provide support for H2 and H4.

In contrast to the trend seen during the 1968 – 1987 time period, two of the 4 publications experience a decline in quotes. These publications are the *Guardian*, which sees a 58% decrease, and the *Sun*, which sees a 16% drop. The decline seen in quotes may account for the decreases seen in markers of personalization across the two publications, however, the indices of personalization which decrease vary across the two publications: while a decline in second person pronouns occurs in the *Guardian*, a decrease in first person pronouns occurs in the *Sun*. Further, the *Mirror*, which experiences a more substantial decline in the form of a major drop in first person pronouns as well as a decrease in private verbs, does not see a decline in quotes, which indicates that a shift may be taking place in primary, or journalistic discourse, as opposed to quoted speech. Thus, data from quoted speech does not support H1, H2, or H4, and instead suggests a reversal of latter two hypotheses.

6.12b. Content Analysis: 1998 – 2009

During the course of the 1998 – 2009 timeframe, each of the publications experience shifts in the proportions of different news article types constituting front-page coverage. The *Times* and the *Sun*, the two Murdoch-owned publications, both see increases in ‘hard’ news stories and declines in ‘soft’ news coverage, the *Mirror* undergoes an increase in ‘soft’ news stories and a drop in ‘general’ news reporting, while a drop in ‘soft’ news stories occurs in the *Guardian*. Accordingly, content analytic data supports H1; while findings from the *Mirror* support H2 and H4, data from the other 3 publications suggest a reversal of the two hypotheses. Several other shifts regarding the type of news story as well as news story topic merit mention.

Figure 6.12a. *Guardian & Times (1998), Sun (1999), Mirror (2000) and Mirror (2008), Guardian, Times, and Sun (2009), Percentage of Articles by Category*



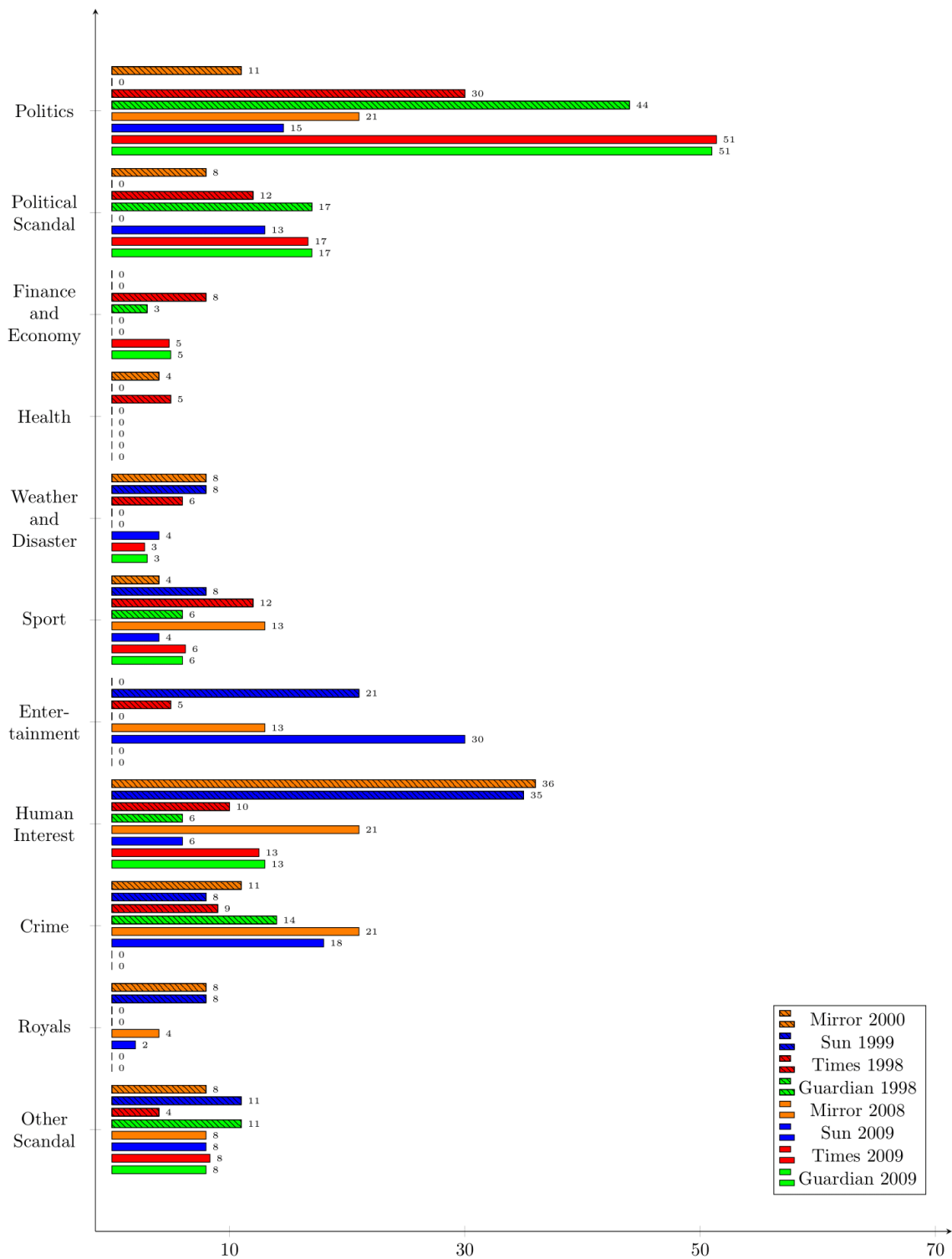
In terms of story topics, growth in politics and political scandal stories account for the increases in 'hard' news stories seen in the *Times* and *Sun*. With the exception of the *Times* in 1998, where finance/economy articles account for 8% of front-page news stories, across all 4 newspapers, finance/economy topics comprise less than 5% of page one news coverage at each data point at the beginning and end of the 1998 – 2009 period. This observation is

particularly interesting in view of the economic turmoil experienced within the newspaper industry and more broadly, the global economy during the final set of data points, in 2008 and 2009. In the context of the 'quality' newspapers, this is perhaps particularly surprising.

While 'soft' news coverage decreases in the *Times*, *Sun*, and *Guardian*, this type of reporting increases in the *Mirror*. Interestingly, changes of statistical significance are not seen in any of the 'soft' news story topics in the *Times*; rather, a set of small shifts across these different topics amount to a broader overall decrease in 'soft' news coverage. The decrease in 'soft' news seen in the *Sun* is of a greater magnitude, from 92% of front-page reporting in 1999 to 68% in 2008. The 'soft' news topics that see shifts are human interest stories, which decline in both the *Mirror* and the *Sun*, crime coverage, which drops from 14% to 0% of front-page coverage in the *Guardian* alongside increases in two tabloids, and entertainment stories, which increase in both the *Sun* and the *Mirror*.

Figure 6.12b. Guardian & Times (1998), Sun (1999), Mirror (2000) and Mirror (2008), Guardian, Times, and Sun (2009), Percentage of Articles by Topic

Front Page Articles – 1998 - 2009



6.13. Composite Tabloidization Measures and Conclusions: 1998 – 2009 Period

On a broader level, a tabloidization, entailing an ascension of values and content traditionally characteristic of tabloids, is not seen during the 1998 – 2009 period. This is an unanticipated finding, which is reflected in the lack of support for H1, H2, and H4, with the exception of content analytic data from the *Mirror*, with regard to each of the 3 hypotheses. This predominant trend is in fact seen across shifts in the composite tabloidization measures: longitudinal change seen across these measures shows a shift away from tabloid elements and towards ‘quality’ elements in all 4 of the publications. The slight shift towards ‘quality’ elements and away from tabloid characteristics in the *Mirror* can be understood as a result of shifts under the 10% error threshold which accumulated across individual proxies in the tabloid.

Table 6.13. Composite Tabloidization Measures, 1998 - 2009

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Guardian</i> 1998	-.941	.614
<i>Guardian</i> 2009	.268	.408
<i>Mirror</i> 2000	-.756	.063
<i>Mirror</i> 2008	-.452	-.008
<i>Times</i> 1999	.268	.231
<i>Times</i> 2009	.959	-.138
<i>Sun</i> 2007	-.928	.805
<i>Sun</i> 2009	-.148	-.237

During the 1998 – 2009 period, disjuncture between the presence of values traditionally characteristic of the tabloid and ‘quality’ newspapers, and the type of articles traditionally distinctive of each newspaper type, emerges. With regard to markers of ‘information-orientation,’ with the exception of the *Guardian*, decreases in the value, which occur across the other 3 publications, are seen alongside either increases in ‘hard’ news stories or stability in this type of coverage. Thus, a trend arises whereby the values traditionally characteristic of ‘quality’ newspapers are decreasing in prominence in the type of news coverage traditionally

distinctive of 'quality' newspapers, particularly in the two Murdoch publications, the *Sun* and the *Times*.

Conversely, in the *Mirror*, the declines in markers of personalization and sensationalism, and in quotes, alongside an increase in 'soft' news stories suggests a trend whereby traditional tabloid values are becoming less salient in the type of stories traditionally characteristic of tabloids. The reconfiguration of traditional tabloid and 'quality' journalistic values in traditional tabloid and 'quality' newspaper article types suggests a certain homogenization of news reporting, whereby 'quality' journalistic values may be less salient in 'quality' news stories and tabloid journalistic values are less salient in tabloid-like news stories. This notion, however, is somewhat modified by composite tabloidization measure findings, which show increases in 'quality' elements and declines in tabloid elements across each of the publications. Drawing from the findings across corpus linguistic, content analytic, and composite tabloidization measure data, the implications for the democracy-enhancing function of journalism can be viewed as largely salutary; the stability initially observed in markers of 'quality' journalism amount to an accumulated increase in 'quality' characteristics, and accordingly, suggests that 'information-orientation' may actually be increasing, and/or that 'quality' news story types are increasing in publications other than the *Times* and the *Sun*.

During this 11-year time period, several trends emerge with regards to similarities across the publications. While the *Mirror* and the *Sun* resemble one another in terms of the shifts experienced in journalistic language and values, each undergoing declines in markers of 'information-orientation,' personalization, sensationalism, and in quotes, the *Times* and the *Sun* are the two publications which display the strongest parallels in terms of the shifts seen in types of content. In the *Times* and the *Sun*, 'hard' news stories increase and 'soft' news

articles decline; while differences are seen between markers of the other values, 'information-orientation' also drops in both newspapers. The similarities identified between the two publications may suggest an overarching approach to journalistic output across the Murdoch newspapers. Parallels between the two tabloid publications and the two publications owned by the same conglomerate also suggest the possible agency of ownership model, company specific factors, and tabloid market positioning. The relative stability seen in the *Guardian*, which does not undergo change in any of the content type categories, further highlights differentiation across these different sets of potential tabloidization agents, and also suggests that a trust-based business model may be more conducive to the endurance of journalistic and brand values over time, and despite potential economic and technological challenges.

In terms of possible economic pressures, with the exception of content analytic data from the *Mirror*, increased financial difficulty does not emerge as an agent of tabloidization in the context of the financial crisis of 2008 – 2009. During the 2006 – 2009 period, while 'soft' news stories increase in the *Mirror*, this type of coverage declines in 3 of the publications, while personalization, sensationalism, and quotes either decrease or remain the same in the 4 newspapers, with the exception of sensationalism in the *Guardian* and *Times*. This finding suggests that financial pressure, at least in certain contexts, does not act as an agent of tabloidization. Excluding the *Mirror*, which was anticipated to show the most evidence of tabloidization in view of its large decline in print circulation during this period, the lack of supporting evidence from this intense period of financial hardship is a particularly unexpected outcome.

The technological factors examined - the means to produce more content more cheaply and increased interactivity – predominantly do not emerge as agents of a

tabloidization. The two exceptions to this overarching finding across the 1998 -2009 period arise from the *Mirror*, where content analytic findings support H2 and H4. Interestingly, the *Mirror's* increase in 'soft' news coverage takes place during the 2006 – 2009 period, in response to the introduction of social sharing features; it is also possible that the tabloid's launch of an online version took longer to impact on the publication.

On the basis of findings from the 1968 – 1987 period, and in line with the literature, a greater ascension in personalization across the newspapers might have been expected in the wake of the Internet's ascension. Interestingly, during the 1998 – 2009 period, markers of personalization decrease in 3 of the publications, while remaining stable in the *Times*. A decline of particular note is that seen in quotes, which drop in the *Guardian* and the *Sun*. Sensationalism is rather the one tabloid value which sees increases during these years, augmenting in the two 'quality' publication, suggesting that with the ascension of the Internet and introduction of social sharing features, sensationalism is becoming increasingly characteristic of 'quality' news publications.

In line with the decline seen in markers of personalization and in quotes, an augmentation in stories reporting on popular culture topics, such as entertainment, sports, and scandal, might have been anticipated on the basis of the literature (e.g. Conboy 2002), in particular in line with the notion that (new) technologies serve as conduits for popular culture. Such an increase is only seen to occur in the entertainment coverage of the two tabloids, and this increase is moderate. Thus, content analytic findings do not indicate that a proliferation of coverage on popular culture topics has occurred in the wake of the Internet's ascendance.

The lack of more substantial increases in values conveying emotional capital and reporting on popular culture, and more broadly, the absence of a tabloidization, with the exception of content in the *Mirror*, represents a body of evidence against assertions of a

tabloidization occurring in the wake of the rise and widespread use of the Internet. This data is particularly strong in the form of composite tabloidization measure findings, which even suggest growth in 'quality' elements and a decline in tabloid elements across all 4 of the newspapers.

In summary, it can be stated that from one year before and through to the end of the period examined in this thesis in which the Internet is in its earlier stages, preceding the Web 3.0 period, that a tabloidization is not seen; rather the reconfiguration of journalistic values and content identified is the reverse of a tabloidization. In the thesis' following chapter, the extent to which the continued growth of the Internet and Web 2.0, and the increasing integration of online functions into everyday life may or may not be associated with shifts in journalistic content and values, is examined.

Chapter 7: Results, 2012 - 2016

7.1. Introduction

The previous chapter analysed corpus linguistic and content analytic data points before and after two key developments in the recent history of newspapers: the introduction of online versions, between 1999 and 2001, and the emergence of social sharing features between 2007 and 2008. This chapter examines corpus linguistic and content analytic findings during the Web 3.0 era, 2012 – 2016. These years were selected for analysis in view of the number of developments of pertinence to journalism, particularly with regard to the online context and the increasing saturation of the Internet in everyday life. In addition to the 4 legacy newspapers which were subject to examination in the previous two chapters, a fifth, digital native publication, the *Huffington Post*, is also subject to analysis in this chapter. As explained in Chapter 2, 'Theorizing Putative Causes of Tabloidization,' and in this chapter's following section, Section 7.2, digital native news publications became a significant feature of the shifted journalism ecology during the Web 3.0 period.

This chapter will begin with an overview of context on the Web 3.0 era, building from the relevant theoretical discussions in the thesis' second chapter. The discussion of Web 3.0 in Section 7.2 will identify specific developments and shifts of pertinence which occurred during this time period. The chapter will then proceed to introduce information pertinent to, *H1: News outlets experiencing greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*, conveying overviews of the financial states of each of the publications leading up to and during the 2012 – 2016 period. Following this, the third section of the chapter, Section 7.3, discusses the corpus linguistic findings from the time period, followed by an overview of these findings in Section 7.4, and with Section 7.5 expounding the contemporaneous content analytic findings. The chapter's final section, 'Composite

Tabloidization Measures and Conclusions,' discusses the composite tabloidization measure data and the key takeaways from the 2012 – 2016 period data analyses, considering the findings with regard to each of the thesis' hypotheses.

7.2. The Web 3.0 Era: 2012 -2016

As discussed in Chapter 2, 'Theorizing Putative Causes of Tabloidization,' the emergence of the Web 3.0 era has been seen to mark a fundamental break from the previous Web 2.0 era. While the latter has been defined in terms of user *participation*, the Web 3.0 context has been understood in terms of user *cooperation* (e.g. Barassi and Treré 2012; Kreps and Kimppa 2015). This user cooperation is conceptualized principally in terms of user-generated data, which, in the Web 3.0 ecology, is used both intensively and extensively to create "new meaning" in new ways (Barassi and Treré 2012, 1272).

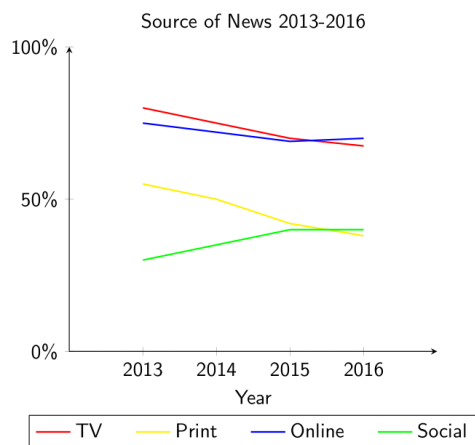
A number of developments and events relevant to the journalistic field merit discussion in order to identify micro and macro level dynamics and frameworks for understanding change and continuity in journalistic values and content in the Web 3.0 context. These are shifts in the mode(s) of news consumption, the decline in newspapers' advertising revenues, the emergence of digital native news outlets, the increasingly widespread use of web metrics, growth in incidental news consumption, the ascension of discourse claiming a proliferation of "fake" news and 'misinformation' online, and declining trust in news producers and institutions more broadly.

The ecology of journalism has profoundly shifted with the emergence of Web 3.0, and in particular, the proliferation of ICTs – smartphones, tablets, wearable technology – and an

adjunct influx of user data. In terms of news access through ICTs, during the 2012 and 2016 period, news consumption through mobile phones and tablets increasingly supplanted the predominance of legacy news in print format. Growth in news consumption through mobile and tablet increased substantially in the first half of the 2012 – 2016 period; while 13% of users reported accessing news via mobile and 8% via tablet in the UK in 2012 (Newman 2012), as displayed in Figures 7.2a and 7.2b, these figures continue to grow from 2013 onwards. Consumption of online news, however, has not increased evenly across certain demographics, with age and nationality emerging as significant determinants of likelihood to access news via computer, mobile, and/or tablets (Newman 2012; Newman and Levy 2013; Newman et al. 2016). For example, people aged 18 - 24 years are more likely to access news via mobile phones than individuals in older age cohorts (Newman et al. 2016); and while 6% of news consumers in the UK access news first via tablet, this figure is 1% in Japan (Newman et al. 2016). Such differences suggest the role of agents exogenous to journalism in determining the mode through which individuals access news.

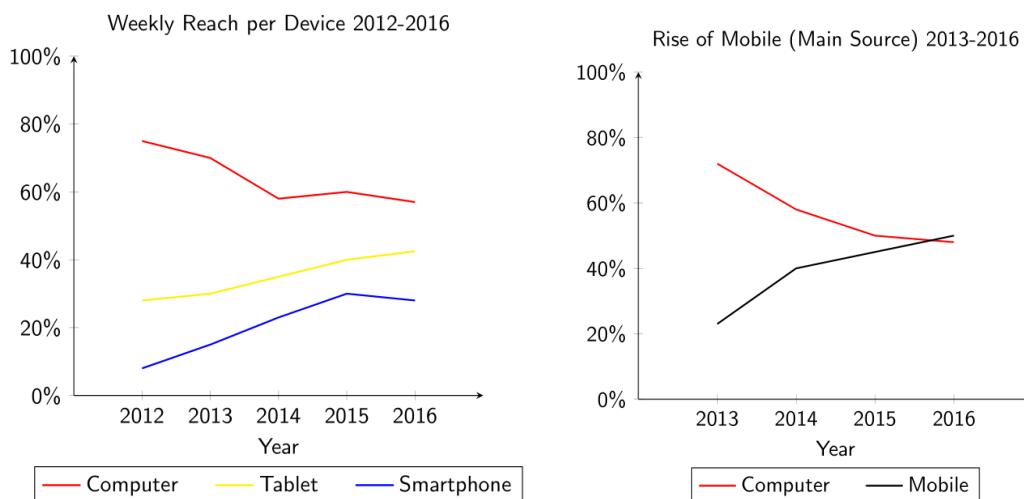
The ascendance of these new formats and growth in online news consumption have, amongst other significant developments, contributed to continuing declines in print circulation and advertising revenues for legacy newspapers (e.g. Olmstead et al. 2012; Picard 2014; McChesney 2016; Picard 2016). This is a drop which has coincided with a rise in discourse predicting a more imminent demise of newspapers (McChesney 2016). As reflected in Tables 7.2a and 7.2b, variation exists across legacy newspapers' contemporaneous fiscal positioning, with the *Guardian*, for example, exhibiting relative strength reflected in financial growth.

Figure 7.2a. Change in Means of News Access in the UK, 2013 - 2016



**Reuters Digital News Report, 2016 (Newman et al. 2016)

Figure 7.2b. Changing Device Use in the UK, 2012 - 2016



*Reuters Digital News Report, 2016 (Newman et al. 2016)

As suggested through figure 7.2c which is featured in the following Subsection 7.2a, 'The News Publications in Context, and with the *Guardian* as something of an outlier, a successful monetization of online news has not accompanied the rise of online news platforms. While the number of individuals accessing online news has increased, the percentage of people paying for online news has remained small: in 2012 in the UK, 4% of those accessing news online paid for it (Newman and Levy 2013), with this figure increasing slightly to 7% in 2014 and remaining at 7% in 2016 (Newman and Levy 2014; Newman et al. 2016). Further, and

having a more significant impact, while advertising was a principal source of revenue in pre-Internet eras, the proliferation of advertising opportunities online lead to a lowering of advertising rates, depleting ad revenues from newspapers' online profits (e.g. Picard 2011; Bakker 2012; Deloitte 2016; Picard 2016). In 2013, national newspaper advertising fell by 8% (Enders Analysis 2014). Between 2014 and 2016, newspaper print advertising revenues on average dropped by 14%, or £162 million, while digital ad revenues only increased by £6 million, from £214 to £220 million (Southern 2017).

Within the Web 3.0 ecosystem, search engines and social media platforms have cannibalized news advertising profits in line with the increasing role of each in directing users to news stories (Olmstead et al. 2012; Newman et al. 2016). In 2012, the 5 biggest technology companies – Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, and Yahoo - collected more than two thirds of ad dollars spent digitally (Olmstead et al. 2012), with this trend continuing to compound. While such a phenomenon suggests that news outlets should increasingly cooperate with other media and non-media companies (Picard 2011), this type of collaboration is largely yet to occur.

It is this, Web 3.0 context, wherein digital native news publications have emerged and gained mainstream traction (Bakker 2012; Wu 2016). While initially regarded as niche or “eccentric” by many legacy news organizations and media critics (Wu 2016, 2), outlets such as *BuzzFeed* and the *Huffington Post* have gained widespread popularity and legitimacy (Wu 2016). For example, in the UK, by 2015, the *Huffington Post* was, with the exception of the *Mail Online*, more popular than any legacy newspaper's online version (see Table 7.2b); by 2016, 45% of respondents reported having accessed news through digital born outlets within the last week (Newman et al. 2016). Digital native news organizations have often been recipients of massive financial investments and turned larger advertising revenues than their

legacy newspaper competitors (Jurkowitz 2015). While organizations such as the *Huffington Post* have benefited from free work by bloggers, numerous journalists at legacy newspapers have also jumped ship to digital native organizations (Wu 2016), with one such journalist, David Wood, for example, even earning the *Huffington Post* a Pulitzer prize in 2012. Accordingly, digital native news outlets such as the *Huffington Post* have been associated with ‘creative destruction’ in the newspaper industry (Nee 2013; Doyle 2014), whereby newer, more innovative companies surpass the financial success of or even supplant their legacy counterparts. Indeed, publications such as the *HuffPo* have been lauded by certain commentators and scholars for their ‘dynamic capabilities,’ or ability to innovate amidst changes in the industry’s ecology (Doyle 2014). In contrast to their initial reputation, underscored is the capacity of digital born news outlets to produce journalism in the public interest, while remaining profitable.

The relative financial success of digital native outlets has, however, often been attributed to low-cost, sensationalist, click-oriented headlines and content (Bakker 2012; Wu 2016). With regard to low costs, the *Huffington Post*, for example, has in addition to content from unpaid bloggers (Bakker 2012), often featured content largely in the form of news wires, press releases, and RSS’ (Bakker 2012). The proliferation of unoriginal journalistic content associated with digital born publications has, further, more broadly been associated with the intense competition and importance of speed characteristic of the Web 3.0 context, with shifts towards a larger share of unoriginal content also seen at legacy news outlets (Boczkowski 2009a, 2010). Boczkowski even states, “in an age of information plenty, what consumers get is more of the same” (Boczkowski 2010, 6). Such claims, as with their earlier iterations, tend to draw from intuition or from qualitative methods which are limited in scope, rather than from a large body of longitudinal, empirical data.

Similar to the spread of unoriginal journalistic content, web metrics were also initially associated with outlets such as *BuzzFeed*, *Quartz*, and the *Huffington Post*, largely in view of the sensationalized, clickbait features seen as characteristic of their content (Cherubini and Nielsen 2016). By 2016, web metrics were described as “ubiquitous” at major news organizations (Petre 2015, 2). The ascension of editorial analytics has also been associated with increased competition between news organizations (Cherubini and Nielsen 2016), and accordingly, with increasing financial pressure at news outlets in the Web 3.0 context. Interestingly, the literature on web metrics has focused on digital native and ‘quality’ legacy newspapers, omitting tabloid news sites from examination. The rise of editorial analytics as a potential deterrent to the prominence and prevalence of ‘hard’ news coverage, and in particular, topics such as climate change, is a common element of journalism scholarship, but one which has only been supported through a small, while growing, number of ethnographic studies.

In theoretical terms, the rise of web metrics has been associated with a broader turn to “quantification” as well as the increasing role played by audiences in news production processes. A surging demand for quantification, which Espeland and Stevens (2008) define simply as, “the production and communication of numbers” (Espeland and Stevens 2008, 401), has been dated back to the 1980s, reflecting also in the “third wave of marketing” which emerged in that decade, discussed in Chapter 2. With the ascension of the Internet, ICTs, search engines, and social media, a wider range of data on a larger number of individuals has become available to online news outlets. Hereby, news organizations have acquired the ability to customize the visibility of news stories to audiences and to individuals on the basis of demographic, opinion, and content preferences. In this way, the ascendance of web

metrics reflects key characteristics of Web 3.0, whereby user data and preferences are utilized to create new configurations of journalistic content and values.

As social media have increasingly become principal sources of news discovery (Newman and Levy 2013; Newman et al. 2016; Fletcher and Nielsen 2018), incidental news consumption has also become an increasingly common and central means of news consumption. Incidental news consumption has been shown to have broadened the news exposure of individuals in the UK, and in particular, social media users who are in younger age cohorts (Fletcher and Nielsen 2018). The effect of incidental news consumption is shown to be particularly strong on younger social media users in terms of their potential engagement with democratic processes (Fletcher and Nielsen 2018), and accordingly, the content and values characteristic of incidentally consumed news stories is of particular significance at the socio-political level. This is to say that a tabloidization of news that is consumed incidentally would be of significance to an increasingly large proportion of news consumers. Fragmentation, another element often associated with incidental news consumption, ostensibly stands to detract from the democracy-enhancing potential of this type of news consumption (Boczkowski, Mitchelstein, and Matassi 2018), and is an element of the online news ecosystem that has been met with concern by media scholarship (e.g. Kook 2009; Bennett 2012; Bastos 2016).

Possible shifts in journalistic content and values associated with the recent developments in the online media-sphere are also of particular significance in view of debates regarding online misinformation. “Fake” news and online misinformation have become the subject of increasingly prolific and salient debates, promulgating widespread concerns as to possible impacts of this type of content on the polity at national and international levels (Rainie, Anderson, and Albright 2017). As discussed in the thesis’ second chapter, it is

important to note that “fake” news and misinformation are not a phenomenon that is new or distinct to the Web 3.0 era, having been dated as far back as a smear campaign by Augustus against Marc Antony in 44 B.C. (e.g. Posetti and Matthews 2018), for example. With the ascension of the Internet and the increasing tendency of individuals to consume news online, shifts in gatekeeping dynamics and broader declines in public trust have been identified as putative agents in an ascending misinformation trend (Albright 2017; Nielsen and Graves 2017). While features of the online ecosystem have often been blamed as agents of misinformation, a possible decline in ‘quality’ news values and content could be an even more widespread and detrimental phenomenon.

The association between contemporaneous notions of “fake” news and misinformation, and the emergence of a ‘post-truth’ era are of particular relevance to this thesis. In 2016, ‘post-truth’ was named word of the year by the Oxford English Dictionary, where it is defined as “the quality of seeming or being felt to be true, even if not necessarily true” (Oxford English Dictionary 2016). The notion of facts and/or truth having become fundamentally undermined and even vacated of meaning (Godler 2019), overlaps with key defining characteristics of postmodernism, wherein a crucial break from an accepted objective core of truth and rationality are seen to have led to a fundamentally new stage of history. Postmodern conceptions of the subjective dynamics of truth can be seen to lend greater scope – that is beyond the context of journalism, and across the broader socio-cultural context - to the ascending salience of “fake” news and misinformation.

Perceptions of fundamental shifts in meaning and the prominence of facts are further reflected in declining levels of public trust in journalists, the media, and institutions more broadly. With regard to journalists, in a 2012 poll, Yougov reported a 27% decline in trust in ‘quality’ news journalists since 2003 (Keller 2012). While polling conducted in the 2016

Reuters Institute Digital News Report states that 50% of UK respondents trust traditional news, defined as “broadcasters and newspapers, including their web offerings” (Newman et al. 2016, 110), a survey conducted by Ipsos Mori during the same year places this figure at 25% (Preston 2016). While in 2016, the British public still held more trust in ‘quality’ journalists than in their tabloid counterparts,⁴⁰ the level of public trust in journalists was still relatively low in the UK: out of 36 countries, the UK ranked 17th in a survey of “trust in news” conducted by the Reuters Institute (Chadwick 2017).

An event distinct to the British context, and of particular significance to a discussion of trust in journalists during this time, is the *News of the World*'s phone-hacking scandal. Revelations of the systematic hacking of phones belonging to public figures as well as ordinary citizens by journalists at the *News of the World* and at UK news publications owned by Rupert Murdoch more broadly, struck a national nerve in 2011 when the tabloid was exposed for hacking into the phone of Milly Dowler, a kidnapped 13 year-old, giving her parents and police false hope that she was alive when she had in fact been murdered. The scandal culminated with the closure of the *News of the World* in 2011, and the 2011 – 2012 Leveson Inquiry into the “culture, practices and ethics of the press.”⁴¹ Reporting on the scandal, spearheaded by Nick Davies, a *Guardian* journalist who scooped the story in 2009, exposed widespread criminal activity by the *News of the World* and *Sun* editors and journalists, many of whom had also lied under oath about their knowledge of and participation in these events (Davies 2014). The criminal activity at the heart of the scandal was not a function of Internet era affordances - landlines of public figures were similarly hacked – but rather of competition and a desire for

⁴⁰ A reported 37% to 42% of the British public trust tabloid journalists, whereas this figure is between 58% and 66% for ‘quality’ journalists (Newman et al. 2016).

⁴¹ <https://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/about/>.

power at news organizations, particularly, those owned by Rupert Murdoch under the corporate umbrella of *News International* (Davies 2014; Rusbridger 2018).

While the phone-hacking scandal stood to decrease public trust in journalism, it has been argued that trust in the UK press had already hit a nadir. For example, in 2010, the country placed last in a survey of trust in journalists across EU countries (Edelman Trust Barometer 2016). The Reuters Institute usefully distinguishes between trust in journalists and in the news more broadly, positing that the phone-hacking scandal impacted the former more than the latter (Newman et al. 2016). This distinction indicates a personal even more than an institutional association between news consumers and news stories, aligning with the notion of a possible increase in the salience of personalization in the news within the contemporaneous context. It has also been suggested that trust in journalists declined substantially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, with news consumers perceiving journalists' performance in covering the financial downturn as inadequate (Rantanen 2012; Schifferes 2012). Thus, while the phone-hacking scandal revelations may have triggered an expression of public outrage against journalists, high levels of public scepticism about journalists may well have pre-dated this event.

In these ways, the Web 3.0 context represents the emergence of a fundamentally different and challenging framework within which news organizations have had to both adapt and maintain their brand identity. Due to the substantial number of significant technological and economic developments of this time period, each year between 2012 and 2016 is subject to examination.

7.2a. The News Publications in Context

From 2012 onwards, data becomes available for the revenues of the newspaper groups which own the 5 newspapers subject to examination. Data regarding print circulations of the 4 legacy publications as well as the “popularity” (Newman 2012; Newman and Levy 2013; Newman and Levy 2014; Newman, Levy, and Nielsen 2015; Newman et al. 2016) of each 5 newspapers’ online sites is also discussed in this subsection. Accordingly, H1 in particular can be examined using more robust indicators of the newspapers’ financial states for the 2012 – 2016 data points. The available financial, circulation, and online popularity statistics are discussed in more detail.

In the two-year period before 2012, the tabloid publications experience the most dramatic declines in circulation. While this drop is 36% for the *Sun* and 31% for the *Mirror*, the corresponding figures for the ‘quality’ legacy publications are 24% for the *Guardian* and a mere 8% for the *Times*. This positioning with regards to circulation is particularly significant as tabloids rely more heavily on hard copy sales than ‘quality’ newspapers, who draw higher shares of revenues from advertising.

Table 7.2a. (Print) Circulation of the *Guardian*, *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Sun*, 2010 – 2016⁴²

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Sun</i>
2010	289,000	507,000	1,240,000	2,956,000
2011	249,000	441,000	1,186,000	2,822,000
2012	212,000	441,000	1,171,000	2,807,000
2013	194,000	394,000	1,038,000	2,282,000
2014	196,000	382,000	951,000	2,049,000
2015	185,000	397,000	922,000	1,979,000
2016	164,000	404,000	809,000	1,787,000

Over the course of the 2012 and 2016 period, however, the two ‘quality’ publications undergo larger drops in circulation than their tabloid counterparts. While the *Sun*’s print circulation declines by 5% and the *Mirror*’s decreases by 6%, this figure is 27% for the *Guardian* and 13% for the *Times*.

Data regarding the “popularity” of newspapers’ online editions, however, suggests a different narrative. “Popularity” is a term used in the 2012 – 2016 annual Reuters Digital News Reports (Newman 2012; Newman and Levy 2013; Newman and Levy 2014; Newman, Levy, and Nielsen 2015; Newman et al. 2016) to capture audience habits and preferences. As shown in Figure 7.2b, by 2015, the *Huffington Post* is more popular than the legacy newspapers; the digital native outlet ranks third during 2015 and 2016, with the *Guardian* ranking fourth. Before this, however, the *Guardian* is consistently the most popular of the 5 news brands. In fact, by 2016 the *Guardian* is one of the most-visited news sites internationally (Newman,

⁴² Reuters Digital News Reports 2012 – 2016 (Newman 2012; Newman and Levy 2013; Newman and Levy 2014; Newman, Levy, and Nielsen 2015; Newman, Fletcher, Levy, and Nielsen 2016)

Fletcher, Levy, and Nielsen 2016). Further, between 2012 and 2014, the publication is the only one of the 4 legacy newspapers subject to examination which registers in the top 10 most popular online news brands in the UK; by 2014, the *Guardian's* website was attracting approximately 90 million unique users per month, with 23 million users hailing from the U.S. and 4 million from Australia (Deloitte 2016).

Table 7.2b. Most Popular Online News Brands, 2012 - 2016⁴³

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	<i>BBC News</i>	<i>BBC News</i>	<i>BBC News Online</i>	<i>BBC News</i>	<i>BBC News online</i>
2	<i>Sky News</i>	<i>Mail Online</i>	<i>Mail Online</i>	<i>Mail Online</i>	<i>Mail Online</i>
3	<i>Yahoo News</i>	<i>Sky News</i>	<i>Sky News</i>	<i>Huffington Post</i>	<i>Huffington Post</i>
4	Local newspaper	<i>Yahoo</i>	<i>Yahoo</i>	<i>Guardian Online</i>	<i>Guardian Online</i>
5	<i>Mail/Mail on Sunday</i>	Local newspaper	<i>Guardian Online</i>	<i>Sky News online</i>	<i>Sky News online</i>
6	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Huffington Post</i>	<i>Yahoo</i>	Local newspaper
7		<i>Google News</i>	Local newspaper	<i>Mirror Online</i>	<i>Buzzfeed News</i>
8		<i>Huffington Post</i>	<i>Telegraph Online</i>	Local newspaper	<i>Telegraph online</i>
9		<i>MSN</i>	<i>Google News</i>	<i>Google News</i>	<i>Mirror online</i>
10		<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>MSN</i>	<i>Telegraph Online</i>	<i>MSN News</i>
11		<i>Sun Online</i>	<i>Mirror Online</i>	<i>MSN</i>	<i>Yahoo News</i>
12			<i>ITV News</i>	<i>Buzzfeed</i>	<i>The Independent/i100 online</i>
13			<i>Buzzfeed</i>	<i>Independent Online</i>	<i>ITV News online</i>
14				<i>ITV News online</i>	<i>Sun online</i>
15				Free city newspaper (e.g. <i>Metro</i>) online	<i>The Lad Bible</i>
16				<i>Times online</i>	<i>Times online</i>

Thus, while the *Guardian* experiences the largest decline in circulation, it enjoys the strongest online popularity of the 4 legacy publications. In fact, and as indicated in Table 7.2c yearly revenues of the *Guardian* are stronger in 2016 than in 2012; this figure for the Guardian Media

⁴³ Publications highlighted in bold are those examined in this dissertation.

Group (GMG) is £196.2 million in 2012 and £209.5 in 2016, an increase of 7%.⁴⁴ By contrast, the Trinity Mirror Group and News Corp. both experience overall declines in revenue between 2012 and 2016. While the Trinity Mirror Group sees a 12% decline in revenue between 2012 and 2016, dropping from £706.5 million to £623.3 million, News Corp, which is registered in the US sees a 3% drop from £5,408 million in 2012 to £ million in 2016.⁴⁵

Table 7.2c. Annual Yearly Revenues, Guardian Media Group, Trinity Mirror Plc, and News Corp.

	<i>Guardian Media Group</i>	<i>Trinity Mirror Plc</i>	<i>New Corp.</i>	<i>AOL</i>	<i>Verizon</i>
2012	£196.2 million	£706.5 million	£5,408 million ⁴⁶	£334 million	
2013	£194.5 million	£663.8 million	£5,621 million	£454.3 million	
2014	£209 million	£636.3 million	£5,154 million	£454.3 million	£77,182 million
2015	£217.5 million	£713.0 million	£5,579 million		£86,138 million
2016	£209.5 million	£623.2 million	£5,246 million		£74,410 million

The financial state of the *Huffington Post* is somewhat more opaque as its parent companies – AOL before June 2014 and thereafter Verizon – are major corporations whose holdings are largely not comprised of news publications. AOL’s \$315/£196.4⁴⁷ million purchase of the *Huffington Post* in 2011, however, has often been referenced in media business commentary as a financial loss (Cohan 2016), whereby the spending of the publication’s owner, Arianna Huffington, surpassed the company’s profits. 2011 has been identified as the one profitable year for the publication, with profits said to be \$30/£18.71⁴⁸ million (Shapiro 2012). While AOL’s profits increased by 25% between 2012 and 2013, it is unlikely that the *Huffington Post*

⁴⁴ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262217/guardian-media-groups-annual-revenue/>.

⁴⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/692155/global-revenue-news-corp/>.

⁴⁶ Annual revenue figures for News Corp, AOL, and Verizon converted from pounds to dollars using the average exchange rate from the corresponding year listed at: <https://www.ofx.com/en-gb/forex-news/historical-exchange-rates/yearly-average-rates/>.

⁴⁷ Historical dollar to pound exchange rate for 2011 applied, as identified at: <https://www.ofx.com/en-gb/forex-news/historical-exchange-rates/yearly-average-rates/>.

⁴⁸ Historical dollar to pound exchange rate for 2011 applied, as identified at: <https://www.ofx.com/en-gb/forex-news/historical-exchange-rates/yearly-average-rates/>.

contributed to an upward financial trend at the conglomerate. Similarly, Verizon's 4% increase in profits between 2014 and 2015, and its 4% decrease in profits between 2015 and 2016 are likely not a direct function of the *Huffington Post*'s yearly earnings. The reported lack of profits at the *Huffington Post* throughout the 2012 – 2016 period should be considered a sign of financial difficulty at the outlet; particularly in view of the business model of its parent companies, the publication's newsroom likely experienced subsequent pressure from upper management (Shapiro 2012; Cohan 2016).

Drawing from the circulation, online popularity, and most significantly, the company revenue data, with regards to H1, we can expect the *Guardian* to show the least evidence of tabloidization, and the *Mirror* to show the most evidence. While the *Sun* experiences a decline in circulation during the 2012 – 2016 period that is 5 percentage points higher than that of the *Mirror*, Trinity Mirror undergoes a drop in yearly revenues that is nearly 10 percent higher than that of News Corp. As financial returns for shareholders are the priority for publicly-owned companies, the decline in revenue experienced by Trinity Mirror can be understood as a stronger signifier of financial difficulty. Accordingly, the *Sun* and the *Times*, as well as the *Huffington Post* can be expected to evidence a level of tabloidization between those of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*. In line with the groupings of data points assessed in the previous chapters, H2, H3, and H4 are tested longitudinally, with the latter data points expected to show more evidence of tabloidization than their earlier counterparts.

7.3. Corpus Linguistic Findings: 2012 – 2016

All of the thesis' hypotheses can be tested against data from the 2012 – 2016 timeframe.

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.

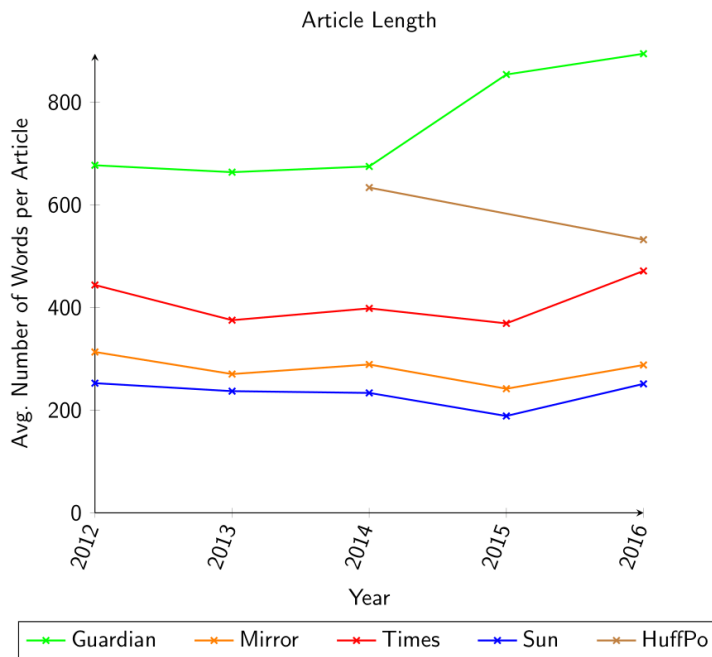
7.3a. Analysis: Markers of ‘Information-Orientation’

Across the legacy newspapers, stability is the predominant trend across indices of ‘information-orientation’; by contrast, the *Huffington Post*, becomes more difficult to read and the average length of its articles declines. In this way, data from the *Huffington Post* does not undergo a shift in any one direction, particularly as differences between the two changes seen – 20% and 11% - are less than 10 percentage points, with 10 percentage points as the threshold for change of significance.

A lack of change is seen in each of the 4 proxies across the *Times*, *Mirror*, and *Sun*, as displayed through Figures 7.3a – 7.3d, and Table 7.3a in Appendix 3. This observation is particularly surprising within the arena of article length and reading difficulty level, where in view of proliferating claims of a ‘tabloidization’ in the wake of the Internet’s ascendance, the publications do not become easier to read or shorter in length. Further contrasting this discourse is the one shift in ‘information-markers’ seen in the legacy publications, an increase in average article length observed in the *Guardian*. This shift occurs during the second half of the 2012 – 2016 period, while this marker is stable between 2012 and 2014 in the publication.

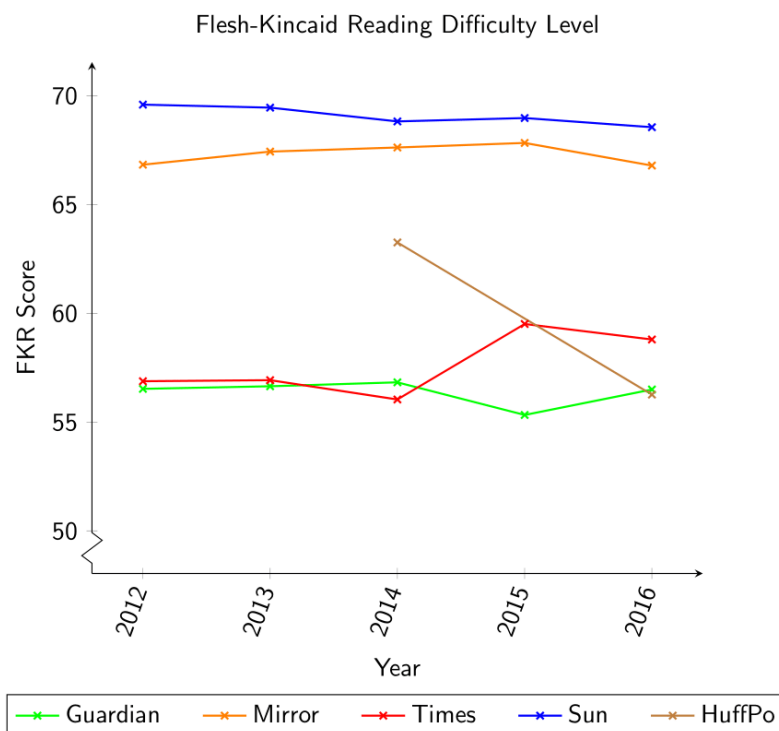
As the *Huffington Post* is examined during 2014 and 2016, the shifts that take place during the 2012 and 2016 period all take place in the second half of this timeframe.

Figure 7.3a. Article Length, 2012 - 2016



An important point of note is also the similar presence in markers of ‘information-orientation’ in the *Huffington Post* and the two ‘quality’ legacy publications. For example, the average article length of the *Huffington Post* is between that of the *Guardian* and the *Times*: accordingly, this average is substantially higher than those of the two tabloids. The Flesch-Kincaid reading difficulty level of the *Huffington Post* is also on average more similar to those of the ‘quality’ titles than to the *Mirror* or the *Sun*.

Figure 7.3b. Flesch-Kincaid Reading Difficulty Level, 2012 - 2016



As H1 hypothesized that the *Guardian* would experience the least evidence of tabloidization and the *Mirror* would experience the most, H1 is supported as the *Guardian* is the one publication which experiences an overall increase in markers of ‘information-orientation,’ while the *Mirror*, *Sun*, *Times*, and *Huffington Post* do not undergo any overall changes. It can be noted that while some of the graphics appear to show increases or decreases in certain markers in specific publications, that these shifts are only over the 10% error threshold in the 3 instances discussed in this subsection, which is also conveyed through Table 7.3a featured in Appendix 3. With regard to H2, H3, and H4, while data from the *Times*, *Mirror*, *Sun*, and *Huffington Post* do not support either hypothesis, evidence from the *Guardian* refutes each of these hypotheses. As suggested ‘information-orientation’ data, evidence from the *Guardian* generally contrasts that from the other news publications regarding the thesis’ hypotheses.

Figure 7.3c. Sentence Length, 2012 - 2016

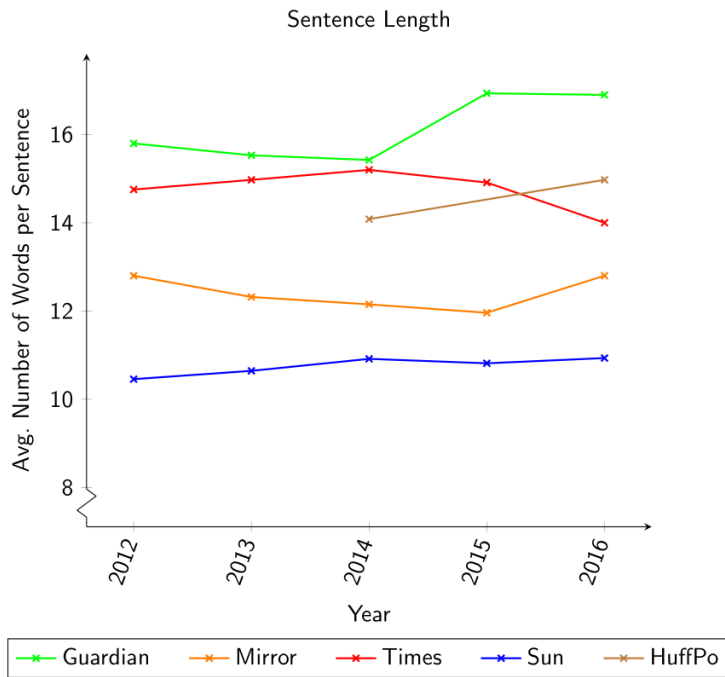
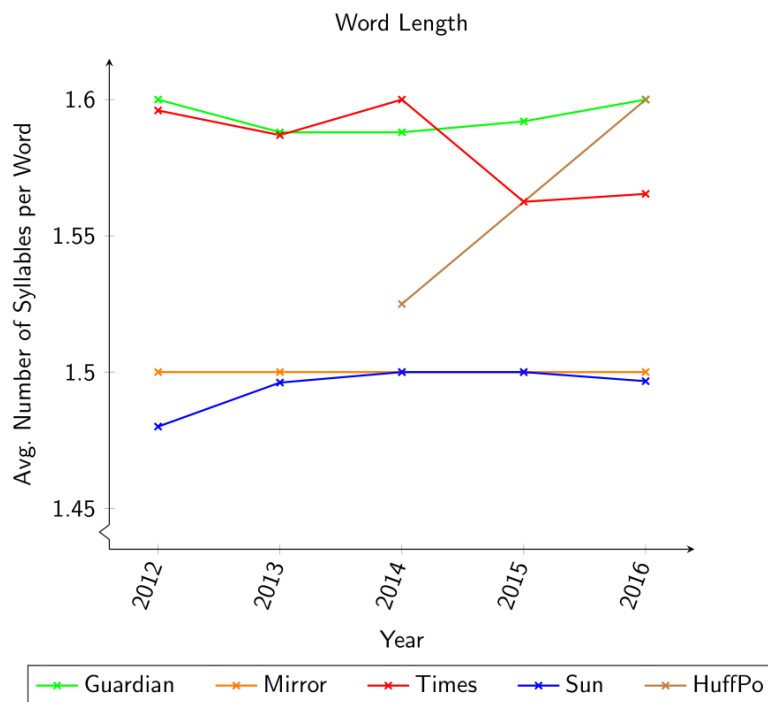


Figure 7.3d. Word Length, 2012 - 2016



7.3b. Analysis: Markers of Personalization

Between 2012 and 2016, 3 of the legacy newspapers undergo overall increases in personalization, one legacy newspaper, the *Mirror*, remains unchanged, with the *Huffington Post* experiencing a decrease in markers of the value. Two of the 3 newspapers wherein growth occurs are ‘quality’ legacy newspapers, indicating that the former publications are undergoing more of a tabloidization in terms of personalization than the latter. In addition to Figures 7.3e – 7.3g featured below, the pertinent data is displayed in Appendix 4 Table 7.3b.

In contrast to the association seen across the markers of ‘information-orientation’ between the *HuffPo* and the two ‘quality’ newspapers, the *Huffington Post* resembles the two tabloid titles the most with regard to indices of personalization. In fact, each of the 3 proxies of personalization are more salient in the *Huffington Post* in 2014 than in any of the other publications. This configuration also applies to private verbs during 2016. Personalization data thus suggests that certain tabloid elements are substantially more prevalent in the *HuffPo* than in either type of legacy publication.

The 2012 – 2016 period sees drops in each of the 3 markers of personalization in the *HuffPo*, with a particularly dramatic drop of 62% occurring in second person pronouns. By contrast, the *Mirror* sees moderate increases in two of the markers, while also undergoing a decline of 48% in private verbs, which surpasses the magnitude of first person and second person pronouns combined.

Figure 7.3e. First Person Pronouns, 2012 - 2016

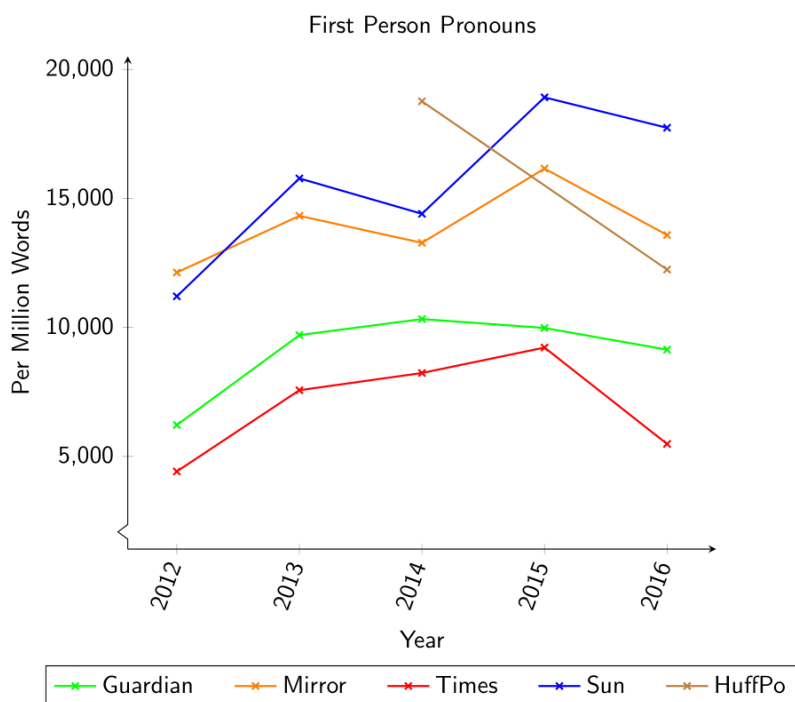
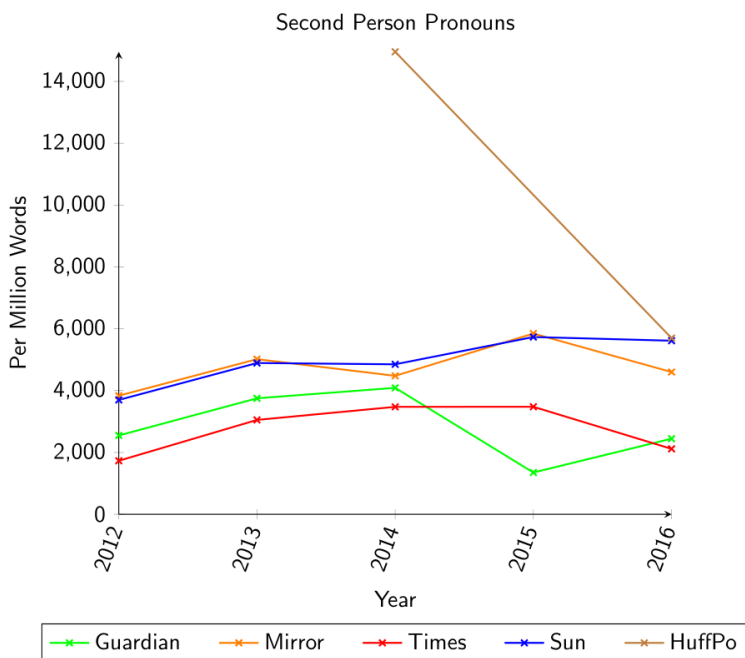


Figure 7.3f. Second Person Pronouns, 2012 - 2016

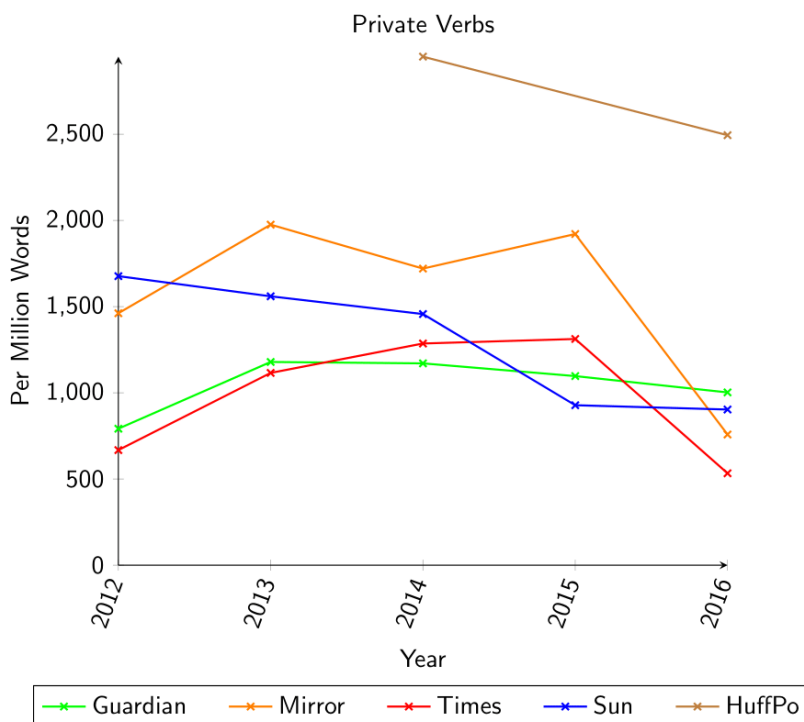


Of the 3 legacy newspapers which see an increase in markers of personalization, the largest overall growth in proxies of the value is observed in the *Guardian*. Two of the indices, first

person pronouns and private verbs, undergo an increase, with overall stability seen in second person pronouns. A particularly large increase of 47% occurs in the newspaper’s first person pronouns, with each of the 4 legacy publications seeing an increase in this feature, and the *Sun* seeing a growth of 57% in this type of pronoun.

In contrast to the concentration of shifts occurring during the 2014 – 2016 part of the 2012 – 2016 timeframe seen in markers of ‘information-orientation,’ 2012 – 2013 is the period which sees the largest concentration of change for markers of personalization. Herein, shifts occur in the form of increases across the 3 personalization markers in each of the 4 legacy publications, with the exception of private verbs in the *Sun*.

Figure 7.3g. Private Verbs, 2012 - 2016



Accordingly, while H1 anticipated the *Guardian* to display the least evidence of tabloidization and the *Mirror* to show the most evidence, personalization data does not support this hypothesis. Data from the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Sun* supports H2, H3 and H4, with the

Guardian providing the strongest data reinforcing these hypotheses; by contrast, the *Huffington Post* provides the strongest evidence against H2, H3, and H4, with data from the *Mirror* neither supporting nor refuting H1, H2, H3, or H4.

7.3c Analysis: Markers of Sensationalism

With the exception of the *Huffington Post*, which in each category shifts away from markers of sensationalism, the trend across the legacy newspapers is an increase in proxies of sensationalism. This trend is particularly marked in the *Sun* where increases, and often quite substantial ones, occur in each of the 6 indices of the value. The *Guardian* also undergoes significant increases in proxies of the value, while those occurring in the *Sun* amount to an overall shift of a greater magnitude. However, in general, markers of sensationalism are the most salient in the *Huffington Post*. Table 7.3c in Appendix 5 displays the frequency counts and percentage change in markers of sensationalism across the 5 publications.

Figure 7.3h. Superlative General Adverbs, 2012 – 2016

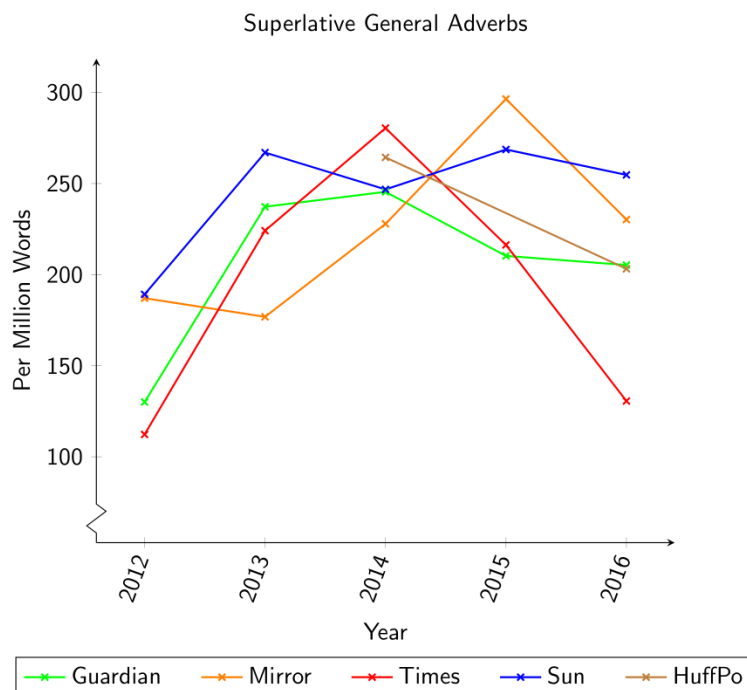
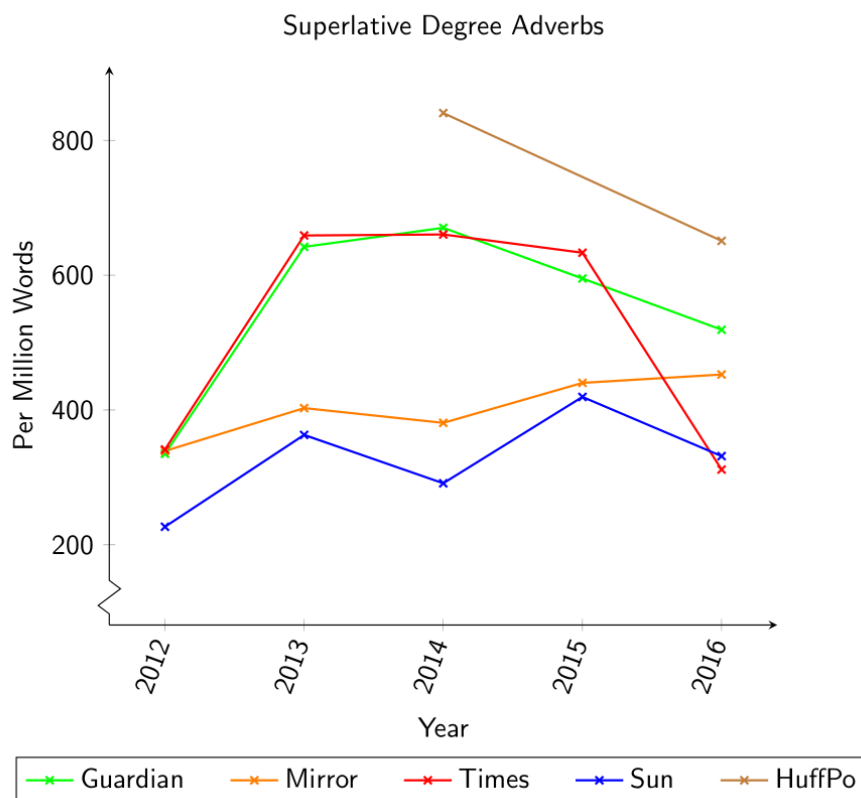
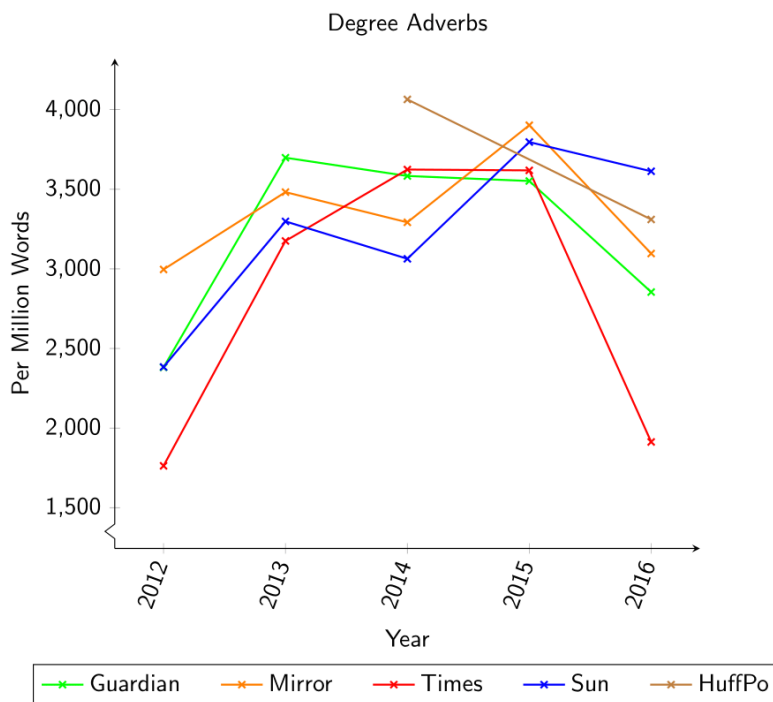


Figure 7.3i. Superlative Degree Adverbs, 2012 – 2016



While overall increases are observed in each of the legacy newspapers, this growth does not occur linearly across the 2012 – 2016 period. Between 2012 and 2016, 2014 and 2015 often see the highest frequencies of specific markers of sensationalism within the 4-year period, with the graphs for the *Guardian* and the *Times*' data points often forming an upside down 'U' with a long right tail. For example, while the *Guardian* sees a 58% increase in superlative general adverbs between 2012 and 2016, between 2012 and 2014, this part of part of speech grows by 89% in the newspaper. Similarly, while the *Times* undergoes a 12% increase in general adverbs between 2012 and 2016, a growth of 95% is seen between 2012 and 2014.

Figure 7.3j. Degree Adverbs, 2012 - 2016



Increases of a particularly large magnitude are seen in superlative degree adverbs in both the *Guardian* and the *Sun*, superlative general adverbs in the *Guardian*, and degree adverbs, general adverbs, and amplifiers in the *Sun*. While increases in each of the 6 markers of sensationalism occur in the *Guardian*, the *Sun* also sees a substantial decline of 47% in general degree adjectives. Interestingly, the *Times* and the *Mirror* also undergo decreases in the feature, even while the newspapers do not undergo declines in any of the other proxies of the value.

Across the markers of sensationalism, data from the *Huffington Post* is also strikingly consistent: moderate declines occur in each of the 6 indices of sensationalism. In this way, evidence from the publication contrasts that of each of the legacy newspapers.

Figure 7.3k. Amplifiers, 2012 - 2016

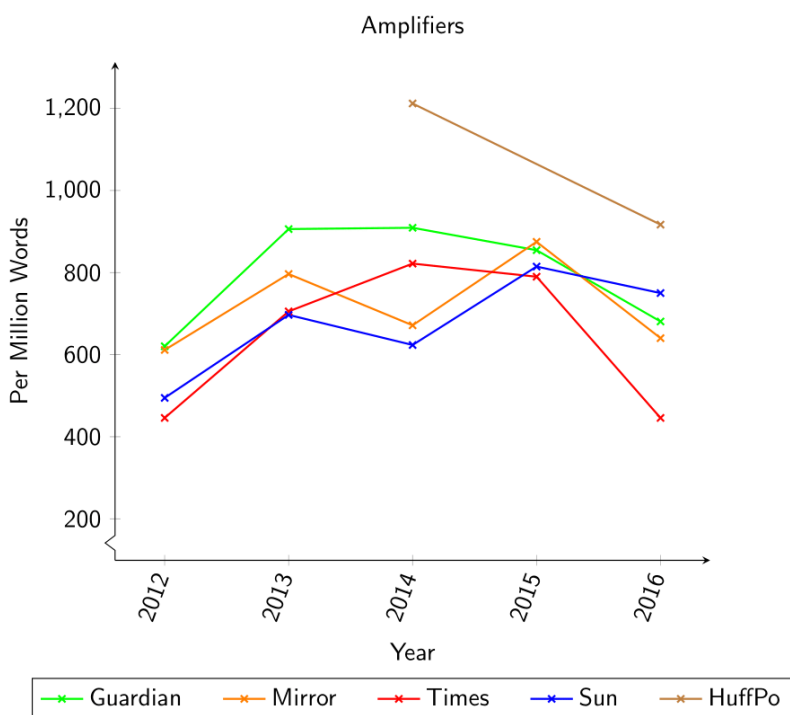
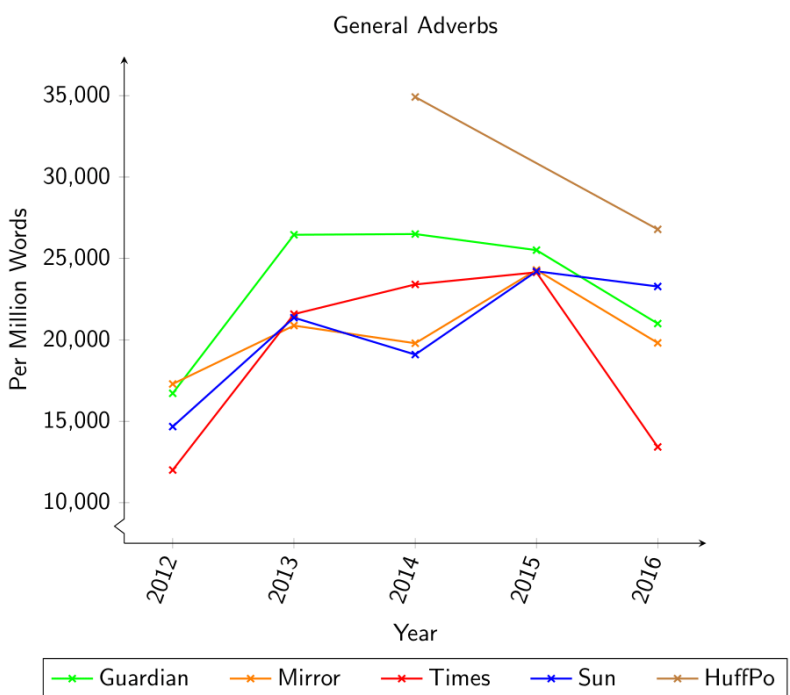


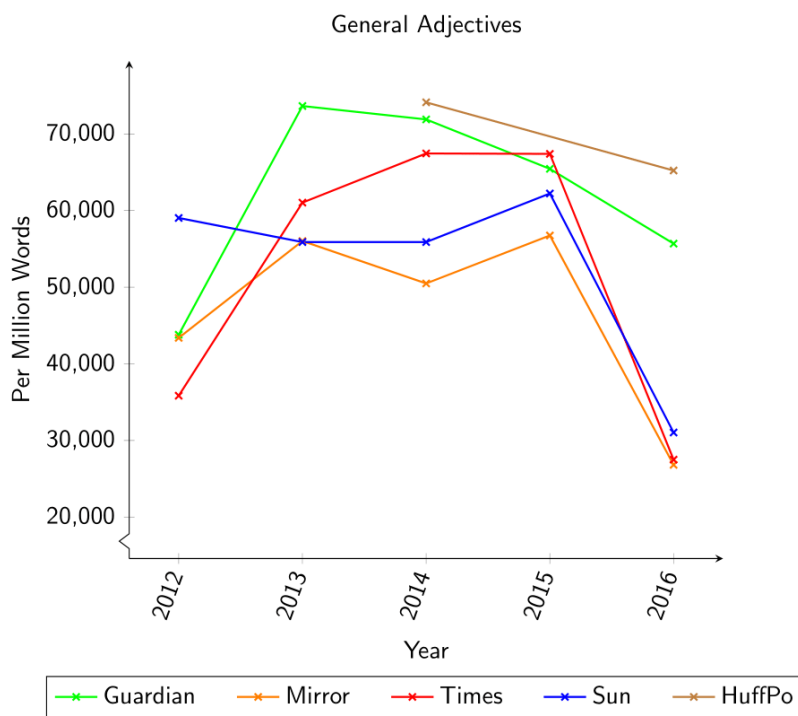
Figure 7.3l. General Adverbs, 2012 - 2016



Accordingly, H1 is not supported as the *Guardian* does not show the least evidence of tabloidization; rather, the newspaper undergoes a series of substantial increases in markers of sensationalism. While H1 anticipated the *Mirror* to display the most evidence of

tabloidization, it is the *Sun* that sees the largest overall increase in markers of sensationalism. Although evidence from the 4 legacy newspapers, and in particular the *Guardian*, supports H2, H3, and H4, data from the *Huffington Post* suggests a reversal of the hypotheses.

Figure 7.3m. General Adjectives, 2012 - 2016

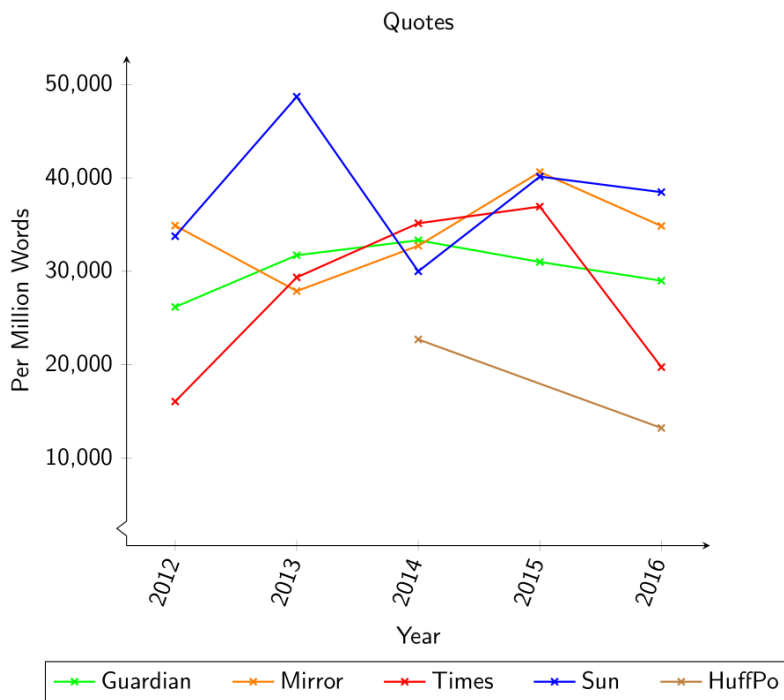


7.3d. Analysis: Quotes

3 of the 5 publications – the *Guardian*, the *Times*, and the *Sun* – see a moderate increase in quoted speech, while the *Huffington Post* experiences a major decrease, of 42%, in the feature. Further at each of the two data points at which the *Huffington Post* is analysed, the frequency of quotes is substantially lower than in the other 4 publications, suggesting that quoted speech is in fact more characteristic of legacy publications. With regards to longitudinal changes in the feature, the 3 newspapers undergoing growth in quotes are the same 3 which experience overarching increases in markers of personalization, suggesting an association whereby growth in quotes accounts, at least to a certain extent, for the increases

in proxies of the value. Likewise, the decline in markers of personalization seen in the *Huffington Post* similarly aligns with the decrease in quotes seen in the publication. The proportion of quotes in the *Mirror* remains the same throughout this period. These trends are represented through Figure 7.3d below and in Table 7.3d of Appendix 6.

Figure 7.3n. Quotes, 2012 - 2016



As seen with markers of sensationalism, the increases in quotes observed in the 3 legacy publications newspapers do not occur linearly across the 2012 and 2016 period. With the exception of the *Times*, in which the presence of quoted speech grows between every data point except for 2015 and 2016, the publications generally undergo an equal number of increases and decreases in quoted speech, with the magnitude of the increases surpassing those of the drops. In this way, increases in quoted speech do not necessarily tend to occur more commonly over the course of the 2012 – 2016 period.

Drawing from this data, H1 is not supported by data on quotes as the *Guardian* does not show the least evidence of tabloidization; rather, the publication showing the least evidence is the *Huffington Post*. Further, while H1 anticipated the largest increase in tabloid characteristics to occur in the *Mirror*, it is the *Times* that undergoes the largest increase in quotes. As also observed through personalization data, while evidence from the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Sun* supports H2, H3, and H4, evidence from the *Huffington Post* suggests a reversal of both hypotheses. Data from the *Mirror* neither supports or undermines H2, H3, or H4 in view of its overall longitudinal stability.

7.4. Overview

The surge in tabloid values across the legacy publications and the drop in these markers in the *Huffington Post* are the most prominent and significant corpus linguistic findings. By contrast, ‘information-orientation’ is relatively static across the news outlets. While the *Guardian* does not show the least evidence of tabloidization, as anticipated, the legacy news publications which are facing financial difficulty do see an ascendance in tabloid values, which suggest support for H1. Evidence from the legacy newspapers is also predominantly supportive when applied to H2, H3, and H4, while data from *Huffington Post* tends to suggest a reversal of these hypotheses.

3 of the 4 legacy publications, with the exception of the *Mirror*, experience increases in personalization, and all 4 of the legacy titles undergo growth in sensationalism. Increases in sensationalism and personalization do not occur across more than half of the publications, or in both of the ‘quality’ newspapers, in any of the corpus’ previously examined data points. The large magnitude of the increases in markers of personalization in both the *Guardian* and the *Sun* are notable, with the *Sun* consistently undergoing the shifts of the largest magnitude.

An adjunct trend of note is the relatively moderate increases that occur in the two publications' quoted speech: an 11% growth is seen in the *Guardian* alongside a 14% growth in the *Sun*. Hereby, it can be deduced that the markers of tabloid values are increasing in the direct or journalistic discourse, as opposed to merely the quoted speech. An ascendance of the language traditionally characteristic of tabloids in the journalistic register marks a penetration of personalization and sensationalism in the journalistic texts of 'quality' journalists.

Further, in line with Chapters 5 and 6, personalization emerges as a particularly salient feature of interest. Contrasting the fluctuation seen in markers of sensationalism, and the relative stability seen in proxies of 'information-orientation,' indices of personalization increase with the most consistency across the 2012 – 2016 data points.

With regard to the *Huffington Post*, the identified decline of tabloid values occurring alongside an 11% increase in reading level difficulty contrasts with the emphasis on clicks associated with digital native news organizations. In fact, data points for each of the markers of 'information-orientation' in the *Huffington Post* resemble its 'quality' newspaper counterparts more than its tabloid ones; the average length of articles in the *Huffington Post* is even higher than that of the *Times* during both 2014 and 2016. This is an original finding of note with regards to the literature aligning digital native publications such as the *HuffPo* with values that detract from journalism in the public interest (Bakker 2012; Cherubini and Nielsen 2016; Wu 2016).

7.5. Content Analysis Findings: 2012 – 2016

4 of the thesis' hypotheses can be tested against content analytic data from the 2012 – 2016 timeframe:

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.

Due to the constrictions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic which are described in the following paragraphs of this section, content analytic data from 3 publications within the 2012 – 2016 period were collected for examination. These 3 news outlets are the *Guardian*, *Mirror*, and the *Huffington Post*. For the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, the years subject to content analytic examination are 2012 and 2016, and for the *Huffington Post*, 2014 and 2016. The first and last year of this timeframe were selected for the legacy news publications so as to provide a snapshot of longitudinal change and continuity over the course of this entire period, and the years 2014 and 2016 were selected for the *Huffington Post* as corpus linguistic analyses were applied to articles from the site during these two years. Synchronic corpus linguistic and content analyses yield more comprehensive depictions of the news publications and years subject to examination, as reflected in composite tabloidization measures that draw from a broader range of newspaper characteristics.

The COVID-19 related restrictions pertained in particular to analyses of the two legacy newspapers, for which physical access to specific libraries was required. During March of 2020, both the British Library and the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford closed. The shutdown of the British Library precluded access to the *Sun*, copies of which had previously been obtained through the *NewsBank* database, a resource that can only be reached by a computer physically located in the British Library's Newsroom. Further, the Bodleian's digital archive of the *Times* did not contain issues of the publication dating after 2014. Accordingly, the content analysis was restricted to the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*.

Additional time was required to obtain even a minimal sample of front-pages from the two left of centre publications, the *Guardian* and *Mirror*. Once the Bodleian Library re-opened remote scanning services in July of 2020, it became possible to request a maximum of two scans per (week)day, of front-pages from the *Guardian*. It should be noted that issues of the *Guardian* from between August 26th and December 20th, 2012 had not been received by the Bodleian; accordingly, the two-constructed week sample of articles from the *Guardian* in 2012 was applied to front-pages from between January 1st and August 25th, and between December 21st and December 31st.

With regard to the *Mirror*, as the Bodleian Library does not have hard copies of the tabloid dated past 2004, it was not until August of 2020, when the Bodleian Library obtained full digital access to *UKPressOnline*, that it became possible to conduct a content analysis of the tabloid. *UKPressOnline* is comprised of digital copies of the *Mirror* searchable by date, page number, and text, thus enabling a time efficient collection of the remaining content analytic data.

Access to the *Huffington Post* was obtained through the Way Back Machine online interface. The same dates examined for corpus linguistic data were identified through the

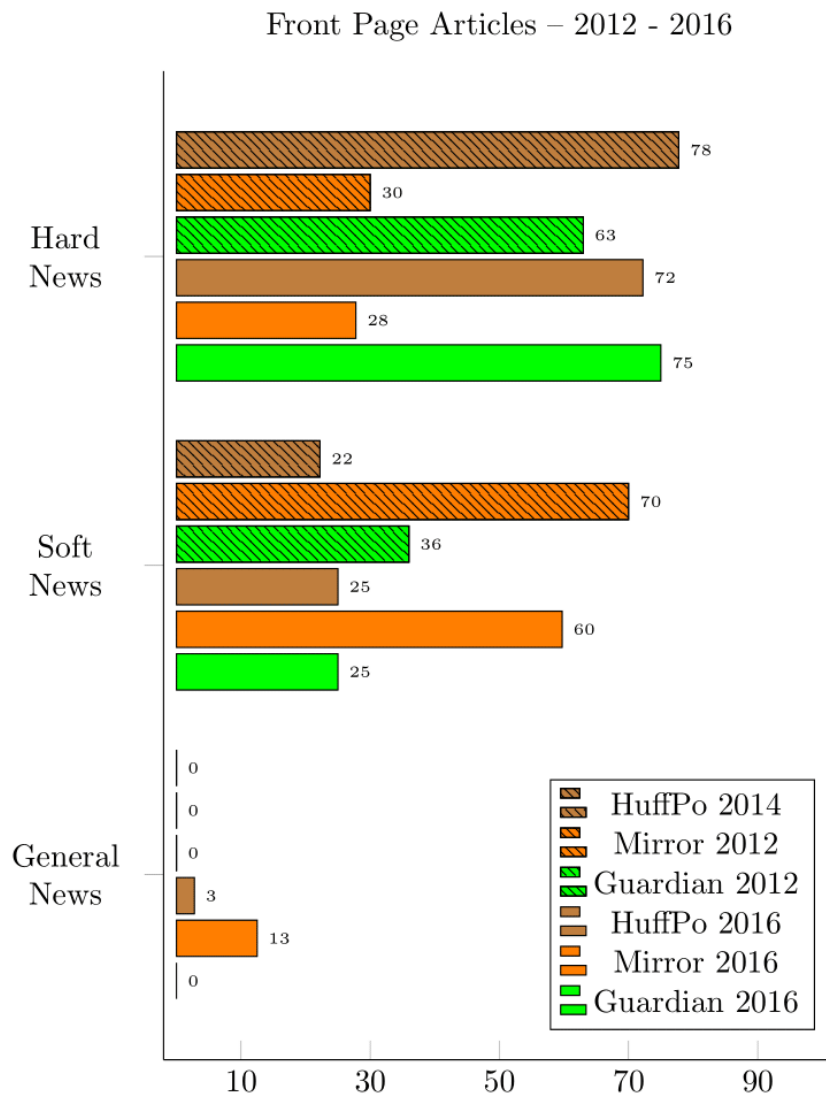
Way Back Machine's archives, and where the news outlet's homepage had been archived multiple times on a given date, a time of day was selected at random. In order to determine the number of articles on the *HuffPo*'s homepage which should be subject to examination, the average number of articles on the *Mirror* and *Guardian*'s homepage during 2014 and 2016 was calculated, with the mean number of these articles, 3, analysed from the *HuffPo*'s homepage.

For the *Guardian* and the *Sun in particular*, findings from 2012 – 2016 corpus linguistic data showed an ascension of the language through which tabloid values are conveyed. This trend was displayed in 3 of the 4 legacy publications, with the *Mirror* as the outlier. By contrast, corpus linguistic findings indicated a decline in tabloid values in the *Huffington Post*. Content analytic findings both reify and contrast the predominant patterns seen across corpus linguistic ones.

In the *Huffington Post*, 'information-orientation' and the proportional configuration of news story types and article topics remain unchanged during this period, with declines seen across markers personalization, sensationalism, and quotes. This combination of corpus linguistic and content analytic change and continuity suggests a drop in the language through which tabloid values are represented in the news articles featured in the publication. Interestingly, and as shown through Figure 7.5a, the frequency of 'hard,' general, and 'soft' news stories at the top of the *HuffPo*'s homepage is roughly equal to those featured on the front-page of the *Guardian* in 2016. In terms of key differences between the prevalence of story topics across publications, and as displayed through Figure 7.5b, political scandal stories are 13 percentage points more common in the *HuffPo* than in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*.

Non-political scandal and human interest stories are also 12 and 13 percentage points more prevalent in the *Mirror* than in the *HuffPo* during 2016.

Figure 7.5a. Guardian, Mirror, and Huffington Post, 2012, 2014 & 2016, Percentage of Articles by Category



With regard to the type of content and elements traditionally characteristic of ‘quality’ newspapers, the *Guardian* undergoes increases in both markers of ‘information-orientation’ and in ‘hard’ news content, whereas in the *Mirror*, both proxies of ‘information-orientation’

and the proportion of 'hard' news content remain unchanged. A decline in 'soft' news stories is also seen in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*.

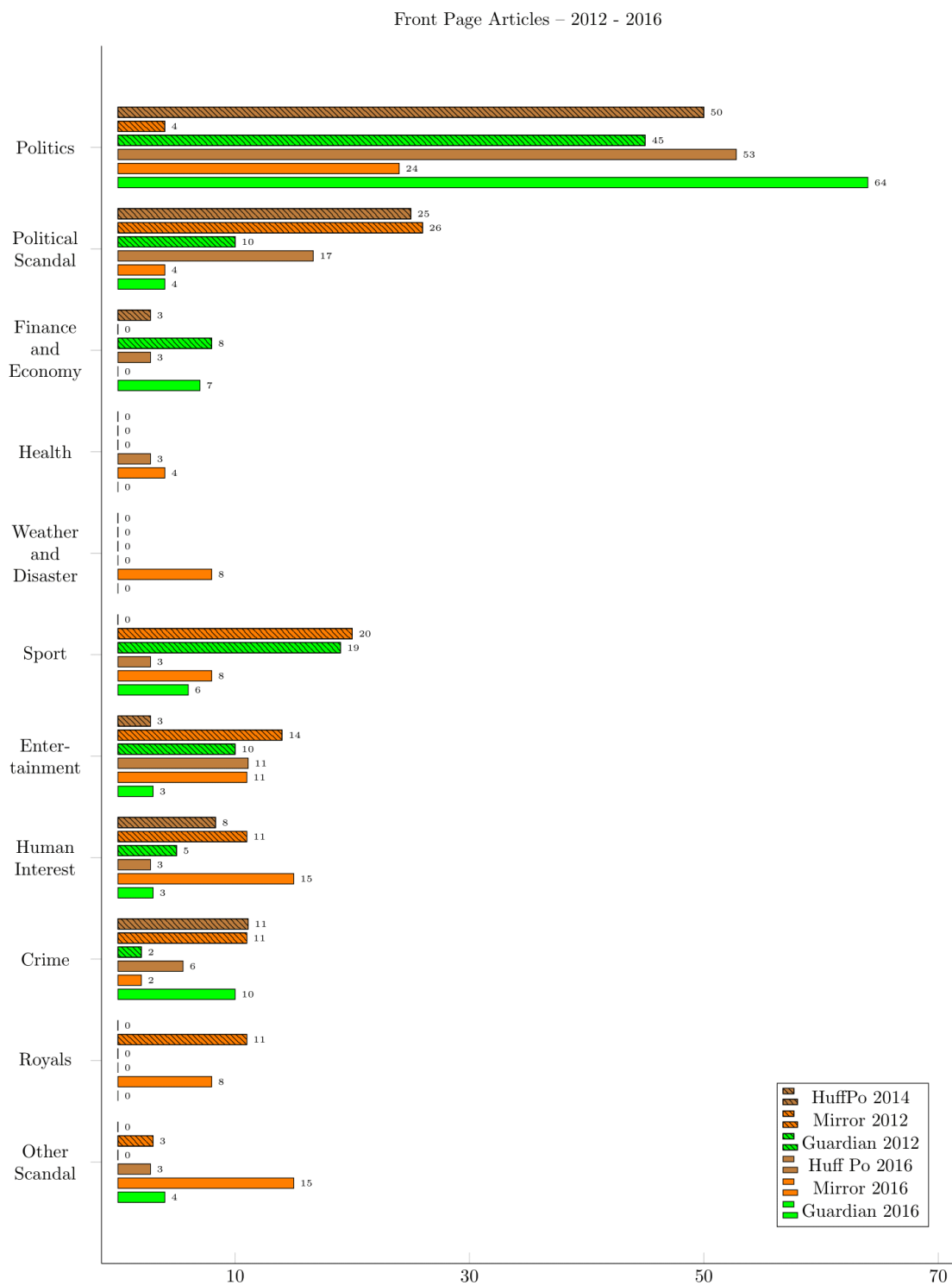
For the *Guardian*, the decrease in 'soft' news stories is a continuation of the longitudinal pattern seen between the 1998 and 2009 data points, while the decline seen in 'soft' news stories in the *Mirror* is a reversal of the increase in 'soft' news articles which occurred in the tabloid between 1998 and 2009. It can thus be noted that the *Guardian* sees a continued shift away from tabloid content across the beginning of the 21st century.

More broadly, 'hard' news stories continue to be the type of content most characteristic of the *Guardian* in both 2012 and 2016, while 'soft' news stories continue to be the type of content most characteristic of the *Mirror* during both years. In 2012 and 2016 in the *Guardian*, 'hard' news stories constitute 63% and 75% of news coverage respectively; 'soft' news coverage in the *Mirror* comprises 70% of reporting in 2012 and 60% in 2016. Further, at 3 of these 4 data points, 0% of content consists of 'general' news, with the front page of the *Mirror* from 2016 as the one outlier, wherein this type of news constitutes 13% of news coverage. This 13% of 'general' news stories is comprised of both weather (9%) and health (4%) reporting.

With regard to specific article topics, in the *Guardian*, political coverage continues to be the most characteristic of the newspaper's front-page content. In 1998 and 2009, political stories comprise 44% and 51% of the publication's page one coverage respectively; in 2012 and 2016, these figures are 45% and 64%. A predominant story topic does not emerge for the *Mirror* from across the 2000 and 2008 data points, and across the 2012 – 2016 data points for both the *Mirror* and the *Guardian*, the one 'soft' news article topic which undergoes a change of significance is sports. In both publications, sports stories are more salient in 2012 than they were in 1998 or 2009, and this is largely in view of the 2012 London Summer Olympics.

Between 2012 and 2016, sports stories decline from 20% to 8% in the *Mirror* and from 19% to 6% in the *Guardian*.

Figure 7.5b. Guardian, Mirror, and Huffington Post 2012, 2014, & 2016, Percentage of Articles by Topic



In sum, the most significant trends of note from the 2012 – 2016 period content analysis are the overall stability seen across news article types and topics in the *Huffington Post*, the declines in ‘soft’ news coverage seen across the *Guardian* and *Mirror*, the increase in ‘hard’ news stories and in particular, politics-focused ones, in the *Guardian*, and the increase in ‘general’ news stories seen in the *Mirror*. The decline in ‘soft’ news coverage across the legacy publications and the augmentation in ‘hard’ news coverage seen in the *Guardian* emerge as substantial evidence against a possible tabloidization of content during the 2012 – 2016 time period. Although the earlier data point, 2012, analysed from the *Guardian* and *Mirror* differs from the 2014 initial data point of the *Huffington Post*, the overall stability as seen in the digital native publication should be viewed as a notable contrast to the shifts seen in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*.

Accordingly, H1 is supported by content analytic data from the *Guardian*; while it was hypothesized that the *Mirror* would show the most evidence of tabloidization, by retaining its configuration of news article types across the years examined, the *Huffington Post* remains more aligned with tabloid content than the *Mirror*, which sees a decline in ‘soft’ news articles. By contrast, H2, H3, and H4, which are tested longitudinally, are refuted by content analytic data, with a reversal of each hypothesis suggested by data from the two legacy publications. The lack of change seen across the configuration of news story types in the *Huffington Post* neither supports nor refutes the 3 diachronically tested hypotheses.

7.6. Composite Tabloidization Measures and Conclusions

Key findings from feature-by-feature analyses of the 2012 – 2016 period, which can thus be associated with the Web 3.0 era, are an ascension of tabloid values, as depicted through corpus linguistic findings, and a decline in ‘soft’ news stories, as identified through content analytic findings. Findings differ slightly, however, when interpreted through the composite tabloidization measures for ‘quality’ and tabloid elements over the course of this period. In fact, tabloid elements decrease in 3 of the 5 publications, with the *Guardian* and the *Sun* as exceptions. More in line with the feature-by-feature assessments, declines are seen in ‘quality’ elements across each of the newspapers, with the *Guardian* as the only outlier; by contrast, the *Guardian* sees a substantial overall increase in ‘quality’ elements during the 2012 – 2016 period.

Table 7.6a. Composite Tabloidization Measures, *Guardian* 2012 - 2016

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Guardian</i> 2012	-.002	-.439
<i>Guardian</i> 2013	.183	.728
<i>Guardian</i> 2014	.204	.814
<i>Guardian</i> 2015	.428	.104
<i>Guardian</i> 2016	1.048	.015

Table 7.6b. Composite Tabloidization Measures, *Mirror* 2012 - 2016

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Mirror</i> 2012	.575	-.253
<i>Mirror</i> 2013	.021	.263
<i>Mirror</i> 2014	.168	.014
<i>Mirror</i> 2015	-.243	.748
<i>Mirror</i> 2016	-.285	-.285

Table 7.6c. Composite Tabloidization Measures, *Times* 2012 - 2016

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Times</i> 2012	-.021	-1.470
<i>Times</i> 2013	-.317	.364
<i>Times</i> 2014	-.135	.905
<i>Times</i> 2015	-.322	.924
<i>Times</i> 2016	-.050	-1.521

Table 7.6d. Composite Tabloidization Measures, *Sun* 2012 - 2016

	'Quality' Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Sun</i> 2012	.257	-1.046
<i>Sun</i> 2013	.371	.388
<i>Sun</i> 2014	.480	-.346
<i>Sun</i> 2015	-.036	.715
<i>Sun</i> 2016	.075	.064

Table 7.6e. Composite Tabloidization Measures, *Huffington Post* 2014 & 2016⁴⁹

	'Quality' Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>HuffPo</i> 2014	179.586	15892.880
<i>HuffPo</i> 2016	149.857	12628.638

Findings of note with regard to the composite tabloidization measures can also be identified in certain extreme values. For example, in 2016, the *Guardian* sees a very high value, 1.048, for 'quality' elements, indicating that 'quality' newspaper characteristics are particularly salient in the publication during this final year in the thesis' timeframe. The *Times* sees values which are extremely low for tabloid elements in both 2012 and 2016, at -1.470 and -1.521 respectively. Interestingly, the composite tabloid measure values between 2012 and 2016 are each positive, suggesting that the trend for tabloid elements in the publication during these years takes the form of a bell-shaped curve. In the *Sun*, a particularly low value, -1.046, for tabloid elements is also seen in 2012; in contrast to the finding seen in the *Times*, however, in 2016, this value is slightly above the tabloid's average for tabloid characteristics, reaching .064.

Composite tabloidization measures from the *Huffington Post* should be understood in terms of the overall change across 'quality' and tabloid elements between 2014 and 2016 in the publication. Thus, longitudinal drops in each measure indicate that both 'quality' and tabloid characteristics have declined in the news site. While the decrease in tabloid elements

⁴⁹ The composite tabloidization measures from the *Huffington Post* are unscaled, in contrast to those from each of the legacy publications. As data from only two years of the *HuffPo* are subject to examination, scaling does not serve a useful function.

reflects drops seen across markers of personalization, sensationalism, and quotes in the publication, the decline indicated through the decrease in 'quality' elements differs from the stability identified through the feature-by-feature analysis. Accordingly, drops in article length, reading difficulty level, and 'hard' news articles under the threshold for error emerge as important indicators of change through the composite measure of 'quality' elements.

When longitudinal changes across the composite tabloidization measures are held against each of the thesis' hypotheses, certain differences emerge in comparison to the feature-by-feature findings. While corpus linguistic data did not provide support for H1, it is more directly refuted by the composite measures, where the predominant trend is a shift away from tabloid features. It should, however, also be noted that in most of the publications, a small shift is also seen away from the 'quality' elements. Further, while the *Mirror* was expected to show the most evidence of a tabloidization in view of relatively heightened financial difficulties, both the *Guardian* and the *Sun* undergo a greater growth in tabloid characteristics. While corpus linguistic and content analytic findings suggested different outcomes with regard to H2, H3, and H4, the *Sun* and the *Guardian* are the two publications which undergo increases in composite measures of tabloid elements, while the *Sun* is the only newspaper that undergoes both a growth in tabloid elements and a decline in 'quality' characteristics. The *Times*, the *Mirror*, and the *Huffington Post* also undergo an overall drop in 'quality' elements, suggesting disjuncture from corpus linguistic data findings with regards to H2, H3, and H4.

Table 7.6ba. Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 2012 – 2016

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>HuffPo</i>		
Trend	Increase	in	Drop in CQM	Drop in CQM	Increase	in	Drop in CQM
Observed	CTM ⁵⁰		Drop in CTM	Drop in CTM	CTM		Drop in CTM
	Increase	in			Drop in CQM		
	CQM ⁵¹						
H1	Partial Support		Not Supported	Not Supported	Partial Support		Refuted
H2	Partial Support		Not Supported	Partial Support	Supported		Refuted
H3	Partial Support		Not Supported	Partial Support	Supported		Refuted
H4	Partial Support		Not Supported	Partial Support	Supported		Refuted

It should thus also be noted that corpus linguistic and content analytic findings broadly contrast one another. This is reflected when the thesis’ hypotheses are applied to these data; in addition to the contrasts mentioned with regard to H2, H3, and H4, similarly, while H1 is not supported by corpus linguistic data, it is supported by content analytic data. Within these broader trends, however, notable exceptions can be identified.

⁵⁰ CTM = Composite Tabloid Measure.

⁵¹ CQM = Composite Quality Measure.

Table 7.6bb. Feature by Feature Findings and Hypotheses, 2012 – 2016

	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Times</i>	<i>Sun</i>	<i>HuffPo</i>
Trend Observed	Increase in CL tabloid indices and 'IO'. ⁵² Increase in 'quality' content, decline in tabloid content.	Increase in CL tabloid indices, decline in CA tabloid indices.	Increases in CL tabloid indices	Increases in CL tabloid indices	Drops across tabloid indices
H1	Partial Support – undergoes less tabloidization than <i>Times</i> or <i>Sun</i> .	Not supported	Partial Support – undergoes more tabloidization than <i>Mirror</i> .	Partial Support – undergoes more tabloidization than <i>Mirror</i> ,	Not Supported
H2	Supported by CL findings, Refuted by CA findings	Supported by CL findings, Refuted by CA findings	Supported	Supported	Refuted
H3	Supported by CL findings, Refuted by CA findings	Supported by CL findings, Refuted by CA findings	Supported	Supported	Refuted
H4	Supported by CL findings, Refuted by CA findings	Supported by CL findings, Refuted by CA findings	Supported	Supported	Refuted

In particular, corpus linguistic data from the *Huffington Post* consistently contrasts with that yielded from the legacy publications. While the 3 legacy newspapers, with the *Mirror* as the outlier, undergo increases in markers of personalization and sensationalism, and an augmentation in quotes during this period, the *Huffington Post* sees a decline in each. A further point of note regarding the *Huffington Post* pertains to its similarities to traditional 'quality' and tabloid newspaper values: the levels of 'information-orientation' in the digital native publication resemble those characteristic of the 'quality' newspapers, the *Guardian* and the *Times*, while the levels of personalization and sensationalism in the publication resemble, and at times, even surpass, those characteristic of the *Mirror* and the *Sun*.

⁵² 'IO' = 'Information-Orientation.'

Accordingly, in terms of the language through which journalistic values are represented, the *Huffington Post* is both 'quality'-like and tabloid-like. As the *Huffington Post* and digital native news publications, such as *BuzzFeed*, have often been associated with click-bait, sensationalist, tabloid characteristics (Bakker 2012; Wu 2016), the identification of 'quality' journalistic values in the *Huff Po's* coverage contrasts with common academic and media commentary about the publication. It is also of note that data from the *Huffington Post* refutes each of the 4 hypotheses, suggesting that putative economic and technological causal factors do not have a tabloidizing impact on the news outlet. In this way, and in consideration of journalism's public service function, the *Huffington Post* shows more dynamic capability than its legacy counterparts.

Findings from the *Mirror* also merit discussion as these are an exception to the trend seen across corpus linguistic data from the legacy news publications. While the *Guardian*, *Times*, and *Sun* each see an augmentation in proxies of both personalization and sensationalism, it is only markers of sensationalism that increase in the *Mirror*, and by contrast, the indices of personalization undergo a decrease in the tabloid between 2012 and 2016. This drop is also notable as personalization has from the beginning of the corpus' timespan emerged as an element particularly characteristic of tabloid news coverage. Further, as quoted speech increases in the *Mirror* during this time period, and as the frequency of 'information-orientation' markers remains unchanged, it is likely that quoted speech in the publication becomes more sensationalized. Such sensational language is uncharacteristic of official discourse and would instead be more distinctive of ordinary citizens. It is thus possible that an increase in sensationalized quoted speech from ordinary citizens has supplanted the prevalence of official information in the tabloid, further

contributing to perceptions of a tabloidization and even an increase in ‘misinformation’ during the Web 3.0 period.

In terms of content analytic findings, it is worth noting a number of article topics wherein declines or stability contrast with notions of a possible ascendance of popular culture. This is largely a continuation of the trend seen in the 1998 – 2009 data from the 4 newspapers. While increases in entertainment, scandal, and sports stories might have been anticipated, such shifts largely do not occur. The only categories wherein diachronic increases are seen are non-political scandal stories in the *Mirror*, which rise from 3% to 15% between 2012 and 2016. The predominant trends across these topics are stability or decline.

With regard to the hypotheses, data from different newspapers suggest different relationships between certain publication types and the putative causal factors examined, which are worth noting. For example, neither corpus linguistic nor content analytic data from the *Guardian* or the *Mirror* support H2, H3, or H4, suggesting that the technological factors subject to analysis do not have a tabloidizing impact on either publication. There is, however, slight support for H1 from content analysis as the *Mirror* shows more evidence of tabloidization than the *Guardian*, although this is due to the fact that the latter newspaper’s content becomes increasingly ‘hard’ news-oriented as well as decreasingly ‘soft’ news-oriented. While this is not strong evidence, it can be said that financial difficulty has more of a tabloidizing impact on the *Mirror* than any of the putative technological agents.

By contrast, corpus linguistic data from the *Times* and the *Sun* supports H2, H3, and H4, and does not support H1. Accordingly, the technological factors are shown to have more of a tabloidizing impact on the language and therein represented values of the right of centre, Murdoch-owned newspapers. While the *Times* and the *Sun* were not subject to content analysis, wherein data yielded some support for H1, it is worth noting the lack of any support

for this particular hypothesis from the two News Corp. publications. Further, in view of similarities in data from the *Times* and the *Sun* between 2012 and 2016, parallels in data from the two newspapers from between 1998 and 2009 merit attention; during this latter period, content analytic findings from the two newspapers closely resembled one another. These diachronic trends suggest a broader affinity for longitudinal similarities across the two publications, indicating that political ideology and/or the specific ownership structure may have an overarching impact on the newspapers.

Longitudinal trends with regard to the *Sun* during the 2012 – 2016 period should be noted as well, in view of several developments which took place during these years and which were mentioned in the overviews of the 5 publications in Chapter 4. Despite the phone-hacking scandal of 2012 – 2013, the implementation of a paywall in 2013, the paywall removal during 2015, and an overhaul of the tabloid’s website in 2016, corpus linguistic data from the tabloid generally shows longitudinal consistency in the trends seen across data from each year during the 2012 through 2016 period. Such relative consistency suggests that each of these developments did not have an independent impact of augmenting the publication’s tabloid elements, as might have been expected.

Looking at the corpus linguistic data more broadly, across the legacy newspapers, an ascension of tabloid values can thus be associated with the Web 3.0 era, while the corpus linguistic evidence from the *Huffington Post* does not suggest that this ascendance applies to digital native news reporting. This is to iterate that the decline in markers of sensationalism, personalization and quotes seen in the *Huffington Post* contrasts with the trend towards an ascendance in these features across the legacy publications. As corpus linguistic data from the *Huffington Post* refutes each of the 4 hypotheses, including H2, H3, and H4, which are supported by corpus linguistic data from the *Times* and the *Sun*, and neither refuted nor

supported by this type of data from the *Mirror*, it is suggested that the ascendance of speed and of interactivity, and the ability to cheaply produce more content, have had more of a tabloidizing impact on legacy news outlets than on digital native ones. Such a contrast could be due to the fact that legacy newspapers were founded in historical contexts wherein speed, and in particular, interactivity with news audiences and the capacity to cheaply produce more content were not pivotal features in the ecology of journalism. This differs greatly from the more recent, Web 3.0 context in which the *Huffington Post* was founded. More broadly, from the perspective of legacy newspapers, this finding should raise concerns about the *Huffington Post*'s potential for creative destruction.

Drawing from both corpus linguistic and content analyses, the data does not necessarily support the many intuition-based claims alleging a tabloidization of newspapers in the wake of the Internet's ascendance and more specifically, within the Web 3.0 era. Alongside the increase in tabloid values identified through the corpus linguistic findings, there is a decline in 'soft' news coverage and, in the case of the *Guardian*, an increase in 'hard' news coverage. This suggests that tabloid language is increasing in the context of non-'soft' news stories, which, as discussed in previous chapters, could serve the salutary function of enhancing reader engagement with 'hard' and 'general' news stories that might have otherwise been overlooked by many news consumers. Within this broader trend, however, it should be noted that the promulgation of tabloid elements in the form of a marked decline in quotes and information from official sources, as suggested by corpus linguistic data from the *Mirror*, could simultaneously pose a hazard to the polity. Thus, while on a broader level, and with regards to the *Huffington Post* in particular, results from the Web 3.0 period stand as beneficial to the public service function of journalism, results are not entirely out of sync

with recent concerns expressed regarding a decline in facts, as echoed through conceptualizations of a 'post-truth' era.

This results chapter, as well as the previous two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, examined data points before and after specific developments, events, or small time periods of interest. Taking a broader view on the data collected through this thesis, the following conclusions chapter will examine the change and continuity in newspaper values and content from across the 1968 and 2016 data points, identifying the extent to which a tabloidization of journalistic values and content may have commenced before the rise and widespread use of the Internet.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1. Thesis and Chapter Overview

The thesis began with an overview of the claims constituting tabloidization debates and a discussion of the stakes involved in a putative decline in ‘quality’ journalistic values and content. This introduction chapter highlighted the promulgation, salience, and significance of these debates in the context of the Internet era, while also suggesting that a tabloidization of journalistic values and content may have started before the ascension of the Internet. Chapter 1 also underscored the absence of quantitatively-based, longitudinal evidence of a tabloidization of newspapers drawing from a large body of newspaper texts, despite the abundance of claims asserting a tabloidization of newspapers. The chapter also expounded the key conceptualizations crucial to understandings of journalism’s ideal, public service function: namely, journalistic values, journalistic ideology, and the public sphere. In particular, the capacity of certain journalistic values and content to inform the polity to the end of meaningful engagement in democratic processes was iterated.

The dissertation proceeded to discuss the factors which have been depicted as putative causal forces of a tabloidization, particularly in light of recent shifts in the ecology of journalism. A theory-focused chapter discussed putative economic, technological, and cultural factors, and the relevant theoretical frameworks proffered by the scholarship. Drawing from literature reviews of the relevant journalism, media, media economics, Internet studies, and cultural studies scholarship, a theoretical framework through which to understand the process of tabloidization was posited. Following a chapter focusing on the thesis’ methods and the rationale for the project’s methodological approach, chapter 4

provided an overview of the 5 news publications selected for examination and presented key information regarding the social context of the thesis' 1968 – 2016 time period in Britain.

At this juncture, and across 3 chapters, data points from between 1968 – 2016 were subject to corpus linguistic and content analysis, with composite tabloidization measures presented alongside each set of data points examined. The first of these 3 chapters, chapters 5 and 6, each analysed two sets of data points from one year before and one year after an event or development with the potential to impact the journalistic values and content of the newspapers selected for analysis. While chapters 5 and 6 analysed 4 legacy newspapers, chapter 7 also applied the thesis' corpus linguistic and content analytic approach to a digital native news outlet. In contrast to the previous results chapters, chapter 7 subjected newspaper articles from each year between the 2012 and 2016 period to corpus linguistics analysis, in view of the exceptional number of developments standing to impact on journalistic values and content which took place during this time period. Articles from 3 of the publications were subject to content analysis at two data points during this period.

In this final chapter, corpus linguistic and content analytic data from the 1968 and 2016 data points are examined against one another, identifying change and continuity in journalistic values and content that has taken place over the course of the dissertation's 48-year time period. Findings from the feature-by-feature analysis and subsequently, from the composite tabloidization measures, are then held against the dissertation's 4 hypotheses. Following this, the composite 'quality' and tabloid elements measures are examined over the course of the thesis' 48-year timeframe – addressing the findings from the 13 specific years subject to examination - with the measures compared longitudinally, and with regard to the hypotheses and therein captured putative causal factors. Accordingly, the agency or lack of

agency, of each of the putative causal forces are discussed with regard to the different publications subject to analysis.

Subsequently, the process of tabloidization is revisited, incorporating the thesis' theoretical framework and identifying the dynamics of the longitudinal shifts and continuity seen between 1968 and 2016. Following this, the implications of the dissertation's results are discussed with regards to the Habermasian public sphere and the ideal public interest function of journalism herein. The implications of the thesis' results for legacy newspapers are next discussed, with specific recommendations proffered to ensure the survival of these news publications moving forward. The final conclusions subsection reflects on the thesis' contributions to the pertinent literature, the next steps in extending academic efforts to an empirically informed understanding of shifts in journalism, and ways in which to support the public service function of the profession.

8.2. The 1968 – 2016 Period: Longitudinal Change and Continuity

8.2a. Corpus Linguistic Results: 1968 – 2016

Due to the unavailability of the *Times* and the *Sun* in searchable, digital formats before the 1990s, the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* were the two newspapers subject to examination from the dissertation's first 4 data points: 1968, 1970, 1985 and 1987. Accordingly, it is the data points from these two publications which can be used to assess change and continuity from the beginning to the end of the thesis' 48-year timeframe. Overall shifts across each set of proxies – 'information-orientation,' personalization, sensationalism, and quotes, will be discussed in terms of percentage change across the 1968 and 2016 data points. Each of the

thesis' 4 hypotheses can be examined against the 1968 and 2016 data points, with H1, H2, H3, and H4 tested longitudinally.

H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed will show more evidence of tabloidization.

H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization.

8.2aa. Analysis: Markers of 'Information-Orientation'

With regard to the feature-by-feature data analysis from 1968 and 2016, the *Guardian* and *Mirror* both see overall increases in 'information-orientation.' Particularly large increases seen in article length account for the significant growth in the value seen in both publications: the total increase in 'information-orientation' proxies is 172% for the *Guardian* and 17% for the *Mirror*. While both publications see an overall increase that is well above the 10 percent margin of error baseline, it is notable that the augmentation in markers of the value is approximately 10 times larger in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror*. Accordingly, H1, H2, H3, and H4, which are tested longitudinally, and anticipate that each publication will show evidence of tabloidization over time are not supported by corpus linguistic 'information-orientation' data.

8.2ab. Analysis: Markers of Personalization

1968 – 2016: H1, H2, H3, and H4 are strongly supported by evidence from the linguistic markers of personalization. Despite a decline in private verbs, immense diachronic increases in first and second person pronouns yield overall surges of 238% in the *Guardian* and 203% in the *Mirror*. Further, the dramatic growth seen in first and second person pronouns occurs alongside a substantial increase in quotes, which aligns with the linguistics literature's identification of these two parts of speech as particularly salient in spoken, rather than written, discourse.

8.2ac. Analysis: Markers of Sensationalism

Despite the scholarship's depictions of sensationalism as traditionally characteristic of tabloid newspapers, initial data from the two publications indicates that proxies of the value are traditionally more salient in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror*. Further, over the course of the thesis' time period, much fluctuation is seen across the proxies of the value, suggesting that the other corpus linguistic indicators, which are less volatile, may be more apt indices of the tabloid and 'quality' characteristics that are of interest to this thesis. Despite this finding, a useful longitudinal comparison of 1968 and 2016 sensationalism data should still be addressed with regard to the thesis' hypotheses.

In comparing sensationalism data from 1968 and 2016, the overall trends seen in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* juxtapose one another. In particular, whereas an overall decrease in sensationalism markers is seen in the 'quality' publication, the tabloid sees an overall increase in indices of sensationalism. Accordingly, while corpus linguistic evidence from the *Guardian* refutes the 4 hypotheses, corpus linguistic data from the *Mirror* supports each of the hypotheses.

In terms of the magnitude of the shifts seen across sensationalism markers, it should be noted that the longitudinal percentage change calculated for the *Guardian* excludes one of the 6 sensationalism proxies, superlative general adverbs, as the initial, 1968 value of the marker is 0 (its value in 2016 in the *Guardian* is 203 per 1 million words), and a percentage change value cannot be calculated. The percentage change calculated using the other 5 markers is a 140% decrease, a substantial shift away from proxies of the value.

In the *Mirror*, the shift seen is of an even more dramatic magnitude. This is largely due to a major increase seen in superlative general adverbs, whereby an overall surge of 621% is seen in indices of sensationalism. However, excluding superlative general adverbs, this increase amounts to just 9%. Thus, superlative general adverbs emerge as a feature of note in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, with increases seen in both publications.

8.2ad. Analysis: Quotes

Between 1968 and 2016, substantial increases are seen in quotes across the two newspapers. As with the overall increases seen in markers of ‘information-orientation’ and personalization, the augmentation in quotes seen in the *Guardian* is of a dramatic magnitude and one which is substantially larger than that occurring in the *Mirror*: in the *Guardian*, an overall increase of 105% is seen, with a 37% increase in quotes occurring in the *Mirror*. Accordingly, H1, H2, H3, and H4, are supported by evidence from quotes from the two newspapers, both of which see concrete growth in the tabloid element.

8.2ae. Overview

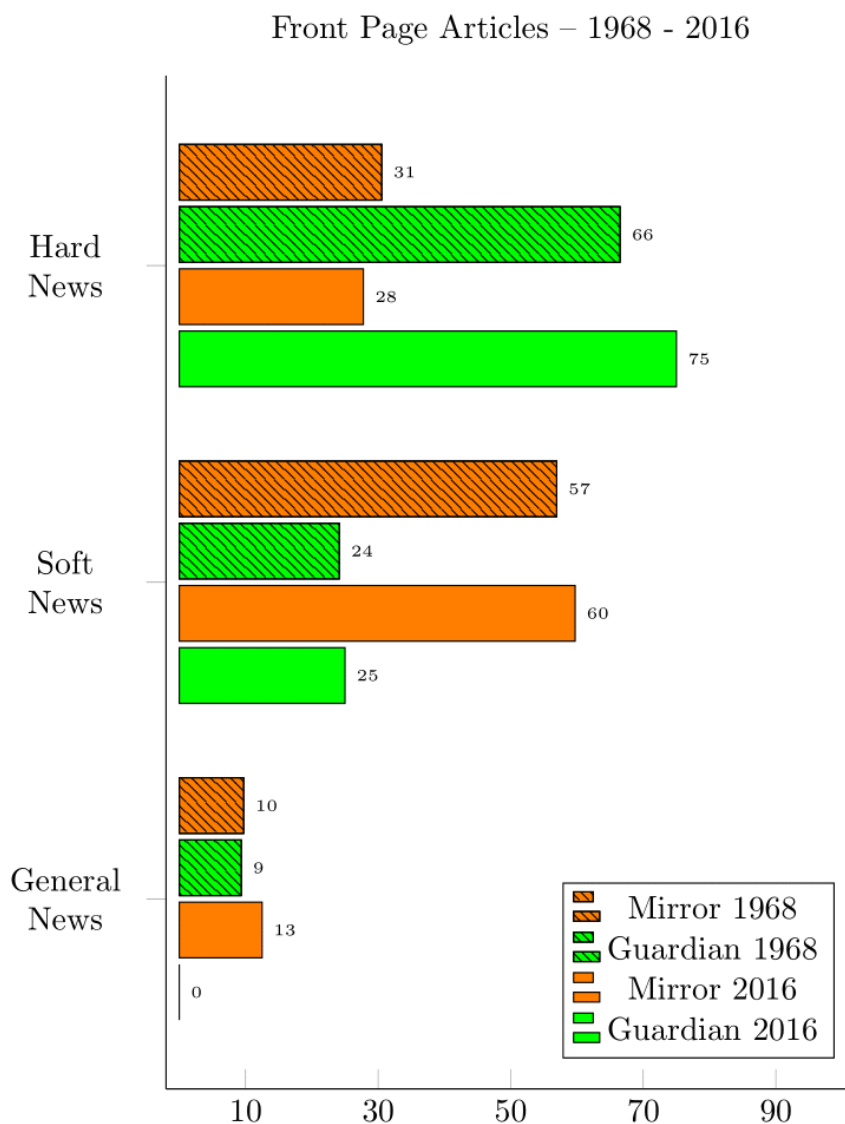
Across a majority of linguistic markers, immense growth is seen between the 1968 and 2016 data points. Particularly strong shifts occur in article length and in first and second person

pronouns. In both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, overall increases are seen in markers of the 'information-orientation' traditionally characteristic of 'quality' newspapers and in the proxies of values seen as traditionally characteristic of tabloids. Thus, H1, H2, H3, and H4 are generally supported by corpus linguistic data.

8.2b. Content Analytic Results: 1968 – 2016

The overarching trend seen across content analytic data is stability across 'hard' news, 'general' news, and 'soft' news stories. Between the 1968 and 2016 data points, the proportional configuration of the 3 news story types remains unchanged. This pattern thus contrasts with the shifts seen across the corpus linguistics categories subject to examination across these data points.

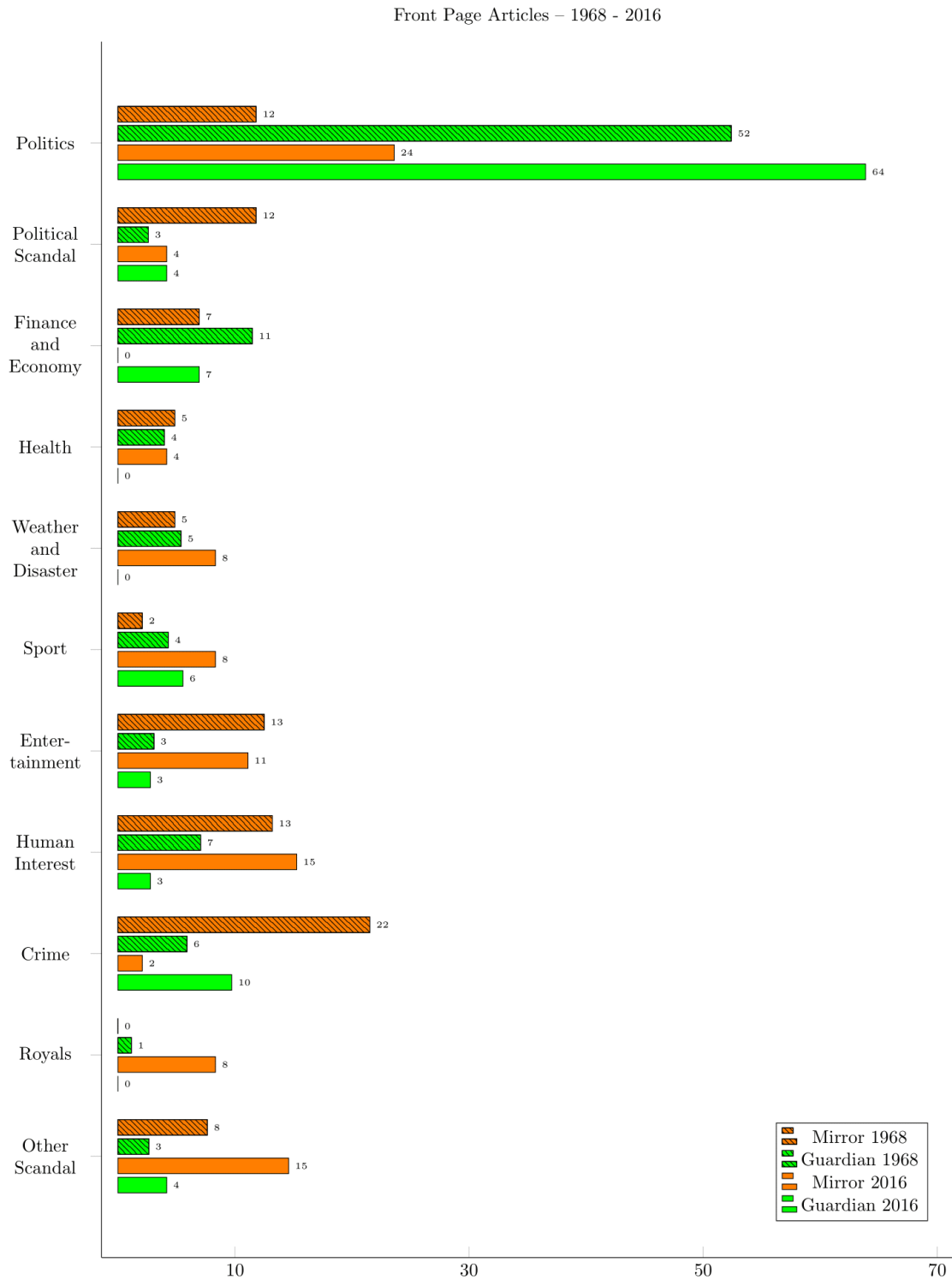
Figure 8.2a. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1968 – 2016, Percentage of Articles by Category



While stability is also the most common trend with regard to article topics, a few shifts do occur within this arena. These shifts are an increase in politics-focused news articles across both publications, and a decline in crime coverage in the *Mirror*. In both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, an increase of 12% is seen in politics reporting; in 1968, this figure is 52% in the *Guardian*, rising to 64% in 2016, and in the *Mirror*, this figure is 12% in 1968 and 24% in 2016. The one decline seen in article topics is the drop observed in crime coverage in the tabloid, which constitutes 22% of the *Mirror's* front-page reporting in 1968 and 2% of page one

coverage in 2016. Accordingly, content analytic data from the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* neither supports nor refutes H1, H2, H3, and H4.

Figure 8.2b. *Guardian* and *Mirror*, 1968 – 2016, Percentage of Articles by Topic



8.3. Overview of Corpus Linguistic and Content Analytic Findings: 1968 & 2016

Between 1968 and 2016, while a number of significant shifts occur across corpus linguistic findings, the trend seen across content analytic data is one of overarching stability. This difference underscores the importance of subjecting both language, and the journalistic values therein represented, and content to longitudinal analysis.

With regard to corpus linguistic findings, increases are seen across ‘information-orientation,’ personalization, and quotes in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*. Across each, however, the growth seen in the *Guardian* is substantially larger than that occurring in the *Mirror*. Sensationalism is the one value-set which sees an exception to this trend: markers of sensationalism undergo an overall decrease in the *Guardian*, while they increase in the *Mirror*. However, and as previously noted, sensationalism was not initially more prevalent in the *Mirror* than the *Guardian*, which called into question the extent to which sensationalism or this particular operationalization of the value, should be understood to fully represent the value. The initial findings in particular of the other corpus linguistic categories iterate the value of each as indexical of ‘quality’ and tabloid characteristics respectively.

With regard to content analytic findings, each of the 3 news story types remain unchanged in frequency across the 1968 and 2016 data points. This consistency is striking and undermines assumptions of a surge in tabloid content pre-dating or in the wake of the Internet era.

In summary, based on the feature-by-feature analysis of data from the 1968 and 2016 data points, an increase in both ‘quality’ and tabloid characteristics in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* is identified. The increase in ‘quality’ elements and in tabloid elements appear to be of a larger magnitude in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror*, the latter of which sees particularly large growth in ‘information-orientation,’ personalization, and quotes. In the following

subsection, the composite tabloidization measures from these two data points will be assessed.

8.3a. The Composite Tabloidization Measures: 1968 & 2016

From the 1968 and 2016 data points, shifts seen across the composite ‘quality’ and tabloid elements measures reflect the direction of the changes seen across the feature-by-feature data. Accordingly, tabloid elements grew in the *Guardian*, increasing from below the publication’s average value for the measure in 1968, to slightly above the mean value in 2016. Interestingly, the shift seen in the composite ‘quality’ elements measure is of an even greater magnitude: in 1968, the value is moderately below the publication’s average for the measure, and in 2016, the value is particularly high above the mean value, at 1.048.

Table 8.3a. Composite Tabloidization Measures, 1968 - 2016

	‘Quality’ Elements	Tabloid Elements
<i>Guardian</i> 1968	-.318	-.167
<i>Guardian</i> 2016	1.048	.015
<i>Mirror</i> 1968	.111	-.329
<i>Mirror</i> 2016	.262	-.285
<i>Times</i> 2016	-.050	-1.521
<i>Sun</i> 2016	.076	.064

As suggested through the feature-by-feature data analysis, ‘quality’ and tabloid elements also become more salient in the *Mirror* across this time period. While ‘quality’ characteristics are relatively absent in the *Guardian* in 1968, during this year, they are above the average value for the *Mirror*, at .111, and reaching .262 in 2016. By contrast, in 1968, tabloid elements are less than the average value seen in the *Mirror*, at -.329; in 2016, tabloid elements are still below the publication’s average, but to a smaller degree, at -.285.

While the *Times* and *Sun* were not subject to examination in 1968, it is worth comparing the composite tabloidization measures for the two publications against those of

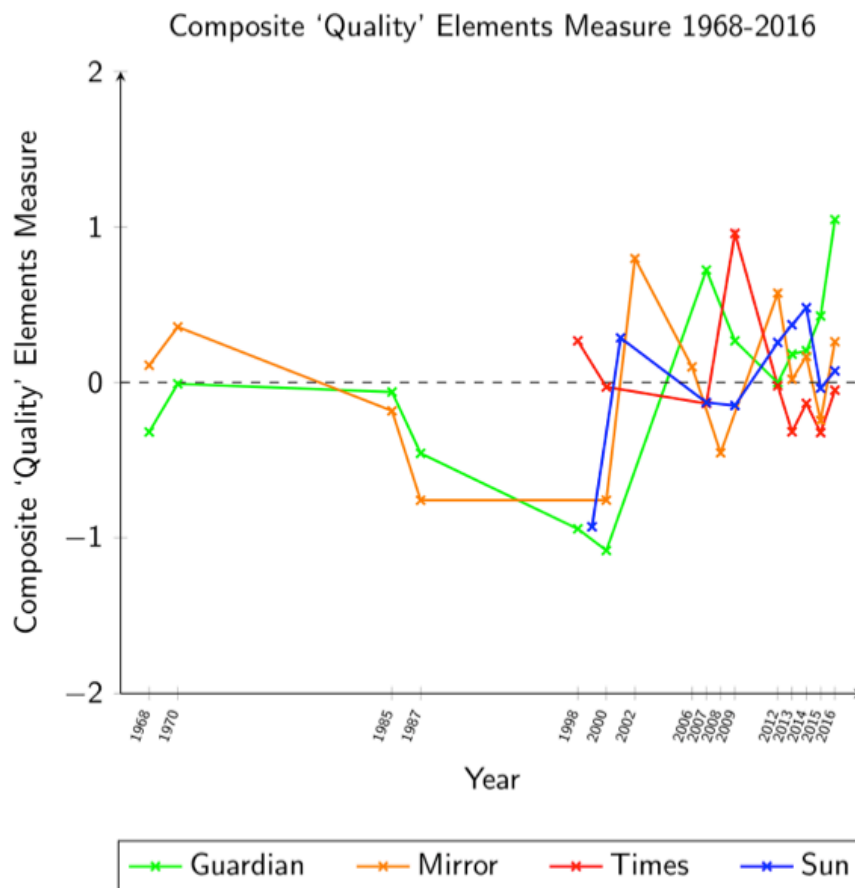
the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* from 2016, as 2016 is the final year in the thesis' timeframe. Across the 2016 composite tabloidization values, certain predominant trends can be noted. For example, with the exception of the *Times*, each of the composite 'quality' elements measures are above each respective publication's average value. By contrast, while the *Guardian* and the *Sun* have positive composite tabloid elements measure for this year, the *Mirror* and the *Times* have negative tabloid elements measures for 2016. Further, it should be noted that this value is of a particularly notable magnitude, -1.521, for the *Times*. Thus, tabloid elements are relatively uncommon in the newspaper at the end of the thesis' timeframe.

As the composite tabloidization measures from the thesis' initial and final data points have been assessed, the following subsection discusses the composite tabloidization measures from across each of the thesis' data points. This discussion will foreground an assessment of the hypotheses against longitudinal shifts across the thesis' data points, or an identification of which hypotheses are supported and/or not supported at which groupings of data points across the thesis' 48-year time period.

8.3b. The Composite Tabloidization Measures: A Look Across the 1968 – 2016 Time Period

When shifts in the composite tabloidization measures across the years and publications of interest are identified, several trends emerge with regard to putative causal factors and time periods of particular interest. Figures 8.3ba and 8.3bb indicate key differences in the overall trends seen before and after 2000/2001/2002, or before and after the launch of the publications' online editions – a juncture synonymous with the mainstream ascendance of the Internet.

Figure 8.3ba. Composite 'Quality' Measures, 1968 – 2016

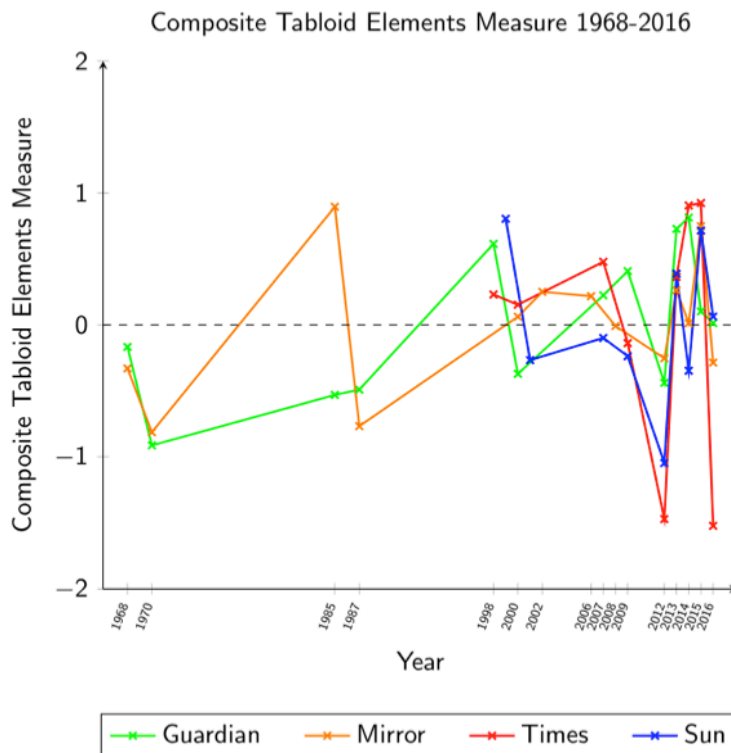


Before the emergence of online editions of each of the newspapers, the overarching trend in the composite 'quality' measures is towards a decline in salience. While 'quality' elements increase in both the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* between 1968 and 1970, after this juncture, 'quality' characteristics drop in both publications until the beginning of the 21st century. This is an important finding which can be seen to account for the increase in perceptions of a tabloidization during the period in which the Internet was gaining widespread traction (e.g. Sampson 1996; Esser 1999). At the beginning of the 21st century, 3 of the 4 publications, with the *Times* as the exception, are well below the average composite 'quality' measure seen for

each respective publication, showing that 'quality' characteristics lacked salience during this period. In particular, one year before and one year after the news publications' introduction of online platforms, 'quality' elements decline in the *Guardian* and the *Times*, a development which would also serve to reify such perceptions.

Figure 8.3bb shows that between 1987 and the early 21st century, tabloid elements are acquiring increasing valence in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, becoming more salient than at the thesis' initial data points in 1968. Further, the first data points from the *Times* and the *Sun*, collected from 1998 and 1999 respectively, show that tabloid characteristics are more salient than usual in the two right of centre newspapers. Interestingly, and as discussed in Chapter 6, the predominant trend in tabloid elements in the data points taken from one year before and one year after the emergence of the newspapers' online editions is a shift away from tabloid elements, with the *Mirror* as the one exception to this trend. This shift away from tabloid elements is reflective of the general shift away from tabloid characteristics seen across the second half of the thesis' timeframe.

Figure 8.3bb. Composite Tabloid Measures, 1968 – 2016



Particularly with regard to ‘quality’ elements and as shown in Figure 8.3ba, greater longitudinal stability is seen across data points before the emergence of the newspaper’s online platforms than after this point in time. While there are more data points in the latter part of the thesis’ timeframe, the substantially greater proportion of flux can be seen to suggest an increased susceptibility to change of journalistic values in association with the Internet era. However, a significant trend of note is the overall increases in the composite ‘quality’ measures seen across the publications, with the exception of the *Times*, in the second half of the thesis’ timeframe.

Within the Internet era, a specific period of note is that of the Web 3.0 years, between 2012 and 2016. In general, changes in the composite tabloid measures take the form of a bell-

shaped curve across the publications, with the *Sun* as something of an exception. A bell-shaped curve suggests that while tabloid characteristics initially started to increase at the beginning of the Web 3.0 period, that they eventually began to decline, returning to a level of salience more similar to that initially seen in 2012. Composite tabloid measure data from the *Times* and the *Mirror* during this period in particular take the form of a bell-shaped curve; while the *Guardian's* composite tabloid measure data roughly takes this form, the publication's composite tabloid measure in 2016 is less similar to its 2012 value than in the *Times* or the *Mirror*. With regard to the *Sun*, before 2012, tabloid characteristics are on the decline in the publication; however, between 2012 and 2016, tabloid elements increasingly regain salience.

As an overview of the trends across newspapers and data points throughout the dissertation's timeframe has now been provided, it is apt to engage in a more in-depth discussion of the longitudinal shifts with regard to the thesis' hypotheses. This discussion will usefully foreground a subsequent revisiting of the project's research question and proposed theoretical framework for the process of tabloidization.

8.4. The Composite Tabloidization Measures and the Hypotheses: 1968 - 2016

When the composite tabloidization measures data from across the thesis' 48-year timeframe are held against the thesis' hypotheses, several trends emerge. These trends are discussed first in terms of each hypothesis, and subsequently, in terms of each of the 5 news publications.

Tables 8.4aa, 8.4ba, 8.4ca, and 8.4da, for example, show less support than might have been anticipated for *H1: News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more*

evidence of tabloidization, particularly in the period before the emergence of the newspapers' online versions. Composite tabloidization measure data from the *Guardian* and *Mirror* from the 1968 – 1987 data points do not provide any support for this hypothesis. This finding would suggest that financial difficulty did not have a tabloidizing impact on these news publications, or that during this period, the financial stresses experienced by the news outlets were not as intense as they might be.

By contrast, composite tabloidization measure data from the *Guardian* from the 1998 – 2002 and 2006 – 2009 data points, from the *Mirror's* 1998 – 2002 data points, from the *Sun's* 2012 - 2016 data points, and partial support from the *Guardian's* 2012 – 2016 data points do support H1. Thus, the emergence of newspapers' online platforms and the Web 3.0 era are the periods which see the most support for H1. In view of the newspaper crisis of 2008, the lack of support for H1 from across the 2006 – 2009 period is an unexpected and interesting finding. The greater support for H1 arising from the 2000/2001/2002 – 2016 period suggests that in the immediate wake of the Internet's ascendance and during the Web 3.0 period, that the increased levels of financial difficulty experienced by the news outlets surpassed a threshold whereby the publications became susceptible to an increase in tabloid elements.

During the 1968 – 1987 period, only one hypothesis, *H2: News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*, is supported by composite tabloidization measure data. This data comes from the *Guardian*. H2 also draws support from the publication from the 2007 – 2009 period, and partial support from the 2012 – 2016 years. The *Mirror* also yields partial support for H2 from

the 2000 – 2002 period, with the *Sun* also producing support during the 2012 – 2016 period. Thus, H2 receives less support than H1 across the thesis' time period.

While *H3: News outlets which place greater emphasis on speed of publication will show more evidence of tabloidization*, and *H4: News outlets which place greater prominence on interactivity with audiences will show more evidence of tabloidization*, are also tested longitudinally, and are subject to assessment at fewer junctures than H2, these hypotheses also receive less support than might have been anticipated. From the *Guardian*, these hypotheses are supported by 2006 – 2009 data, and partially supported by data across the 2012 and 2016 data points. In line with H2, data from the 2012 – 2016 period from the *Sun* also support H3 and H4.

Composite tabloidization measure data, as well as feature-by-feature findings, from the *Guardian* reflect that the newspaper has displayed more evidence of tabloidization than the other news publications subject to examination. As shown through Tables 8.4aa and 8.4ba, during the 1968 – 1987 time period, H2 is the only hypothesis which has support, and this support comes solely from the *Guardian*.

Table 8.4aa. Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 1968 – 2016, *Guardian*

	1968 - 1970	1985 - 1987	1998 - 2000	2007 - 2009	2012 - 2016
Trends Observed	Decline in CTM, growth in CQM, with greater drop in CTM: both measures lower than those seen in <i>Mirror</i> .	Growth in CTM, decline in CQM.	Decrease in CTM and CQM, bigger drop in CTM.	Increase in CTM and decline in CQM.	Increase in CTM, and large increase in CQM.
H1	(<i>Mirror</i> expected to show more tabloidization) Not Supported	(<i>Mirror</i> expected to show more tabloidization) Refuted	(<i>Times</i> , <i>Mirror</i> , and <i>Sun</i> expected to show more tabloidization). Supported	(<i>Guardian</i> , <i>Times</i> , and <i>Mirror</i> to show more tabloidization than <i>Sun</i>). Supported	(<i>Guardian</i> to show least tabloidization, and <i>Mirror</i> the most). Partial Support
H2	n/a	Supported	Refuted	Supported	Partial Support
H3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Partial Support
H4	n/a	n/a	n/a	Supported	Partial Support

Composite tabloidization measure data from the *Mirror* does not provide any support for the thesis’ hypotheses before the mainstream ascendance of the Internet in the late 1990s. However, the 2000 – 2002 data points see the most evidence of tabloidization in the *Mirror* from any data points tested through the thesis’ time period, with H1 and H2 partially supported. A striking finding of note is the absence of support for two of the technologically-focused hypotheses H3, and H4, which are at no point in the thesis’ timeframe supported by composite tabloidization measure data from the *Mirror*.

Table 8.4ba Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 1968 – 2016, *Mirror*

	1968 – 1970	1985 – 1987	2000 – 2002	2007 – 2009	2012 – 2016
Trends Observed	Decline in CTM and increase in CQM: both measures higher than in the <i>Guardian</i> .	Drop in CTM and bigger drop observed in CTM.	Increase in CTM and CQM, bigger increase in CQM.	Decline in CTM and CQM.	Slight decrease in CTM, decline CQM.
H1	(<i>Mirror</i> expected to show more tabloidization) Not Supported	(<i>Mirror</i> expected to show more tabloidization) Refuted	(<i>Times, Mirror, and Sun</i> expected to show more tabloidization than <i>Guardian</i>) Partial Support	(<i>Guardian, Times, and Mirror</i> to show more tabloidization than <i>Sun</i>) Not Supported or Refuted	(<i>Guardian</i> to show least tabloidization, and <i>Mirror</i> the most) Not Supported
H2	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported	(Longitudinally-tested) Partial Support	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported
H3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported
H4	n/a	n/a	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported

A striking lack of support for the hypotheses can be drawn from the *Times*, as composite tabloidization measure data either refutes or does not offer support for any of the thesis' hypotheses at any of the data points subject to investigation. It should be noted, however, that the *Times* also sees an overarching decline in 'quality' features between 1998 and 2016; accordingly, the shifts seen in the publications do not necessarily amount to a lack of a tabloidization seen in the newspaper, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Table 8.4ca: Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 1998 – 2016, Times

	1998 – 2000	2007 – 2009	2012 – 2016
Trends Observed	Increase in CQM, decrease in CTM.	Increase in CQM, decrease in CTM.	Decrease in CQM, larger decrease in CTM.
H1	(<i>Times</i> , <i>Mirror</i> , and <i>Sun</i> expected to show more tabloidization than <i>Guardian</i>). Not Supported	(<i>Guardian</i> , <i>Times</i> , and <i>Mirror</i> to show more tabloidization than <i>Sun</i>). Refuted	(<i>Guardian</i> to show least tabloidization, and <i>Mirror</i> the most). Not Supported
H2	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted
H3	n/a	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted
H4	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted

With regard to the *Sun*, the only composite tabloidization measure data that supports the thesis' hypotheses comes from the 2012 – 2016 time period, wherein partial support for H1 and full support for H2, H3, and H4 are yielded. Accordingly, for the *Sun*, the Web 3.0 period and the technological factors assessed therein are shown to have a particularly tabloidizing impact on the publication.

Table 8.4da: Composite Tabloidization Measures and Hypotheses, 1998 – 2016, Sun

	1998 – 2000	2007 – 2009	2012 – 2016
Trends Observed	Increase in CQM, decrease in CTM.	Slight decrease in CQM, decrease in CTM.	Decrease in CQM, increase in CTM.
H1	(<i>Times</i> , <i>Mirror</i> , and <i>Sun</i> expected to show more tabloidization than <i>Guardian</i>). Refuted	(<i>Guardian</i> , <i>Times</i> , and <i>Mirror</i> to show more tabloidization than <i>Sun</i>). Not Supported	(<i>Guardian</i> to show least tabloidization, and <i>Mirror</i> the most). Partial Support
H2	(Longitudinally-tested) Refuted	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported	(Longitudinally-tested) Supported
H3	n/a	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Supported
H4	n/a	(Longitudinally-tested) Not Supported	(Longitudinally-tested) Supported

The *Huffington Post* has not been discussed until now as the digital native publication has an initial data point of 2014, and only one additional data point, that of 2016. Across these two years, composite tabloidization measure data from the *Huffington Post* reflects the dramatic

drops in tabloid elements seen in the feature-by-feature analysis of the publication. As the publication does not undergo increases in tabloid elements, each of the thesis' hypotheses are refuted by data from the online newspaper.

Table 8.2ea: Composite Tabloidization Measure and Hypotheses, 2012 – 2016, HuffPo

	2012 - 2016
Trends Observed	Decrease in CQT, Larger decrease in CTM
H1	Refuted
H2	Refuted
H3	Refuted
H4	Refuted

Assessing the composite tabloidization measures from the thesis' initial data points and final data points against one another is also a comparison of note. As conveyed through Table 8.3a., featured in the previous subsection, both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* undergo increases in composite tabloid and composite 'quality' elements measures. The increases in both 'quality' and tabloid elements seen in the *Guardian* are of a substantially greater magnitude than those observed in the *Mirror*: increases in 'quality' elements are over 9 times greater in the *Guardian* than in the *Mirror*, with growth in tabloid elements over 4 times greater. Hereby, each of the longitudinal hypotheses, H1, H2, H3, and H4 receive partial support from each of the two publications.

As the data from across the thesis' timeframe has now been examined with regard to each of the dissertation's hypotheses, the following subsection will revisit the project's research question. In order to respond to the research question, findings from the 3 forms of data, corpus linguistic, content analytic, and composite tabloidization measure values, from each of the publications will be subject to discussion. The theoretical reasons for the variation in the shifts seen across the publications are discussed in greater detail in the following Subsection 8.6., 'The Process of Tabloidization Revisited.'

8.5. Research Question Revisited

The first chapter of this thesis introduced the dissertation's research question:

RQ: To what extent have news outlets 'tabloidized' in the last 48 years, and what explains variation in the extent of tabloidization between these outlets?

At this juncture in the dissertation, the research question can be readdressed through findings from the project's corpus linguistic and content analytic data, as well as through the composite tabloidization measures generated using both. A discussion of the key shifts, hypotheses, and adjunct temporal considerations is followed by a brief overview of the variation seen across the publications. As the thesis' proposed theoretical framework for the process of tabloidization is revisited in detail in the following subsection, theoretical reasons for the variation in the shifts seen across the different newspapers are discussed in this following section, so as to avoid repetition. This Subsection, 8.5, ends with a summarized response to the thesis' research question drawing from the changes and trends discussed below.

Between 1968 and 2016, the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* see the same shifts, in different magnitudes: tabloid and 'quality' elements increase in both of the publications. As the *Times* and the *Sun* were not subject to examination until 1998 and 1999 respectively, it is also worth comparing the overall shifts seen between this juncture and the thesis' end point, across all 4 newspapers: 3 of the publications, with the *Times* as the exception, undergo growth in 'quality' elements, with all 4 of the legacy news outlets experiencing a decline in tabloid elements. From this temporal viewpoint, the shifts seen across the initial and end data points

of each newspaper are the reverse of a tabloidization of newspapers; therefore, news outlets have not become more tabloid-like.

A point of particular relevance to the dissertation's research question is at which time(s) during the project's timeframe the identified shifts take place. As noted in this chapter's previous subsection, before the Internet's ascendance there is no evidence to support H1 (*News outlets which are in greater financial difficulty will show more evidence of tabloidization*). The only support for a hypothesis before the end of the 20th century is for H2 (*News outlets with the technological means to cheaply produce more content will show more evidence of tabloidization*). The general lack of support for H1 and H2 from the 1968 – 1987 time period suggests that the economic and technological factors subject to analysis are not sufficiently potent at these junctures in time – for example, that the financial difficulty experienced by the newspapers was not sufficiently extreme to have an impact – or that these factors more broadly do not have a tabloidizing impact on these newspapers. This can be seen as particularly relevant to H1, which does not receive any support from changes seen in tabloid elements before 1998.

As greater support is seen for the hypotheses after the Internet's ascendance, it may be suggested that an amplification of these putative causal factors do have a tabloidizing impact on the news publications. H1, which captures the potential impact of financial difficulty, is the hypothesis which garners the most support from the second half of the thesis' timeframe. Full support for this hypothesis draws from the *Guardian's* 1998 – 2000 and 2007 – 2009 data points, with partial support⁵³ produced by the publication's 2012 – 2016 findings,

⁵³ Partial support can be understood as support generating from the change seen in the composite tabloid elements measure, and not from the composite quality elements measures. As an increase in 'quality' characteristics does not correspond with traditional

from the *Mirror's* 2000 – 2002 data points, and the *Sun's* 2012 – 2016 findings. Thus, the *Times* is the only newspaper which does not produce support for H1 at some point across the data points subjected to comparative analysis. Interestingly, it is also the only one of the newspapers examined which uses an online paywall, which was introduced in 2011, which indicates that this additional source of revenue may account for the lack of ascension in tabloid elements at the publication.

While the technologically-focused hypotheses are supported by certain publications at certain junctures between the 1998 – 2016 period, this support is not as prevalent as that seen for H1. H2, H3, and H4 are both supported by composite tabloid and composite 'quality' elements data from the *Guardian* between the 2007 and 2009 data points, and by both measures from the *Sun* across the 2012 – 2016 period. These 3 hypotheses also receive partial support from the *Guardian*, in the form of composite tabloid elements measure data from the 2012 – 2016 years.

H1's emergence as the hypothesis with the most support from this time period suggests that financial difficulty in fact resulted in an amplification of tabloid elements in each of the newspapers, with the exception of the *Times*. As newspapers broadly experienced more financial hardship between 1998 and 2016 than between 1968 and 1998, the temporal dynamics of the support for H1 indicate that the newspapers may have passed a certain threshold for financial difficulty whereby the publications began to see a rise in tabloid characteristics.

In considering the junctures at which shifts take place during the thesis' timeframe, it is also important to note the role of changes in the composite tabloidization measures which

understandings of a tabloidization, this type of diachronic change alongside an increase in tabloid elements is indicated as partial support.

took place outside of the data points subject to comparative analysis. For example, while data points from 1968 and 1970 are compared against one another, as are data points from 1985 and 1987, the data points from 1970 and 1985 are not compared against one another. While it is likely that the value of the composite tabloid elements measures would not remain entirely stable across these points in time, often the shifts which occur across these periods are of a substantial magnitude.

Such shifts help to explain the reasons for which H1 has substantial support from during the 1998 – 2016 period, yet overall increases in tabloid values are not seen between the 1998 and 2016 data points when compared against one another. For instance, the composite tabloid elements measure decreases in the *Mirror* between 2002 and 2007, with substantial drops seen in all 4 of the newspapers between 2008/2009 and 2012, the latter of which largely account for the decrease in the composite tabloid elements measure which occurs between 1998 and 2016.

By contrast, during the first half of the thesis' timeframe, the composite tabloid elements measures generally increase across the data points which are not subject to comparative analysis. In particular, this value increases between 1970 and 1985, and 1987 and 1998 in the *Guardian* and 1987 and 2000 in the *Mirror*.

With regard to the composite quality elements measure outside of the data points subject to comparative analysis, the overarching trend seen before 1998/2000 is towards a drop, while after the launch of the publication's online versions, the trend is towards an increase in the measure. In terms of the first half of the thesis' time period, substantial declines occur in the measure between 1970 and 1985 and between 1987 and 1998 in the *Guardian*, with a drop also seen in the *Mirror* between 1970 and 1985. After the 2000 – 2002 data points, drops in the measure are also consistently observed outside of the data points

compared against one another, occurring between 2000/2001/2002 and 2006/2007 in the *Times*, *Sun*, and *Mirror*, and between 2008/2009 and 2012, in the *Times* and the *Guardian*. Increases of a substantial magnitude occur across this measure in the *Guardian* between 2000 and 2007, and in the *Mirror* and the *Sun* between 2008/2009 and 2012.

Thus, in both the first and second halves of the thesis' timeframe, for the composite quality elements measure, the predominant trends seen across the data points which have not been subject to comparative analysis are the same as those predominantly observed across the data points that are subject to comparative. The opposite occurs with regard to the composite tabloid elements measure. Hereby, outside of the data points subject to comparative analysis, an overall increase in the composite tabloid elements occur in the first half and overall decrease in the second half, with an overall decrease in the composite tabloid elements measure in the first half and decrease in the second half across the points subject to comparative analysis. Accordingly, greater longitudinal consistency is found across the 'quality' elements than across the tabloid elements. This is a point which will be unpacked in greater detail.

As the findings with regards to the thesis' hypotheses and shifts between and outside of the data points subject to comparative examination have now been discussed, in moving towards a fleshed-out response to the dissertation's research question, variation seen in the shifts across the newspapers subject to examination can now be addressed. Significant differences arise across the publications, along with several notable similarities.

A pattern of particular note across each of the publications is the agency of journalistic values and the language through which these are conveyed, rather than the potential agency of journalistic content, in accounting for the longitudinal shifts seen across the thesis' timeframe. In each of the outlets subject to comparison, between their initial and end data

points, the changes which take place emerge from the corpus linguistic arena, as stability is the overarching trend seen across content analytic data. The increases in tabloid elements are predominantly attributable to growth in first and second person pronouns, and quotes, with increases in 'quality' characteristics most commonly arising from growth in article length and reading difficulty level. The significance of these shifts with regard to the relevant bodies of scholarship will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter's final section.

Findings from the *Times* are distinct from the other newspapers in the publication's consistent lack of support for any of the thesis' hypotheses, at any of the junctures examined in the newspaper. The *Times* is also the only publication which does not see an overall increase in the composite tabloidization measure data between the initial data point from the publication and the final data point, in 2016. One similarity of significance between the *Times* and another publication is between 1998 and 2016 data points in the *Guardian*: both of the 'quality' newspapers see decreases in tabloid elements across the initial and final data points. This is a compelling finding that undermines claims asserting a tabloidization of 'quality' newspapers as a result of the Internet's ascendance.

As identified in the previous subsection of this chapter, between its initial and end data points, it can be noted that the *Guardian* experiences the largest increases in tabloid and in 'quality' characteristics of any of the publications. In terms of the overall shifts seen between the publication's 1968 and 2016 data points, the *Guardian* also parallels overarching findings of the *Mirror*, which also sees overall increases in tabloid and 'quality' elements over the course of the thesis' 48-year time period. Particularly within the 2012 – 2016 period, the publication also undergoes similar shifts to those seen in the *Sun*.

The *Sun* undergoes an increase in 'quality' elements and a decline in tabloid elements between its initial data point in 1999, and the thesis' final data point in 2016. The 2012 – 2016

period, or Web 3.0 era, is a time during which the publication sees an augmentation in tabloid elements, providing support for the 3 technological-oriented hypotheses, H2, H3, and H4, across these 4 years. The Web 3.0 period can be thus associated with a period of growth in tabloid elements at the publication.

While not to the same extent as the *Times*, data from the *Mirror* provides relatively little support for the thesis' hypotheses. Before the mainstream ascendance of the Internet in the late 1990s, composite tabloidization measure data from the tabloid does not provide any support for the thesis' hypotheses. Further, there is no composite tabloidization measure data which supports H3 or H4, and the launch of the newspaper's online platform is the only juncture subject to comparative analysis which hypothesis support, confirming H1 and H2. Although data from the *Guardian* yields more support for the thesis' hypotheses, as previously mentioned, the overall trends seen across the two newspapers' initial and final data points resemble one another the most.

The *Huffington Post* has not yet been mentioned in this subsection as only two years of data are subject to examination from the digital native news publication. Several findings from analysis of the *HuffPo* are relevant to the thesis' research question. One is the salience of 'quality' and tabloid elements in the publication in comparison to those of the 'quality' and tabloid legacy newspapers subject to examination. The *Huffington Post* is shown to have levels of 'quality' elements most similar to those of the 'quality' legacy newspaper publications, and with the exception of quotes, levels of tabloid language and the values therein represented higher than those of the tabloid newspapers, and levels of tabloid content also similar to those seen in the 'quality' news publications. In particular, the prevalence of 'quality' characteristics is higher than anticipated, in line with depictions by the body of scholarship of the online publication as clickbait-driven.

As seen in the legacy publications, the longitudinal changes observed between the publication's 2014 and 2016 data points are a result of activity within the corpus linguistics arena. The digital native publication undergoes a decline in tabloid values, as indicated through the drop in markers of personalization and sensationalism, and the decline in the salience of quotes seen in the publication. While changes of statistical significance are not detected in the feature-by-feature analysis of the *HuffPo*'s 'quality' characteristics, the publication's composite 'quality' elements measure declines across 2014 and 2016. In this sense, the *HuffPo* can be seen to have some resemblance to the *Sun*, as this is the one other publication which experiences a decline in 'quality' elements during these years.

In summary, to provide a response to the thesis' research question, a tabloidization occurs across several of the publications subject to examination. The shifts which take place across the data points subject to analysis can largely be attributed to corpus linguistic findings, with personalization, and first and second person pronouns therein, quotes, and 'information-orientation,' with article length and reading difficulty level therein, emerging as arenas which generally augment across the dissertation's time period. Further, the tabloidization does not take a linear form, instead taking place during specific points in time and in line with specific economic, technological, and cultural factors, which are discussed in greater detail in the following subsection.

The *Guardian* is the publication which sees the greatest increase in tabloid elements, however, this augmentation is accompanied by a growth in 'quality' characteristics of an even greater magnitude. Moreover, with the exception of the *Times*, each of the legacy newspapers subject to analysis undergo an ascension of 'quality' elements across the earliest data point and the final data point subject to analysis in each respective newspaper. Thus, while an overall increase in tabloid values is seen in two of the newspapers subject to analysis,

growth in 'quality' newspaper values is the more predominant trend, as it is observed across 3 of the legacy publications examined. Furthermore, as the two newspapers which did experience growth in tabloid elements also saw an augmentation in 'quality' values, the tabloidization that did occur during this thesis' timeframe can be understood to be accompanied by an explicitly 'information-oriented' aspect, whereby the language through which the principal 'quality' newspaper value is represented simultaneously increases in prominence.

As the dissertation's research question has been revisited and answered in view of the longitudinal corpus linguistic, content analytic, and composite tabloidization measure data, the following section will return to the thesis' proposed framework for the process of tabloidization. Certain modifications will be applied to the framework in line with the thesis' findings, and to emphasize certain key results from the project.

8.6. The Process of Tabloidization Revisited

In Chapter 2, 'Theorizing Putative Causes of Tabloidization,' the groundwork for and the details of a novel theoretical framework for the tabloidization process were posited. This framework depicted the role of putative causal factors of an ascension of tabloid elements in legacy newspapers drawing from the economic, technological, and cultural arenas. The thesis' key findings will in this section be discussed in terms of the proposed process of tabloidization, with modifications applied to this theoretical framework and added to a theoretically enhanced response to the dissertation's research question accordingly.

Central to this framework is the identification of the overall ascension in 'quality' elements in the newspapers over time, with a decline in tabloid values particularly

pronounced during the Internet era. The agency of putative economic and technological causal factors is not found to be universal across the different newspapers, in particular, calling into question the strength of each as possible causes of a tabloidization. Differences in the temporal dynamics and accordingly, the role of the putative causal factors across the 5 publications is also seen to suggest an ascendance of values upheld by individual newsrooms rather than across newsrooms, the latter of which would suggest a reification of journalistic ideology. The identified shifts further call into question assumptions regarding shifts in gatekeeping associated with the ascension of the Internet and in particular, the Web 3.0 era. Key findings support the central arguments of hybrid media system theory, and also suggest the agency of broader cultural factors.

Stemming from literature by scholars such as Sjøvaag (2014) and Conboy (2011) attesting to shifts in newsrooms as a function of the technological capacity to make more content more cheaply, an ascension of tabloid elements was anticipated to occur in the wake of certain major technological developments and events between 1968 and 2016. Namely, these were the Wapping Revolution, the introduction of online newspaper editions, the emergence of social sharing functions, and subsequently of the Web 3.0 context.

Variations in the adoption of new technological capacities were expected to arise across the different newspapers in line with differences across the publications' respective newsrooms. Different impacts and/or degrees of impact were anticipated to occur across the newsrooms in response to the ability to make more content more inexpensively, and the placement of emphasis on speed and on interactivity, as examined through the thesis' hypotheses.

With regard to possible economic factors, in line with scholarship such as that of Franklin (1997), Picard (2006), and Skovsgaard (2014), financial difficulty was hypothesized to lead to an augmentation of tabloid values and content. This was in view of the capacity of tabloid values and content to increase circulation and in the online context, article views. Further, in line with variation in the degree of financial difficulty on a publication-by-publication basis, differences in the extent of growth in tabloid elements was expected to emerge across the different newspapers.

The thesis' findings show that financial difficulty did not have an impact on the newspapers before the emergence of the Internet era. This evidence counters numerous scholarship from the 1990s referencing an ascension of tabloid elements in British newspapers which attests to the agency of financial difficulty in this augmentation (e.g. Sampson 1996; Franklin 1997; Sparks 2000). It is not until the ascension of the Internet that financial difficulty is shown to have such an impact, and this impact only occurs at more than one juncture subject to the thesis' data analysis in one newspaper, the *Guardian*.

The *Guardian* also stands out as the publication which did not suffer circulation drops, as its circulation expanded during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and its online version quickly gained popularity in the 21st century. It can be inferred that a decline in advertising revenue would largely account for the financial difficulty experienced at the *Guardian* during the 1998 – 2016 period, which would be an expected development as the ascension of the Internet and adjunct drops in advertising income have been particularly problematic for 'quality' legacy newspapers, as they have traditionally been more reliant on advertising than on circulation for revenue (Picard 2006a, 2008). However, during this period, the *Times* sees a decline in tabloid values, suggesting that an ascension in tabloid elements is not a trend distinctive of legacy 'quality' newspapers more broadly.

In terms of other junctures at which financial difficulty saw a rise in tabloid characteristics, this occurred in the *Guardian* across the 2007 – 2009 and 2012 – 2016 data points, in the *Mirror* between the 2000 and 2002 data points, and from the *Sun* between 2012 and 2016. A point of differentiation with regard to the *Guardian* is its ownership model, which operates in the form of a trust. Despite the scholarship and the publication's own attestations, it is thus this model that is the most associated with shifts in journalistic values.

Further, variation seen across newspapers under the same type of ownership, and even the same conglomerate, namely News Corporation, underscores distinctions in the shifts occurring across each of the publications. Despite ownership by the same conglomerate as the *Sun*, the *Times* does not see an ascension of tabloid characteristics as a function of financial difficulty, or as a function of any of the other putative causal factors tested.

There are two junctures at which financial difficulty is seen to have a tabloidizing impact on more than one newspaper: before and after the launch of the newspapers' online versions and during the Web 3.0 period. With regard to the former, increases in tabloid elements occur in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, and with regard to the latter, an augmentation in tabloid characteristics is seen in the *Guardian* and the *Sun*. Thus, while the *Guardian* is the news publication most often associated with financial difficulty, at the beginning of the Internet era and during the Web 3.0 era, both publicly-traded and trust-funded legacy newspapers, and even those upholding different political ideologies, undergo shifts, often at different intervals from one another. As also underscored by longitudinal differences between each of these newspapers with the *Times*, findings suggest a rise of values at the individual newsroom level rather than across all newsrooms more broadly.

It should also be explicitly noted that neither the 1998 – 2002 or 2012 – 2016 time period are the junctures at which the newspapers are experiencing the most financial

hardship. The newspaper crisis of 2008 in particular was a time of greater financial losses at each of the publications. Rather than attributing principal agency to factors at the market structure level, this finding suggests the interplay of financial difficulty with technological factors distinct to or amplified to a higher degree within the Web 3.0 era. As will be discussed later in this subsection, this notion also corroborates the principal pillars of the hybrid media system theory.

At this juncture, it is prudent to incorporate into the discussion findings regarding the putative technological factors. Technological factors were expected to vary on a newsroom-to-newsroom basis, and in line with several technological developments which took place during the thesis' timeframe. Similar to financial difficulty, the impact of the putative technological factors was not as prevalent or pronounced as anticipated.

In line with H1 findings regarding financial difficulty, the *Guardian* emerges as the publication with the newsroom which most frequently produces increased levels of tabloid values in the wake of the emergence or an amplification of putative technological factors, and in particular, that of the ability to make more content more cheaply. It can be noted that this finding aligns with that of Westin's (2001) corpus linguistic study wherein the language of the *Guardian* is found to be more informal than that of its 'quality' British counterparts, namely the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. The rise in tabloid elements at the *Guardian* as a function of economic and technological factors, however, further indicates the particular susceptibility of the newspaper to undergo changes in journalistic values. It is also relevant to note that from 1999, when the *Guardian* first launched the *Guardian Unlimited*, editorial leadership at the publication spoke in favour of the transition to online (Rusbridger 2012, 2018), stating that the newspaper would use its online version to provide more background to news stories, and also to focus more on stories relevant to the everyday lives of its readers. This focus on

‘information-orientation’ as well as more personal, or tabloid elements, is reflected in those articles also featured in the newspaper’s print edition, indicating the agency of shifts at the newsroom level. It is significant to note that these changes are manifest in the values of the publication, rather than in the content, the latter of which retains the same proportional configuration of ‘hard’ news and ‘soft’ news, with only a slight decline seen in ‘general’ news, across the thesis’ 1968 – 2016 timeframe.

The *Sun* also sees an augmentation of tabloid elements in the Web 3.0 period, furthermore in confirming H3 and H4, which identify a growth of these elements as a function of increased emphasis on speed and interactivity, respectively. As discussed in Chapter 4, ‘The News Publications and Social Context,’ the *Sun* underwent numerous experiments and changes during the 2012 through 2016 period. This included the introduction of a paywall in 2013, its removal in 2015, and an overhaul of its online version in 2016. To iterate this point, in 2016, the publication’s former editor, David Dinsmore, referred to the last 6 years as a “period of experimentation” (Dinsmore in Burrell 2016b). While between 1999 and 2012 the general trend seen in the *Sun* was a shift away from tabloid values, the increase in tabloid values seen alongside the *Sun*’s response to the Web 3.0 era, which is depicted as one lacking coherence, indicates a period wherein changes in the publication’s newsroom can be associated with changes in the journalistic values of the newspaper.

The support for H3 and H4 from the *Mirror* at a different juncture than the *Sun*, in the wake of the publication’s launch of an online version, supports the notion of a disintegration of journalism ideology and a rise of values upheld by individual journalists. Alike the *Sun*, the 1996 – 2004 years may be understood as a period of change at the tabloid, wherein the new Editor of the publication during this period, Piers Morgan, expressed his aim to see changes at the *Mirror* whereby it would compete more successfully against its rival, the *Sun*.

Interestingly, the increase in tabloid values seen in the wake of the newspaper's introduction of an online edition are accompanied by an augmentation of 'quality' values, which occurs across each of the publications, with the exception of the *Times*.

Across the news publications, the manifestation of shifts in the arena of language and the values represented therein, as opposed to content, is a point of substantial theoretical significance. For one, evidence of a shift in gatekeeping practices, in the form of a reconfiguration of the types of news stories covered in the Internet era, is not produced by the thesis' content analytic data. Rather, between 1968 and 2016, stability is seen across the percentage of 'hard' news and 'soft' news stories in the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*. In terms of changes observed in the proportional configuration of story topics, increases in politics stories occur in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, the former of which sees growth from 52% to 64% of this story topic on newspaper's front-page, with the latter seeing an increase from 12% to 24%. A drop in crime stories also takes place in the *Mirror*, declining from 22% to 2%. These shifts in particular contrast notions of a rise in tabloid, or clickbait-driven, story topics.

Such findings suggest that elements of an Internet era and/or therein Web 3.0 context, such as editorial analytics, are not shifting the proportional configuration of front-page news. While the homepages of the legacy newspapers are not subject to examination, content analysis of the top of the *Huffington Post's* homepage shows that it is most similar to a 'quality' newspaper, the *Guardian*, rather than a tabloid one, and further, that with the increased integration of editorial analytics between 2014 and 2016, that an augmentation in tabloid content does not occur; rather, the proportional configuration of news article types across the homepage of the *Huffington Post* remains the same across 2014 and 2016.

Subsequently called into question are the configuration of reader interests and their relationship with the agenda-setting of journalists. If readers' interests have in effect dictated

the configuration of news stories given prominence in the newspapers, these interests closely resemble those upheld before the mainstream ascension of the Internet. In the case that page one stories do not represent reader preferences as conveyed through editorial analytics and data gathered online, the agenda-setting power of journalists has remained stable. A third possibility, which is less likely in view of the similarities between the news story types constituting the top of the *Huffington Post*'s homepage and the legacy 'quality' newspapers,' and differences from the legacy tabloid newspapers' page one coverage, is that the configuration of news story types which constitute the online homepages of the legacy newspapers differs substantially from that of their print copy page one reporting.

The lack of change seen across the proportional configuration of front-page news stories could also represent an effort by the legacy newspapers to reify their traditional brand reputations. In an age of innovation and flux, legacy newspapers may have realized the value of their traditional brand identity as a totem of continuity, authority, and trustworthiness. As suggested in this chapter's Section, 8.8 'Implications for the News publications,' a prudent course of action for newspapers in the future is to enhance the 'quality' elements associated with their brand. This is something that brands outside of the journalistic field in numerous industries, particularly in the realm of material culture, have emphasized, through brand signifiers that combine tradition and heritage as a means through which to distinguish themselves and secure consumer trust in a crowded marketplace. Continuity established at the content level contrasts the changes seen in journalistic values across the different publications which, as argued can be attributed to the individual journalist level rather than to a broader independent variable.

The pertinence of branding considerations to the continuity seen across content types in the legacy newspapers touches on the role of factors drawing from the cultural arena. As

discussed in the previous subsection of this chapter, shifts also occur outside of the data points subject to comparative analysis, and these should be addressed with regard to forces other than those assessed through the thesis' hypotheses. In order to orient the reader, these shifts as well as the key similarities and differences with the data points subject to comparative analysis will be summarized briefly.

Between 1968 and the launch of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror's* online versions, these shifts can be categorized as increases in tabloid elements – which contrast the predominant decreases seen across the points subject to comparative analysis – and decreases in 'quality' elements, which contrast the trend seen across the two publications between 1968 and 1970, but roughly parallel the decreases seen in the data points compared through the end of the 20th century. Between 1998 and 2016, increases in 'quality' elements are seen both inside and outside of the data points subject to comparative analysis. By contrast, while increases in tabloid elements are seen across numerous data points subject to comparative analysis, the broader trend outside of these points is a shift away from tabloid values.

Thus, and as mentioned in this chapter's previous section, distinctions between the trends occurring across the data points subject to comparative analysis and those adjunct yet external to these points arise with tabloid elements to a greater degree than with 'quality' elements. This finding indicates that tabloid elements, and in particular, tabloid values and the language through which they are conveyed, are more susceptible to change as a function of broader factors than those tested through H1, H2, H3, and H4, than 'quality' characteristics. With regard to the relevant media linguistics scholarship, the relatively malleability of the language representing tabloid values is a finding of note; while scholars such as Hundt and Mair (1999) assert the agility of the newspaper register, this thesis suggests that within this register, it is the language indexical of tabloid values that is the most susceptible to change.

With regard to the pertinent journalism literature, as the values resembling those traditionally characteristic of 'quality' newspapers have often been viewed as more central to journalistic ideology (Deuze 2004, 2005a), tabloid values may in fact have less of a core role in this ideology, rendering personalization, for example, more susceptible to change from a broader range of causal factors.

An additional point of note with regard to diachronic changes in tabloid elements and associated shifts in broader factors pertains to certain more limited shifts seen across types of content in the *Mirror* and *Guardian*. Before the launch of its online edition, an ascension of tabloid elements in the *Mirror* can also be attributed to growth in 'soft' news content, largely in the form of royal family coverage. Although the proportion of 'soft' news stories does not increase in the *Guardian*, within the 'hard' news category, the *Guardian* sees a 13% increase in political scandal reporting. These shifts indicate heightened salience of public figures, which can be understood as a more highbrow form of shifts in popular culture. Increases are not seen in entertainment or sports coverage, each of which often report on celebrities; rather, the well-known figures of interest are at the governmental and monarchical level. As the ascension of the Internet may be understood as the emergence of a new technological medium through which popular culture can be constructed, in line with conceptualizations of popular culture asserted by Fiske (1989), an augmentation of a broader range of popular culture topics might have been anticipated. The lack of a decline seen in 'hard' news topics and increases seen in royal news and political scandal coverage, however, suggest the continued salience of topics which have traditionally been central to 'quality' journalism and journalism in the public interest, as will be discussed further in this chapter's following section.

Distinctions between the overall trends seen in the publications before and after the mainstream ascendance of the Internet may also be interpreted in terms of shifts in public trust in institutions more broadly. As discussed in Chapter 2, starting in the late 1990s, public trust in institutions has declined (e.g. Rantanen 2012). Starting in the first decade of the 21st century, this trend was increasingly reflected in the public's views of journalism and newspapers, with levels of trust in newspapers and journalism also declining. Knowledge of this phenomenon may have resulted in an increasing emphasis on 'quality' values by newsrooms as a means by which to regain public trust.

Likewise, findings from the thesis suggest that the possible emergence of a postmodern context at a broader, cultural level, did not result in shift away from the traditional 'quality' journalism. Rather, the augmenting emphasis on 'quality' values is indicative of reinvigoration of traditional 'quality' newspaper values, particularly within early Internet era and Web 3.0 era. Despite laments over a putative 'post-truth' context and a rise of misinformation each associated with journalism in the online era, and in particular, during the Web 3.0 period, the thesis suggests that journalism is becoming more, rather than less 'quality'-oriented.

The thesis' findings also confirm the key arguments of hybrid media system theory (Chadwick 2013), namely that old media logics are not replaced, but are rather accompanied by those which emerge with new media. Across the newspapers subject to examination, stability is seen in the proportional configuration of 'hard' news and 'soft' news stories, representing a continuity of the logic through which the configuration of news story types has been determined before and during the Internet era. Shifts, however, are detected in the language and therein represented journalistic values across the different newspapers; while these shifts occur in conjunction with different causal factors, the mainstream emergence of

the Internet is associated with a subsequent decline in tabloid values across each of the legacy publications, and a growth in 'quality' values at 3 of the 4 newspapers. In this sense, the pre-Internet configuration of journalistic values, wherein tabloid elements were more salient and 'quality' elements less so, can be seen to represent a new logic, or approach to journalistic values and the language of journalism.

Further, the fluctuations seen in the salience of tabloid and 'quality' elements across the data points underscore that the overall shifts occurring across the thesis' initial data points and 2016 do not constitute a process that is linear. In general, the direction of changes in the composite tabloid elements measure fluctuate, with drops in the value are often followed by increases in the measure. This suggests that the emergence of the Internet era can be associated with growth in 'quality' values, rather than in a growth in tabloid elements.

With regard to the second part of the thesis' research question which addresses the reasons for variation in the longitudinal shifts seen across the publications, this subsection has identified several explanatory points. The most central explanatory factor is the shift away from a broader journalistic ideology spanning across newspapers to one which differs on a newsroom-to-newsroom basis. In particular, the different newsrooms took different approaches, at different junctures in time, to the mainstream ascension of the Internet, a development which over time saw increased financial difficulty for each of the publications. This shift in journalism ideology is shown to be more impactful on tabloid values than on 'quality' ones, the latter of which show more consistent levels of salience across data points within and external to the thesis' comparative analyses.

The following section will discuss the implications of the key shifts seen across this thesis' timeframe in terms of the implications for the public sphere. As discussed in this thesis' introduction chapter, conceptualizations of the public sphere and journalism in the public

interest have been integral to the relationship between journalism and democracy in democratic societies. Accordingly, consideration of the thesis' findings with regard to notions of the public sphere and journalism in the public interest are of particular importance to the polity.

8.7. Implications for the Public Sphere

The key finding from this thesis with regards the public sphere and journalism in the public interest is an identified longitudinal augmentation of 'quality' characteristics. Between 1968 and 2016, the ascension seen in 'quality' elements is accompanied by an increase in tabloid characteristics; however, within the Internet era, a decline in tabloid elements is observed across each of the publications. The dissertation's findings thus suggest a minimal ascension of tabloid values, and rather a more prominent growth in 'quality' newspaper ones.

Further, and as discussed in this chapter's previous section, continuity is the predominant trend seen across the configuration of content types in the newspapers. The overarching ascension in 'quality' values and stability in 'hard' news content suggests continuity of the traditional Habermasian public sphere model and journalism in the public interest, whereby the characteristics traditionally distinctive of 'quality' newspapers are to the same, or an even greater extent than before the Internet's mainstream emergence, salient in the newspapers, with the exception of the *Times*. The thesis' findings thus present a significant intervention to the numerous media and journalism literature lamenting a disintegration of the journalism in the public interest (e.g. Sampson 1996; Patterson 2000; Sparks 2000; Rusbridger 2018).

Certain elements of the longitudinal shifts occurring, however, indicate a more complex evolution of journalistic norms. For example, with the exception of the *Times*, each of the legacy newspapers sees an augmentation in quotes, with dramatic growth of the feature observed in the *Guardian* and *Mirror*. As suggested through journalism literature attesting to the ability of global communication technologies, such as the Internet, to enable the representation of a wider range of voices in newspapers' quoted speech (Matheson and Allan 2009), and the growth in first and second person pronouns, which are more characteristic of oral, informal registers of speech (Biber 1988; Biber and Finegan 1989; Westin 2001; Clark 2014), the thesis' findings suggest that quotes from a broader cross-section of individuals are being featured in the legacy newspapers. This development would contrast the traditional predominance of official or governmental discourse, in legacy newspapers, and legacy 'quality' newspapers in particular (Landert 2014).

Another diachronic shift of note with regard to the public sphere is the increase observed in reading difficulty level, particularly in the tabloid newspapers. This finding suggests the role of increases in education rates, particularly, that of secondary education, in Britain, whereby a larger percentage of the population would be able to access newspaper discourse of a more advanced level. The growth in education in Britain, particularly during the first half of the thesis' timeframe, may be seen to have enabled an emancipation of more individuals into the public sphere as citizens with greater capacities to engage more meaningfully in the democratic processes which underpin democracy. Further, the shift seen in the reading difficulty level of newspapers indicates the relevance of Griswold's cultural diamond framework (Griswold 2013), whereby changes in the social world, news producers, and news consumers, may be understood to have influenced newspaper discourse.

Accordingly, with the exception of the *Times*, the implications of the dissertation's findings for journalism in the public interest and the public sphere model are predominantly salutary. A key finding is an ascension of 'quality' values, which can be seen to counter claims, namely by anti-tabloidization scholars, who attest to a substantial augmentation in tabloid values and content that are detrimental to the democratic role of newspapers in society. The increases seen in tabloid elements are instead ones which suggest a broadening of the public sphere, whereby more citizens are represented and enabled to participate more meaningfully in critical rational debate and in democratic processes.

Before concluding this chapter and the dissertation, the following subsection draws from the thesis' key findings to provide suggestions for legacy newspapers moving forward in the context of journalism's reconfigured ecology.

8.8. Implications for Legacy Newspapers: Recommendations for the Future

Findings from this thesis can be meaningfully incorporated into newspapers' brand upkeep, as contrasts from this dissertation's longitudinal and synchronic data between recent newsroom ethnographies indicate a gap between newspapers' self-perception and the content and values which they are emphasizing. In particular, while numerous recent ethnographic studies indicate that newsrooms, and the journalists therein, perceive themselves and their colleagues as increasingly emphasizing tabloid elements (e.g. Boczkowski and Mitchelstein 2013; Petre 2015), findings from both the legacy newspapers and the *Huffington Post* counter such perceptions. With regard to content analytic data, newspaper front-pages, and in the case of the *Huffington Post*, articles at the top of the homepage, are still prominently and prevalently featuring 'hard' news coverage. With regard

to corpus linguistic data, the ascension of 'quality' values seen through shifts in the language of the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* in particular indicate the growing salience of 'quality' elements across the entirety of newspapers, and across both tabloid and 'quality' publications.

Although this thesis has subject front-page articles and the top of a digital native newspaper's homepage to content analysis, these arenas are the most crucial to consumers' perceptions of the newspaper brand. Even if across the entirety of news published on any given day there is a higher percentage of 'soft' news stories which do not serve a public interest function and a lower rate of 'hard' news stories which do serve the public interest, this different configuration of news story types is less visible than that on page one or at the top of a news publication's homepage.

It is thus suggested that while consumers might click, like, and share 'soft' news coverage more than 'hard' news ones (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein 2013), 'hard' news reporting is still central to both news producers and those who consume news items from the news publication. Accordingly, the thesis' findings can be understood to suggest that newsrooms should not underestimate news consumers' interest in 'quality' characteristics, in the form of 'hard' news stories, or news articles that are more 'information-oriented.' Accordingly, news publications should consider the significance of 'quality' elements as a means through which to render their brand increasingly appealing to readers.

8.9. Conclusions

This thesis began by highlighting tendencies of the scholarship to greet the ascension of new technologies with halcyon narratives of the past. The dissertation's introduction and second chapters referenced media and journalism literature wherein journalism pre-dating the

Internet has been depicted as serving the public interest to a greater extent than journalism in the wake of the Internet's mainstream ascendance (e.g. Reinardy 2010, 2013; Petre 2015). These chapters also underscored the lack of quantitative, longitudinal empirical data supporting such claims. A principal contribution of this thesis is the empirical intervention provided to this discourse.

Indeed, the thesis' findings do not show a decline of 'quality' journalism elements and/or an adjunct ascension of tabloid characteristics within the Internet era. By contrast, since the launch of the newspapers' online editions and the widespread traction of the Internet in the late 1990s/early 21st century, across tabloid and 'quality' legacy newspapers, the predominant trends observed are an increase in 'quality' elements and a drop in tabloid ones. Further, the first half of the period's timeframe, from 1968 – 1998/2000 sees growth in tabloid elements and a decline in 'quality' elements. With regard to this earlier half of the thesis' corpus, these shifts are shown to be unconnected to financial difficulty and in only one instance, are a function of the technological ability to cheaply produce more content. Thus, while scholarship attesting to a tabloidization in the second half of the 20th century may be supported (e.g. Sampson 1996; Franklin 1997; Esser 1999), the reasons for these shifts do not align with those indicated by this literature.

Further, the longitudinal shifts seen across 'quality' newspaper characteristics underscore the importance of subjecting both tabloid and 'quality' elements of newspapers to examination. The differences seen between changes in journalistic values and content similarly highlight the importance of subjecting both arenas to examination, in both tabloid and 'quality' news publications.

Before concluding this chapter and the dissertation, this subsection will summarize this thesis' key findings with regards to the 3 arenas of scholarship to which it has contributed:

journalism, media linguistics, and Internet studies. Overlap arises across these 3 areas, which are discussed separately for the sake of clarity.

8.9a. Contributions to Journalism Studies

This thesis provided an empirical intervention to the journalism literature, producing original linguistic and content analytic data through a methodology specifically designed to examine possible longitudinal shifts in journalistic values and content, and a putative tabloidization of newspapers. Findings from this thesis show that a tabloidization of British newspapers, namely the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*, occurred between 1968 and the end of the 20th century. This tabloidization was characterized by an increase in tabloid elements and a decline in ‘quality’ elements. Findings from the thesis show a reversal of this trend with the mainstream ascendance of the Internet in the beginning of the 21st century and 2016, whereby ‘quality’ values augmented and tabloid values decline in the newspapers. This latter finding counters claims which abound in recent journalism literature, attesting to an ascension of tabloid elements with the rise of the Internet and Web 3.0 eras (e.g. Petre 2015; Rusbridger 2018)

The thesis also developed a novel composite tabloidization measure which captures overall change across corpus linguistic and content analytic proxies for tabloid and ‘quality’ elements. This measure served as a heuristic and a means through which to triangulate findings across the indices of tabloid and ‘quality’ characteristics. The composite tabloidization measures neatly reflect the dissertation’s key findings with regard to the overall shifts seen across each of the newspapers subject to examination.

Implications of the shifts identified were shown to be largely salutary to the public sphere and journalism in the public interest, a finding which is particularly significant as each of these conceptualizations are crucial to the democratic function of journalism. Despite

concerns of the public sphere's disintegration in line with a putative ascension of tabloid elements and an erosion of 'quality' ones, the diachronic increases in reading difficulty level, article length, quotes, and first and second pronouns suggest a broadening of the public sphere whereby more individuals are being represented and engaged in journalism discourse.

8.9b Contributions to Media Linguistics

As posited in the thesis' introduction chapter, this dissertation is the first to subject a large, longitudinal body of newspaper texts to corpus linguistic and content analysis, to the end of identifying possible shifts in journalistic values and content, and a possible tabloidization of newspapers. The project created a new corpus, 'British Newspapers: 1968 – 2016,' consisting of newspaper articles from 4 British legacy newspapers, and one digital native newspaper, from before and in the wake of the Internet's mainstream ascension. The author intends to make this corpus publicly available in order to facilitate future media linguistics, as well as journalism and Internet studies research.

Section 8.6 of this chapter identifies the relative malleability of language indexical of tabloid values in the newspaper register, drawing from the relative fluctuation seen in markers of the value over time. While media linguistics has noted the agility of the newspaper register (Hundt and Mair 1999), an intervention to this assertion is the particular susceptibility of tabloid language to change. With regard to more specific findings of the thesis' corpus linguistic methods, the data of particular interest to the literature pertain to first and second person pronouns, and quotes, or the parts of speech more characteristic of oral styles of discourse, as the largest shifts occur across these features. Findings regarding first and second person pronouns support the scholarship by Hundt and Mair (1999) and Clark (2014), who have similarly identified diachronic augmentation of each marker. The growth seen in quotes

over the course of the thesis' timeframe also supports Clark's study, in addition to work by Matheson and Allan (2009) which attests the ability of new global communication technologies to facilitate journalists' access to more and a wider range of quotes from sources.

The mainstream ascension of the Internet is shown to temporally align with shifts in the language of journalism, however, these shifts do not represent a 'dumbing-down' of journalistic discourse. Instead, corpus linguistic findings suggest a simultaneous integration of more sophisticated and more informal characteristics. This is a rich finding which merits further, future research, which as, indicated, can be facilitated through the availability of this thesis' original corpus.

8.9c. Contributions to Internet Studies

Numerous literature have referenced the putative impact of the Internet's ascension on legacy journalism (e.g. Bockowski 2004a, 2004b; Picard 2008, 2014). As has been suggested, this scholarship often purports an augmentation of tabloid elements, particularly in view of apparent shifts in gatekeeping practices whereby news consumers have been seen to gain more agency in news selection and agenda-setting processes (e.g. Singer 2007, 2010; Tandoc 2014; Petre 2015). This thesis has yielded evidence, particularly in the form of content analytic findings, which counter this ostensible phenomenon. Between 1968 and 2016, the frequency of 'hard' news and 'soft' news coverage remains the same in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror*. As discussed in this chapter's Section 8.6, 'The Tabloidization Process Revisited,' the stability observed across the proportion of 'hard' and 'soft' news stories suggests either a continuation in the degree of agency held by journalists in the gate-keeping process or similarity in content preferences between journalists and news consumers. This is a significant

finding that counters depictions of affordances and characteristics of the Web 3.0 era as agents of an erosion of 'hard' news content and 'information-oriented' elements of news publications.

In line with hybrid media system theory, these findings suggest that the mainstream ascendance of the Internet and the Web 3.0 period mark a continuation of traditional media logic alongside shifts in the power dynamics which shape the new ecology of journalism. As suggested through the rise in quotes and increase in reading difficulty levels, journalism since the mainstream ascension of the Internet can be seen to engage and represent a broader range of individuals, while maintaining a focus on 'hard' news stories and 'information-oriented' values. These findings thus indicate that the widespread traction of the Internet should be viewed as an opportunity to continue and enhance journalism in the public interest, as a type of discourse which can reach even more individuals and to an even greater extent enhance democratic processes.

8.9d. Concluding Remarks

In contrast to the often grim portraits of present day journalism in both academic scholarship and media commentary, findings from this thesis provide reassurance regarding the state of journalism, both in legacy 'quality' and tabloid publications, as well as in digital native ones. Despite the potential for substantial financial difficulties and putative causal factors associated with the rise of the Internet and of the Web 3.0 era to detract from journalism in the public interest, legacy and digital native publications have largely retained, and through numerous means, increased the proportion of 'quality' journalism elements since 1968. It can thus be concluded that journalism itself is not suffering from a decline in 'quality' elements

which were, in line with halcyon narratives, once much more abundant; as of 2016, 'quality' elements are more abundant than they were in the late 1960s.

Accordingly, rather than lament a golden age of journalism which may never have been, or in the least, only have been short-lived, news outlets and engaged members of the polity should focus on building and supporting a business model which will serve to sustain the type of journalism in the public interest which is already being practiced. Whether this be through innovating or overhauling a newspaper's business model, making financial donations to newspapers, or asking politicians to support the newspaper industry, it is imperative to focus on the future, and recognize and support the virtues of journalism in the present day.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 5.12. 'Information-Orientation,' Personalization, Sensationalism, and Quotes, 1968 & 1987

	1968	1987	% change
Average Article Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	330 words/article	370 words/article	2.1% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	261 words/article	273 words/article	4.6% increase
FKR Metric			
<i>Guardian</i>	53.5	54.2	1.3% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	68	68.3	.4% increase
Average Sentence Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	17.7 words/sentence	17 words/sentence	4% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	11.1 words/sentence	11.5 words/sentence	3.6% increase
Average Word Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	1.6 syllables/sentence	1.6 syllables/sentence	No change
<i>Mirror</i>	1.5 syllables/sentence	1.5 syllables/sentence	No change
1 st Person Pronouns			
<i>Guardian</i>	5052 ⁵⁴	6451	27.7% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	7006	5259	24.9% decrease
2 nd Person Pronouns			
<i>Guardian</i>	758	1557	105.4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	1592	1889	18.7% increase
Private Verbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	2905	2113	27.3% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	3362	2855	15.1% decrease
Superlative General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	0	113	n/a (increase)
<i>Mirror</i>	478	0	n/a (decrease)
Superlative Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	632	562	11.1% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	319	0	n/a (decrease)
Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	4547	3189	29.9% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	4140	3956	4.4% decrease
Amplifiers			
<i>Guardian</i>	758	337	55.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	159	301	89.3% increase
General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	22231	16421	26.1% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	19427	17731	8.7% decrease
General Adjectives			
<i>Guardian</i>	75281	60623	19.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	57642	59955	4% increase
Quotes			
<i>Guardian</i>	14149	33915	139.7% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	25490	34203	34.2% increase

⁵⁴ Frequency of personalization and sensationalism markers and quotes are measured per million words.

Appendix 2

Table 6.12a. 'Information-Orientation,' Personalization, Sensationalism, and Quotes, 1998 – 2009

	1998/1999/2000	2008/2009	% change
Average Article Length			
<i>Guardian</i>	478 words/article	494 words/article	3.4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	293 words/article	238 words/article	18.8% decrease
<i>Times</i>	461 words/article	376 words/article	18.4% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	233 words/article	212 words/article	9% decrease
Flesch-Kincaid Readability Metric			% change
<i>Guardian</i>	57.2	56.3	1.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	67.2	67.6	.6% increase
<i>Times</i>	56.3	57.8	2.7% increase
<i>Sun</i>	67.5	68.7	1.8% increase
Average Sentence Length			% change
<i>Guardian</i>	14.9 words/sentence	15.6 words/sentence	4.6% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	12.5 words/sentence	12.2 words/sentence	2.7% decrease
<i>Times</i>	16.4 words/sentence	14.7 words/sentence	10.6% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	12.3 words/sentence	9.5 words/sentence	22.8% decrease
Average Word Length			% change
<i>Guardian</i>	1.46 syllables/sentence	1.6 syllables/sentence	9.6% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	1.49 syllables/sentence	1.5 syllables/sentence	No change
<i>Times</i>	1.59 syllables/sentence	1.6 syllables/sentence	No change
<i>Sun</i>	1.5 syllables/sentence	1.5 syllables/sentence	No change
1 st PP			
<i>Guardian</i>	8175	8942	9.4% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	14304	1326	90.7% decrease
<i>Times</i>	7208	7431	3.1% increase
<i>Sun</i>	19243	15008	22% decrease
2 nd PP			
<i>Guardian</i>	4147	3528	14.9% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	4155	4364	5.1% increase
<i>Times</i>	3079	3172	3% increase
<i>Sun</i>	4947	4904	.9% decrease
Private Verbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	1121	1103	1.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	1503	1658	10.3% increase
<i>Times</i>	1071	1088	1.6% increase
<i>Sun</i>	1800	1688	6.2% decrease
Superlative General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	221	196	11.4% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	200	221	10.9% increase
<i>Times</i>	193	199	3.3% increase
<i>Sun</i>	215	237	10% increase
Superlative Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	710	582	18% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	386	317	17.5 % decrease
<i>Times</i>	623	561	9.9% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	409	319	21.9% decrease
Degree Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	3446	3389	1.7% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	3199	3193	.2% decrease
<i>Times</i>	3175	3076	3.1% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	3767	3212	14.7% decrease
Amplifiers			
<i>Guardian</i>	968	846	12.6% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	660	626.1	5.1% decrease
<i>Times</i>	835	743.3	11% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	790	609	22.9% decrease
General Adverbs			
<i>Guardian</i>	25790	24060.5	6.7% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	19978	19890.9	.4% decrease
<i>Times</i>	23598	20333.6	13.8% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	22738	19969.5	12.2% decrease
General Adjectives			
<i>Guardian</i>	34069	61577	89.5% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	49070	52898	7.8% increase
<i>Times</i>	31314	55556	77.4% increase
<i>Sun</i>	61993	54123	12.8% decrease
Quotes			
<i>Guardian</i>	17507	27570	57.5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	32155	32189	.1% increase
<i>Times</i>	26007	23969	7.8% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	38586	32430	16% decrease

3Appendix 3

Table 7.3a. 'Information-Orientation,' 2012 – 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% Change, 2012 - 2016
<hr/>						
Average Article Length						
<i>Guardian</i>	677 ⁵⁵	664	675	854	894	32% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	313	270	289	242	288	8% decrease
<i>Times</i>	444	375	398	369	471	6% increase
<i>Sun</i>	253	237	234	189	251	1% decrease
<i>HuffPo</i>			664		532	20% decrease
Flesch-Kincaid Readability						
<i>Guardian</i>	57	57	57	55	54	5% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	66	68	68	60	68	3% increase
<i>Times</i>	57	57	56	68	59	4% increase
<i>Sun</i>	70	70	69	69	69	1% decrease
<i>HuffPo</i>			63		56	11% decrease
Average Sentence Length						
<i>Guardian</i>	16 ⁵⁶	16	15	17	17	6% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	13	12	12	12	12	8% decrease
<i>Times</i>	15	15	15	15	14	7% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	11	11	11	11	11	No change
<i>HuffPo</i>			14		15	7% increase
Average Word Length						
<i>Guardian</i>	1.6 ⁵⁷	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	No change
<i>Mirror</i>	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	No change
<i>Times</i>	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	No change
<i>Sun</i>	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	No change
<i>HuffPo</i>			1.5		1.6	7% increase

⁵⁵ Article length measured in average number of words per article.

⁵⁶ Sentence length measured in average number of words per sentence.

⁵⁷ Word length measured in average number of syllables per word.

Appendix 4

Table 7.3b. Personalization, 2012 - 2016

	2012, pmw ⁵⁸	2013, pmw	2014, pmw	2015, pmw	2016, pmw	% Change, 2012 - 2016
1st Person						
Pronouns						
<i>Guardian</i>	6217	9701	10323	9977	9137	47% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	12127	14324	13277	16155	13579	12% increase
<i>Times</i>	4416	7565	8233	9218	5483	24% increase
<i>Sun</i>	11203	15775	14402	18916	17737	58% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			18762		12241	35% decrease
2nd Person						
Pronouns						
<i>Guardian</i>	2550	3751	4090	1351	2446	4% decrease
<i>Mirror</i>	3835	5017	4478	5846	4600	20% increase
<i>Times</i>	1731	3051	3474	3478	2117	22% increase
<i>Sun</i>	3699	48923	4851	5733	5614	52% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			14958		5699	62% decrease
Private						
Verbs						
<i>Guardian</i>	792	1179	1171	1097	1002	27% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	1462	1975	1721	1921	758	48% decrease
<i>Times</i>	668	1115	1286	1312	533	20% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	1677	1560	1457	928	903	46% decrease
<i>HuffPo</i>			2950		2494	16% decrease

⁵⁸ Pmw = per million words.

Appendix 5

Table 7.3c. Sensationalism, 2012 - 2016

	2012, pmw ⁵⁹	2013, pmw	2014, pmw	2015, pmw	2016, pmw	% Change, 2012 - 2016
Superlative						
General						
Adverbs						
<i>Guardian</i>	130	237	246	210	205	58% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	187	177	228	296	230	23% increase
<i>Times</i>	112	224	280	216	131	17% increase
<i>Sun</i>	189	267	247	260	255	35% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			264		203	23% decrease
Superlative						
Degree						
Adverbs						
<i>Guardian</i>	335	642	670	595	519	55% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	339	403	381	440	453	34% increase
<i>Times</i>	341	659	660	633	312	9% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	227	363	291	419	332	46% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			841		651	23% decrease
Degree						
Adverbs						
<i>Guardian</i>	2381	3699	3584	3552	2855	20% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	2996	3482	3293	3903	3096	3% increase
<i>Times</i>	1763	3176	3624	3619	1913	9% increase
<i>Sun</i>	2384	3298	3063	3797	3613	52% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			4065		3310	19% decrease
Amplifiers						
<i>Guardian</i>	620	906	909	855	681	10% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	611	797	672	875	640	5% increase
<i>Times</i>	446	705	822	790	446	No change
<i>Sun</i>	495	697	624	815	750	52% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			1212		917	24% decrease
General						
Adverbs						
<i>Guardian</i>	16718	26456	26498	25511	21002	26% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	17292	20877	19792	24294	19814	15% increase
<i>Times</i>	12005	21580	23405	24148	13424	12% increase
<i>Sun</i>	14675	21363	19096	24213	23278	59% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			34918		26788	23% decrease
General						
Adjectives						
<i>Guardian</i>	43797	73650	71896	65445	55687	27% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	43389	56028	50492	56747	26816	38% decrease
<i>Times</i>	35841	61040	67456	67403	27494	23% decrease
<i>Sun</i>	59037	55892	50556	62230	31037	47% decrease
<i>HuffPo</i>			74128		65229	12% decrease

⁵⁹ Pmw = Per million words.

Appendix 6

Table 7.3d. Quotes, 2012 - 2016

Quotes	2012, pmw	2013, pmw	2014, pmw	2015, pmw	2016, pmw	% Change, 2012 - 2016
<i>Guardian</i>	26177	31712	33316	30998	28988	11% increase
<i>Mirror</i>	34891	27874	32728	40624	34847	No change
<i>Times</i>	16060	29345	35139	36919	19732	23% increase
<i>Sun</i>	33751	48688	29994	40133	38473	14% increase
<i>HuffPo</i>			22702		13227	42% decrease

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