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Anatomy of Front Pages: Comparison Between *The New York Times* **and Other U.S. Major Metropolitan Newspapers**

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Comparison Between *The New York Times*
and Other U.S. Major Metropolitan Newspapers

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Using content analysis, this article compares the front-page elements of *The New York Times* with six major metropolitan national newspapers to assess how different news organizations package and present their most important page to the public. Findings reveal that *The New York Times* featured more international and national news stories, depended more frequently on its own staff for both stories and images, and used smaller headlines on its front pages compared with the other major metropolitan newspapers.

Keywords: newspapers, The New York Times*, journalism, front pages, page design, news media*

Newspapers serve a critical function in presenting a selection of the day's events to their communities, and each day's news presents a set of perspectives of the most important happenings to their publics (Utt & Pasternack, 2003). Perhaps the most important location to find such representations of society's most critical events is a newspaper's front page. The first page of the newspaper is what grabs a reader's attention, and, thus, editors devote much energy in determining which story elements should be placed on the most prized page of their publication (McQuail, 2010; Singer, 2001).

When designing the front page, a complex process is at play. For example, story selection is critical (Reisner, 1992). The most important stories should be featured prominently to entice impulsive buyers. However, stories are not the only features that are presented on the front page. Other design elements, such as headlines and photos, are also taken into consideration—along with typographic decisions and graphic features—to highlight each story. Much of these design decisions may reflect a

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newspaper organization's values regarding what is considered to be the key news items of the day worthy of being presented to its audiences (Lowrey, 1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). For example, story elements featured on the front page of *The New York Times* are considered to be the most critical pieces by that particular news organization. Thus, it is important to examine how newspapers present information on their front pages, which serve a particularly important function in informing the public.

Several studies have attempted to assess patterns of front-page content selection (e.g., Bridges, 1989; Bridges & Bridges, 1997). Other studies, including a series of studies by Utt and Pasternack, have evaluated design changes in recent years primarily due to the emergence of new technologies (e.g., Barnhurst & Nerone, 1991; Pasternack & Utt, 1986; Utt & Pasternack, 1984, 1989, 2003). However, a comprehensive assessment of the anatomy of the front page is noticeably absent in the literature. In particular, although many scholars have used *The New York Times* as the standard for American journalism in their studies (see Chang, Shoemaker, & Brendlinger, 1987; Kim, 2011), little scholarly attention has been given to how *The New York Times* has presented key information on its front pages as compared with other major metropolitan national newspapers in recent years.

Thus, this study, in an attempt to address this gap, seeks to compare the front-page elements of *The New York Times* (or *The Times* hereafter) against six other major metropolitan national/regional U.S. newspapers. By conducting a content analysis, this article aims to assess how *The Times*, compared with other news organizations, may approach presenting the most important events of the day in unique ways. In doing so, this study seeks meaningful insights of organizational influences on content and layout of *The New York Times* versus other metropolitan papers.

Importance of Front Pages

Newspapers serve an important function in a democratic society as they provide shared collective experiences, common symbolic anchors, and representations of society to its publics (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002). They present a display of codes—linguistic, typographic, and graphic—providing readers with information of the world (Carter, 2000). The front page of the newspaper is the most important page of the publication and highlights the day's most critical stories (Reisner, 1992). It is generally considered to function as a way to "attract readers, inform them and set the reader's agenda" (Pasternack & Utt, 1986, p. 29). This is significant in that the front page visually suggests to the audience what a newspaper organization considers to be the most important stories of the day (Reisner, 1992). Thus, news audiences tend to focus more on front-page stories rather than on stories published elsewhere in the paper (Min-Mid Publications, 1984).

In terms of front-page content, news values, such as timeliness, prominence, proximity, magnitude, conflict, impact, and oddity, were important front-page attributes for an analysis conducted in 1989 (Bridges, 1989) and a replication of this study in 1993 (Bridges & Bridges, 1997). Both studies found that hard news dominated the front pages, and little had changed over the course of several years. The authors conclude that there may be certain unwritten standards that guide attention to certain pressures/interests, or a mechanistic approach is at play when selecting the news (Bridges & Bridges, 1997).

Organizational Influence on Media Content

The front page of a newspaper, as it is the introduction to the publication, is essentially an extension of the core values of the newspaper's staff. As such, there are organizational factors that may influence the content of the news. Many have pointed to the construction of news, or the internal and external forces that may guide news selection (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Studies of news organizations and the routines tied to organizational life point to the manufacturing of news for efficiency and profitability (Lowrey, 1999). Media sociologists, such as Tuchman (1973), Gans (2004), and Schudson (2012), suggest that news is a manufactured product; news organizations follow routines for efficiency; external forces impact the news product; journalists suppress personal values and embrace professional values to serve organizational routines; and routines largely determine news content and subsequently the way the world is portrayed to the public (Lowrey, 1999). Thus, the process for selecting what makes the news—especially the front page of a newspaper—is a critical question to consider.

For example, organizational politics, such as conflict—both vertical and horizontal—may have an impact on how stories are selected and what makes the front page (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Sigal (1973) noted that section editors seek to place their share of stories on the front page to increase the prestige of their relative division. He discovered that, over time, bureaucratic conflicts led to a pattern of front-page stories that balanced out and accommodated the number of stories from various news desks. Likewise, having one's work published on the front page is considered an indication of a journalists' success at a news organization (Breed, 1955). Further, these individuals are more likely to have editorial control over their work and develop a greater degree of power within their newsrooms (Breed, 1955). Another possible organizational influence might be the recent transitions that many daily newspapers have adopted amid a significant downturn in the print newspaper industry. Newspapers have been forced to take various cost-saving measures, including massive layoffs of seasoned reporters, editors, and photojournalists. Such practices may lead to more and more newspapers turning to wire services for content (Anderson, 2013; Picard, 2014). Similarly, in terms of page design, many newspapers have given up individual operations and have adopted so-called design hubs, where page designs are provided from centralized offices to individual newspapers (Cavendish, 2013).

Thus, the specific ways in which individual newspapers produce and package their front page might vary across newspapers, as the front pages are outcomes of a complicated process within organizations.

Analyzing Front Pages

In a study analyzing 64 different newspapers, news editors were found to strategically use traditional news values, but used their own ideologies to argue their case for news selection (Reisner, 1992). Stories with ongoing themes, however, were more likely to be integrated into the front pages without question. More recently, the layout and design of the front page has garnered much attention. Many newspapers have also gone through design changes due to the emergence of new technologies, competition of other media, and concern of appearance, such as "dull" versus "modern" designs (Barnhurst & Nerone, 1991; Morris & Haught, 2014; Pasternack & Utt, 1995; Utt & Pasternack, 2003).

For example, newspapers are now paying more attention to their online versions rather than solely to their traditional print output, which has led to significant changes in new style and structure (Morris & Haught, 2014). In a study that examined college student perceptions of a newspaper's front-page design, Pasternack and Utt (1986) found traditional newspaper designs were more likely to be associated with hard news, and more modern designs received higher quality scores than papers with traditional layout designs. In another study, Utt and Pasternack (1989) found that most American daily newspapers had integrated modern design formats with much color, more photos, and infographics on their front pages. In their 2003 study, Utt and Pasternack concluded that the popularity of modular design had been expanded to be "almost universal," and adoption of color on front pages was also a widespread phenomenon.

Barnhurst and Nerone (1991) examined a century's worth of front pages of three newspapers. They found there were indeed changes, but they happened gradually over time. Rather than finding the source of design change in the rise of new technologies and competition over various media, the authors found changes were addressed to make the front pages more efficient for the readers. They conclude that newspaper front pages were designed to address design theory and news ideology rather than technological advances and market economy.

In another study, researchers explored how American newspapers depicted Hurricane Katrina through their front-page images (Fahmy, Kelly, & Kim, 2007). This study found that front-page images on newspapers were significantly different from images by wire services in terms of main topic, presence of human interest, and cultural proximity of events. The authors conclude that gatekeeping functions play a key role in the decision-making process of the selection of visuals. In doing so, studies exploring front pages have focused on a few specific elements. For example, Barnhurst and Nerone (1991) examined the number of stories and illustrations, size of stories, headlines, and credit lines. Pasternack and Utt (1986) focused on examining the main topic of stories. The relationship between proximity of stories and images were also examined by other scholars (Bridges & Bridges, 1997; Fahmy et al., 2007).

Uniqueness of *The New York Times*

The year 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of *The New York Times Co. v. Sullivan,* one of the key U.S. Supreme Court decisions, which has defined the boundaries of freedom of the press for contemporary American society (Gresko, 2014). It is considered to be one of the many contributions of *The New York Times* to American journalism since its first publication in 1851. For many readers and journalists alike, *The News York Times* is considered to have high standards of quality journalism, as it has won 119 Pulitzer Prizes—arguably the most prestigious award in the journalism field ("*The Times* wins 2 Pulitzers," 2016). These Pulitzer Prizes includes 33 awards for the International Reporting category, 20 awards for the National Reporting category, nine awards for the Criticism category, eight awards for News Photography categories, and many more awards for public service, commentary, feature writing, among

others.[2,3] As such, *The Times* is well regarded as a prominent and credible news organization in the U.S. and around the world. *The Times* is also recognized for its editorial excellence.[4]

In many senses, it has been unique. Although it is based in a specific metropolitan area, like many other major metropolitan newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, *The Times* has made great efforts to reach readers beyond its main target area, and thus it is generally considered to be a national news publication of record. Besides *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*, which are unique in a different sense, it is the only traditional daily newspapers that makes its printed copies available across the entire nation ("About home delivery," 2014). Furthermore, its strong ambition to expand its realm beyond American soil is well documented (Keaten, 2013). It first became a joint owner of the *International Herald Tribune*, a long-rooted international newspaper printed in several dozens of countries in 1967. In 2003, the *International Herald Tribune* came under full control of *The Times* as another joint owner, *The Washington Post*, exited. Recently, it was renamed *The International New York Times* (Taibi, 2013).

Although the uniqueness of *The New York Times* is well known and considered common wisdom, studies examining the actual content or layout of *The Times*, compared with other major metropolitan newspapers, are surprisingly rare. Even an extensive literature review yielded very little in terms of any systematic examination regarding a comparison between *The Times* and other papers. However, *The Times* is regularly used as the standard for American journalism and is, thus, included in many studies assessing news coverage (e.g., Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002; Chang et al., 1987; Golan, 2006). Thus, a study analyzing the content and layout of major metropolitan papers—comparing *The Times* with others—might bring new insights regarding organizational influences on media content.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature suggesting specific organizational influences on newspaper content and the uniqueness of *The New York Times* among major metropolitan newspapers in the U.S., this study explores how the front pages of *The New York Times* differ from other major metropolitan newspapers in terms of its content and layout. In doing so, the following hypotheses were formulated:

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[2] Numbers of awards for each category was manually counted based on *The New York Times* website (http://www.nytco.com/pulitzer-prizes) and the Pulitzer Prizes website (http://www.pulitzer.org/prize-winners-by-year).

[3] Specific names of award categories may have changed over the course of the Prize history. For example, the International Reporting category was established in 1947. Before 1947, it was awarded as the Correspondence category, which was presented to both domestic and international correspondents. From 1969 to 1999, there was only one news photography category (Photography or Feature Photography). From 2000, the Breaking News Photography was added.

[4] See http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/412546/The-New-York-Times

H1:   *There will be observable differences between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers' front-page stories.*

  H1a: *The proportion of topics of the total front-page news stories will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H1b: *The proportion of proximity of the total front-page news stories will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H1c: *The proportion of types of credit lines of the total front-page news stories will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H1d: *The proportion of the size of the total front-page news stories will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H1e: *The proportion of the sizes of the total front-page headlines will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

H2:   *There will be observable differences between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers' front-page images.*

  H2a: *The proportion of topics of the total front-page news images will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H2b: *The proportion of proximity of the total front-page news images will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H2c: *The proportion of types of credit lines of the total front-page news images will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

  H2d: *The proportion of size of the total front-page news images will be different between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers.*

Method

Sampling and Unit of Analysis

To test the hypotheses, this study used purposive sampling by selecting *The New York Times* and six other major metropolitan newspapers. These six papers were selected based on their large circulations and geographical locations—*The Washington Post* and the *Miami Herald* from the East Coast region, the *Chicago Tribune* and *The Dallas Morning News* from the Midwestern region, and the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Seattle Times* from the West Coast region. In sampling the front pages from the newspapers, six

months were randomly selected from the calendar year 2013. For each selected six months, one-week periods (from Sunday through Saturday) were randomly selected based on stratified sampling.

For *The New York Times,* all issues of the given six weeks were selected. For the six major metropolitan newspapers, they were first randomly assigned to each selected month. All issues of the newspapers, which were assigned to each month, were selected from the same week period as *The New York Times*. In other words, the same date was examined for *The New York Times* and one of six other major metropolitan newspapers. Examining newspapers from the same time frame may be helpful in controlling any possible influences of a specific time frame on the front-page newspapers. Furthermore, stratified sampling from the six newspapers might prevent any oversampling or undersampling of any individual papers among the selected sample. As a result, 42 issues each from *The New York Times* and the six newspapers (seven issues per six papers) were examined for this study.

Front pages from the selected 42 issues were obtained from the daily front-page archive of the Newseum, which provides more than 400 U.S. and international newspaper front pages on a daily basis.[5] The Newseum archive provides up to three days' worth of front pages—unless they are included in a separate major news events archive, such as 9/11, the Olympics, or Hurricane Katrina. Originally, we collected 11 newspapers' front pages on a daily basis during 2013. Samples of this study came from this collection. From the issues, the top three news stories and images were analyzed based on the size of the headline of each story and the overall size of each image. Thus, the unit of analyses was the individual story, headline, and image. In the case of news images, simple portraits/mug shots accompanied by a news story and small images in a news index were not included in the analysis regardless of their size.

The final sample size was 252 top-three stories (126 from *The New York Times* and 126 from the other six major metropolitan newspapers: 21 from each of six metropolitan newspapers) and 184 top-three news images (97 from *The New York Times* and 87 from the other six major metropolitan newspapers: 17 from *The Washington Post*, 16 from the *Miami Herald*, 16 from the *Chicago Tribune*, 15 from *The Dallas Morning News*, 13 from the *Los Angeles Times*, and 10 from *The Seattle Times*). In some cases, the newspapers had published less than three images on the front pages.

Coding Procedures

Topic, proximity, credit line of both stories, and images were nominal variables and coded into a category based on the given coding guidelines for this study. For *topic,* each news story and image was coded as (1) politics, (2) business, (3) international, (4) general news, (5) spot news, (6) feature, or (7) sports based on commonly accepted news genre. For *proximity,* each news story and image was coded as (1) local/regional, (2) national, or (3) international. For this category, geographical proximity may not be a determining factor. For example, if *The Washington Post* published a story about the president's inauguration, it was coded as national, not local/regional, even though it physically happened in the Washington, D.C., area. For *credit line,* each news story and image was coded as (1) staff or (2) wire, and for the images only, two additional categories were formulated: (3) freelance and (4) handout. Wire

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[5] http://www.newseum.org

services included the Associated Press (AP), and international wire services included Reuters, AFP/Getty Image, and European Press Photography. It also included syndicated wires in the case that a newspaper published stories from another newspaper. For example, when *The Seattle Times* published a story credited to *The New York Times,* or the *Miami Herald* published a story credited to McClatchy Foreign Staff, the stories were coded as *wire*.

The first coding was conducted by one of the authors. To validate the first coding, six issues each from *The New York Times* and the other major metropolitan newspapers (one issue from each of six newspapers) were randomly selected (14.28% of the sample). These selected issues were independently coded by a second coder. The intercoder reliability, conducted based on the measure of Cohen's kappa (Cohen, 1960), indicated higher than acceptable reliabilities. Cohen's kappa scores for news stories were .892 for topic, .913 for proximity, and 1.000 for credit line. Cohen's kappa scores for news images were .861 for topic, .939 for proximity, and 1.000 for credit line.

Size Measurements

The size of the news story, headline, and image were continuous variables. Because of different page sizes, each news story, headline, and image was measured in terms of its proportion to the entire front page. Regarding size measurements, the space for the accompanying news images was not included in the calculation of size of the news stories. In measuring the size of an individual headline, only the main headline, and not its accompanying subhead, was measured. Similarly, only the actually image, not its surrounding cut lines, was measured.

Findings

Altogether, we sampled 250 news stories ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 0.31$) for *The New York Times* and a total of 181 news stories ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.78$) among the six other newspapers, respectively. In contrast, *The New York Times* published a total of 98 images ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.61$), whereas the other six major metropolitan newspapers published a total of 88 images ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 0.69$), excluding simple portraits/mug shots and news index pictures.

Among these 431 news stories (and headlines) and 186 news images, the top three news stories and images were specifically analyzed for this study. The final sample size was 252 top-three stories (each 126 from *The New York Times* and other newspapers) and 184 top-three news images (97 from *The New York Times* and 87 from other newspapers), as mentioned earlier. The hypotheses were tested using the chi-square test or independent-samples *t* test.

Based on the perceived importance of dominant news stories (headlines) and images regarding their size on the front pages (Garcia, 1991), this study provided further detailed analysis on the dominant news stories (headline) and images beyond the analyses for the top three news stories (headlines) and images.

Findings for News Stories and Headlines

H1:   *There will be observable differences between* The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers' front-page stories.*

Topic of News Stories (H1a)

In terms of story topic, *The New York Times* published more international and political stories, but fewer general and spot news stories on its front page than the other major metropolitan newspapers (see Table 1). More specifically, the proportion of international news in *The New York Times* (27.8%, 35) was much higher than the other newspapers (15.9%, 20). The proportion of general news in *The New York Times* (10.3%, 13) was less than the proportion in the other newspapers (18.3%, 23). Meanwhile, the proportion of business news for *The New York Times* and the six major metropolitan papers was on par as 15 news stories (11.9%) were published for both groups. According to a chi-square test, the difference was statistically significant (χ^2 = 18.56, *df* = 6, *p* ≤ .00, two-sided) as predicted. Therefore, H1a was supported (see Table 1).

Proximity of News Stories (H1b)

Although other newspapers tend to publish more local/regional-level news stories, news stories in *The New York Times* tended to be either national or international (see Table 1). For example, *The Times* published a total of 39 international level news stories (31%), and the proportion was more than twice compared with that of the other newspapers (15.1%, 19). The difference was statistically significant (χ^2 = 47.820, *df* = 2, *p* ≤ .00, two-sided) as predicted, and, thus, H1b was supported.

Credit Line of News Stories (H1c)

Almost all of *The New York Times*'s news stories were written by staff writers/reporters (99.2%, 125). In contrast, the six major metropolitan papers published 22 news stories (17.5%) that were credited to the Associated Press (AP) or other wire services, while publishing 104 (82.5%) stories written by staff writers/reporters (see Table 1). A chi-square test indicated that the difference was statistically significant (χ^2 = 21.10, *df* = 1, *p* ≤ .00, and Fisher's exact test *p* = .00, two-sided). Thus, H1c was supported.

Size of News Stories (H1d)

The average size of the front-page news stories in *The New York Times* was 8.58% (*SD* = 0.023) of the total space in a single issue. This was much smaller than the average size of news stories (11.74%, *SD* = 0.087) published in the other six major metropolitan papers (see Table 2). The difference was statistically significant (*t* = −3.95, *df* = 142.86, *p* ≤ .00, two-sided, equal variances not assumed). According to an additional analysis with the largest news stories based on their headline size, the pattern was identical (see Table 2). The average size of the top news stories was 9.78% (*SD* = 0.029) and 14.39% (*SD* = 0.056) for *The Times* and the other newspapers, respectively. A statistical test shows the

difference was significant ($t = -4.73$, $df = 61.03$, $p \leq .00$, two-sided, equal variances not assumed). Thus, H1d was supported.

Table 1. Hypotheses Regarding News Stories and Headlines.

		NYT		Other papers		Pearson χ^2
		($N = 126$)		($N = 126$)		(two-sided)
H1a:	Politics	46	36.5%	40	31.7%	$\chi^2 = 18.556$
Topic	Business	15	11.9%	15	11.9%	$df = 6$
	International	35	27.8%	20	15.9%	$p = .005$
	General news	13	10.3%	23	18.3%	
	Spot news	1	0.8%	10	7.9%	
	Feature	15	11.9%	12	9.5%	
	Sports	1	0.8%	6	4.8%	
H1b:	Local/regional	17	13.5%	69	54.8%	$\chi^2 = 47.820$
Proximity	National	70	55.6%	38	30.2%	$df = 2$
	International	39	31.0%	19	15.1%	$p \leq .000$
H1c:	Staff	125	99.2%	104	82.5%	$\chi^2 = 21.100$
Credit line	Wire	1	0.8%	22	17.5%	$df = 1$
						$p \leq .000*$

* Fisher's exact test, $p = .000$.

Table 2. Hypotheses Regarding Size of News Stories and Headlines.

		NYT	Other papers	t test* (two-sided)
H1d:	Mean	0.0858	0.1174	$t = -3.949$
Story size	SD	0.0232	0.0866	$df = 142.861$
($N = 126$)				$p \leq .000$
Dominant	Mean	0.0978	0.1439	$t = -4.732$
story only	SD	0.0287	0.0562	$df = 61.025$
($n = 42$)				$p \leq .000$
H1e:	Mean	0.0127	0.0279	$t = -11.723$
Headline size	SD	0.0038	0.0140	$df = 144.059$
($N = 126$)				$p \leq .000$
Dominant	Mean	0.0158	0.0415	$t = -10.325$
Headline only	SD	0.0051	0.0152	$df = 50.095$
($n = 42$)				$p \leq .000$

* Equal variances were not assumed for all cases.

Size of Headlines (H1e)

Headlines of *The Times* (1.27%, *SD* = 0.004) tended to be much smaller, less than half, compared with their counterparts in the other major metropolitan newspapers (2.79%, *SD* = 0.014; see Table 2). In terms of analyzing the dominant headlines only, the difference was even clearer. Although the average headline size of *The Times* was around 1.58% (*SD* = 0.005) of the total space in a single issue, the average headline size in the other major metropolitan newspapers was much larger, at 4.15% (*SD* = 0.015). In both cases, the differences were statistically significant (for overall sample, $t = -11.72$, $df = 144.06$, $p \leq .00$; for the biggest headlines only, $t = -10.33$, $df = 50.10$, $p \leq .00$; both two-sided, equal variances not assumed). Thus, H1e was supported.

Findings for News Images

H2:   There will be observable differences between The New York Times *and other U.S. major metropolitan newspapers' front-page images.*

Topic of News Images (H2a)

In terms of topic, observed patterns of news images were similar with the patterns emerging among the news stories (see Table 3). The proportion of news images depicting international news was higher in *The Times* (37.1%, 36) than among the six newspapers (17.2%, 15). In contrast, 18.4% of the news images (16) in the other major metropolitan papers were general news, whereas only 10.3% of news images (10) in *The Times* were coded into the same general news category. The difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 18.63$, $df = 6$, $p \leq .00$, two-sided), and, thus, H2a was supported (see Table 3).

Proximity of News Images (H2b)

In *The Times*, the proportion of international level news images in terms of proximity was highest (45.4%, 44), with slightly less than half of its images falling in this category (see Table 3). However, around two thirds of all news images (63.2%, 55) in the other newspapers were coded into the local/regional level. The difference was confirmed to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 38.810$, $df = 2$, $p \leq .000$, two-sided) supporting H2b.

Credit Line of News Images (H2c)

The notable difference in terms of credit lines of news images was the proportion of images taken by freelance journalists (see Table 3). In *The Times*, it was a considerable 30.9% (30), but it was a mere one image (1.1% of 87) in the other newspapers. Further, the proportion of news images taken by staff photographers (26.8%, 26) by *The Times* was much less (69.0%, 60) than at other newspapers. In other words, other major metropolitan newspapers rarely adopted freelance work for their front pages, and adoption of news-agency pictures was also not very significant compared with *The New York Times*. The difference was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 44.684$, $df = 3$, $p \leq .000$, two-sided), supporting H2b.

Table 3. Hypotheses Regarding News Images.

		NYT (N = 97)		Other papers (N = 87)		Pearson χ^2 (two-sided)
H2a:	Politics	17	17.5%	15	17.2%	χ^2 = 18.634,
Topic	Business	4	4.1%	10	11.5%	df = 6,
	International	36	37.1%	15	17.2%	p = .005
	General news	10	10.3%	16	18.4%	
	Spot news	1	1.0%	5	5.7%	
	Feature	26	26.8%	18	20.7%	
	Sports	3	3.1%	8	9.2%	
H2b:	Local/regional	18	18.6%	55	63.2%	χ^2 = 38.810,
Proximity	National	35	36.1%	17	19.5%	df = 2,
	International	44	45.4%	15	17.2%	p ≤ .000
H2c:	Staff	26	26.8%	60	69.0%	χ^2 = 44.684,
Credit line	Wire	37	38.1%	21	24.1%	df = 3,
	Freelance	30	30.9%	1	1.1%	p ≤ .000
	Handout	4	4.1%	5	5.7%	

Size of News Images (H2d)

The average size of news images in *The New York Times* (9.39%, *SD* = 0.052) and the other newspapers (9.73%, *SD* = 0.064) was relatively similar (see Table 4). This was also the case for the additional analysis based on each one dominant news image per issue. The average size of the dominant news images was 14.52% (*SD* = 0.026) and 15.41% (*SD* = 0.042) in *The Times* and the other newspapers, respectively. Statistical tests showed the differences were not significant in both cases (for overall sample, *t* = −.39, *df* = 165.70, *p* = .69; for the largest images only, *t* = −1.16, *df* = 68.16, *p* = .25; both two-sided, equal variances not assumed). Thus, H2d was not supported.

Table 4. Hypotheses Regarding Size of News Images.

		NYT	Other papers	*t* test * (two-sided)
H2d:	Mean	0.0939	0.0973	*t* = −0.386,
Image size	*SD*	0.0518	0.0639	*df* = 165.704,
		(N = 97)	(N = 87)	*p* = .691
Dominant image	Mean	0.1452	0.1541	*t* = −1.163,
only	*SD*	0.0259	0.0421	*df* = 68.160,
		(n = 42)	(n = 42)	*p* = .249

* Equal variances were not assumed for all cases.

Discussion

The News York Times is regarded as one of the most prominent newspapers in the world in terms of its influence and its quality of reporting. Although its uniqueness is well known, few empirical studies have conducted systematic examinations to ask the question of how its content and layout might differ from other major metropolitan newspapers. To answer this question, this study focused on examining the front pages of newspapers, which tend to function as the gateway to the most important stories and images of the day (Pasternack & Utt, 1986). This study conducted a content analysis based on 252 news stories and 184 news images on a total of 84 front pages from *The Times* and six other major metropolitan newspapers, including *The Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Dallas Morning News*, the *Los Angeles Times,* and *The Seattle Times*.

The findings reveal that the content and layout of *The News York Times* were considerably different from its six counterparts. In terms of topic of news stories and images, it was clear that *The Times* focused on international news much more frequently than the other newspapers, which tended to present more general news than *The Times*. Among three levels of proximity, *The Times* was also likely to publish either national- or international-level news stories and images on its front pages, whereas the other newspapers were likely to publish more local/regional-level news stories and images. These results were consistent with *The Times*'s well-known focus on international news (Chang et al., 1987). When it came to credit lines of news stories, *The News York Times* depended exclusively on its own staff journalists, whereas it used images taken by staff, wire, and freelance workers relatively equally. The other newspapers tended to use a considerable number of news stories and images provided by wire services, but did not use many images taken by freelance workers. These results may be interpreted as stemming from the difference of available resources. It appears that *The Times* may have sufficient staff members to cover international and national news stories beyond its metropolitan area. It may also reflect *The Times*'s commitment to diverse global coverage. The six other newspapers seemed to depend on wire services for their news stories.

Because capturing news images requires the physical presence of photographers at the actual news events, where second-hand reporting is inadequate, it appears that *The Times* could not deploy its own photographers for all world events. Nevertheless, *The Times* was willing to use freelance workers to accommodate its extensive international news coverage and access, which might require additional resources had *The Times* used its own staff. This may also reflect *The Times*'s commitment to visual storytelling. In contrast, the six other newspapers seemed to depend on wire services for both stories and images, especially when it came to covering stories at the national and international levels—perhaps because of the shortage of staff and resources in covering such distant events. Thus, these patterns suggest strategies that different organizations employ to compensate for limited availability of resources.

Regarding the layout, the average size of news stories and headlines appearing on the front pages of *The Times* were much smaller compared with the other six newspapers. This finding suggests that *The New York Times* still maintains a traditional newspaper design, while the other newspapers moved toward a more progressive newspaper format. The adherence to more traditional design formats may reflect *The Times*'s continued commitment to its visual identity over time to connect with its

audience. However, the average image size on the front pages was not significantly different between *The Times* and the other six newspapers.

Altogether, these results suggest that the specific ways in which *The Times* and the other major metropolitan newspapers produced and packaged their front pages varied as predicted. In other words, the results appear to demand more attention to the importance of organizational influences on media content. The need to examine organizational influences over how newspapers present their content on the front pages might be bigger than ever, as the newspaper industry has experienced unprecedented downturn, often resulting in massive layoffs (Anderson, 2013; Hodierne, 2009; Picard, 2014). When newspapers let many seasoned reporters, designers, and photographers go, the content itself and the presentation of that content might be inevitably influenced. In this massive transition, one of the new trends that might be particularly relevant to newspaper design is the growing adoption by individual newspapers of so-called design hubs, where centralized page designs may be applied to each member newspaper (Cavendish, 2013). For example, Gannett, Media General, and Tribune Co. are some of big media conglomerates that recently adopted centralization of copy editing and design (Channick, 2011). Particularly, it might be meaningful to compare major metropolitan newspapers, which still tend to maintain individual autonomy regarding their page designs, with smaller newspapers, where page designs may be carried out by design hubs.

There has been extensive discussion among mass communication scholars in comprehending how media content may be shaped and presented to the public. In terms of the five levels of influence on media content suggested by Shoemaker and Reese (2013), two levels, the ideological and extramedia levels, have been the focus of many studies. The most microlevel, individual factors, has also been examined among media scholars. When it comes to organizational influences on media content, many studies mainly explored the specific media outlet's political orientation. Aside from such a perspective, other organizational influences on content have not been given much scrutiny in previous studies. These organizational influences might be understood as a part of gatekeeping processes. As many media scholars, including Shoemaker and Vos (2009), suggested, the gatekeeping process is very influential, even though it tends to be overlooked by the reading public, who tend to focus on the content presented in the given media without understanding the whole process of content production. Through the gatekeeping process, various organizational editorial policies, both political and nonpolitical, are introduced and even enforced.

In this study, the analysis implies that there might also be considerable impact from nonpolitical organizational influences on media content. These nonpolitical organizational influences might include ambitions to expand its realm beyond its traditional metropolitan boundaries, strategies for seeking additional resources, and an organization's perspective on how to visually connect with its audience (e.g., traditional vs. progressive page design). More specifically, as discussed earlier, individual newspapers' adoption or nonadoption of design hubs might be influential in newspaper design. Once individual newspapers decide to prioritize their metropolitan area news over national or international news, the papers may not need to print stories and photographs produced by news agency, not to mention freelance work, as their staff reporters and photographers may cover their metropolitan area thoroughly. If individual newspapers have internal policies to print up to two photographs on the front pages, its overall

front page designs and sizes of news photographs might be different from newspapers where three photographs are printed regularly. These factors have certainly nothing to do with political orientation of individual newspapers. These nonpolitical organizational influences, however, might be more influential and require more attention by media scholars and the public.

The study is not without limitations. One such limitation that should be noted is that it depended on a purposive sample, not the whole population or a random sample of total U.S. newspapers. Therefore, the representativeness of the newspapers in the sample of this study, especially regarding the six major metropolitan newspapers, should be interpreted carefully. Additionally, only select elements of the front pages were analyzed. However, *The Times* and the six newspapers examined were carefully selected for their reputation as prominent newspapers, their large circulation size, and for their geographic diversity. Thus, the findings from this study may provide a snapshot into how large, prominent newspapers in the U.S. are presenting their front pages to the public. Another limitation is that all elements of the front pages were not analyzed. Instead, the present study focused on analyzing the top three news stories and images for each front page sampled. While this approach fails to assess all formal features appearing on the front page, it still assesses more than half of total news stories (58.5%, 252 of 431) and almost all news images (99.0%, 184 of 186) from the front pages examined.

Nevertheless, this study strongly suggests that organizational influences on media content, especially nonpolitical factors, should not be overlooked. Future studies examining nonpolitical organizational influences would be helpful in aiding readers to develop a clearer picture regarding how media content is shaped and presented to its publics. In addition, proper attention should be given in terms of how the recent massive reduction of newspaper journalists may have influenced newspaper content and design.

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