

**PRIMING OF BANKING ISSUES IN KENYA'S PRINT MEDIA: COMPARATIVE  
STUDY OF DAILY NATION AND STANDARD NEWSPAPERS**

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**DECLARATION**

**DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE**

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in this or any other University. No part of this project may be reproduced without prior permission of the author and / or University of Nairobi.

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**DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR**

This research project has been submitted with my approval as University Supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is devoted to all those who in one way or the other contributed to its completion. It is also dedicated to my family for their love and moral support.

## **Executive Summary**

This study's main objective was to comparatively analyze how two leading newspapers in Kenya prime banking news. The specific questions that this study sought to answer were: to establish the key banking issues themes and how they are disseminated to the public through print media; who the key voices and agenda-setters are and how were they primed over time; how are banking issues presented and the geographic diffusion pattern of the media coverage of the banking news. The study reviewed the Priming Theory and the Agenda setting theory. The research design involved content analysis of the literature with a bias towards the following themes: number of articles; size in cm<sup>2</sup>, type of the story, placement, prominence and the main subject that stories are published mostly. Data collection involved conducting interviews with the media professionals, banking sector employees and desk review of newspapers. One major limitation is the fact that the research was based on information provided to a certain portion of the overall Kenyan demographic, and thus the recommendations could be most valid and useful for a similar portion of the Kenyan demographic.

Notably, the study evidence suggests the media were more amicable to the vested interests of the political class than the banking sector news. This was confirmed by the fact that during the entire 6month study period, no banking related news item appeared in 'A' section of the two newspapers. Interestingly, majority of the articles containing the words "banking news" and/or "financial news" appeared in the D section of newspapers. This should be a matter of concern, not just for banks but also editors and media owners. Very often, print media articles mentioned peer or rival banks in the same sentence hence the need for banking institutions to work together. More so, the findings divulge that the media attention relating to banking news is increasing over time and recommends that bank should establish personal relationships with a small cadre of print media professionals. In terms of geographically focus, banks should invest in national campaigns and or news.

In a nutshell, the print media is a powerful tool that has been and can continue to be used to effect business change. Banking industry news is important and salient business issue of the present time. While banking institutions already actively attempt to use the print media in order to sensitize people about the industry and market their products, there are ways in which they can improve their media communications strategies through priming.

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CEOs	:	Chief Executive Officer
DN	:	Daily Nation
ICC	:	International Criminal Court
ICT	:	Information Communication and Technology
KEG	:	Kenya Editors' Guild
KNLS	:	Kenya National Library Services
MFAF	:	Media Focus on Africa Foundation
MI	:	Media Institute
MRT	:	Media Round Tables
NMG	:	Nation Media Group
SoJMC	:	School of Journalism and Mass Communication
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UoN	:	University of Nairobi

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0. Introduction**

The dynamism and uncertainty in the banking industry is an important business issue the Kenyan public is faced with. The print media can be used as a tool to bring the issues of banking to the public domain, as it has been used as a tool to further important social movements throughout history. This research proposal compares how the two leading Kenyan dailies have been priming issues in the banking sector as well as the trends prevalent in current print media coverage of banking issues. The goal of this comparative study is to offer specific recommendations to banking institutions in Kenya about how they can more fully harness the power of the print media to more efficiently educate the public and effect greater marketing for their products. It is my hope that this greater print media coverage through deliberate priming of banking issues will lead to greater public understanding of the issues in the banking sector, which will ultimately lead to greater action taken to improve how the banking sector operates.

This study examines the media coverage of banking issues in Kenya's print media from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 with specific focus on the Daily Nation and The Standard Newspapers. If one needed proof that Kenyan banking is unresponsive to the public, one only has to switch on to television news or pick up a daily newspaper to view the consequences of the industry's shifting trends. Perhaps many would agree with the concept that the media should, in the form of a social contract provide "news that are accurate, comprehensive, and analysis that is informed, fair and based on the facts" (Kennedy, 2010). In so doing the media should therefore act as a mirror of events in society and the world, "ensuring a faithful

reflection” (McQuail 2005, p.83). However there are those who claim that the reflections of the media in society have become distorted and only reflect the agenda of the powerful.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

This work makes a comparison on the media coverage of banking issues in Kenya as represented in Kenya’s leading daily newspapers, the Daily Nation and The Standard. Using a Frame Analysis approach the research critically examined the priming of banking issues in the two newspapers in the period October 2012 to March 2013. In general this research suggests that the print media coverage of the two leading dailies is reflective of the editorial ethos at Nation Media Group (NMG) and The Standard Media, an ethos that coincidentally concurs with the ideological preferences of the elites.

The media sets the public and the political agenda by bringing issues to the attention of the audience and of policy makers. Agenda setting has a little brother, priming, sometimes called second order agenda setting. Priming effects of communication are important for decision making, for example which candidate to vote for in an upcoming election.

The concept of priming is based on the assumption that people don't carefully weigh all possible aspects of a situation or problem when making decisions. Rather, people employ mental shortcuts when making up their minds. One of the heuristics they apply is to rely on information that is most accessible in their memory. The memory network stores ideas and concepts that we have come across at some point in time, for instance when reading the newspaper this morning. Every memory is stored as a node, and every node is related to another node by semantic paths. Nodes that are strongly connected to each other form a

mental schema, an interpretative framework or a belief system. When an external stimulus, for instance a news headline, activates a node in this network, the entire schema gets activated and will serve as shortcut for making a decision.

The banking industry players can use the priming effect to advance their own business goals. A massive communication campaign illustrating, for instance, the state of the banking sector over and over again may be taken up by the media, and will certainly be noted by the customers. Such campaigns may shift the weight of an issue and thereby the role it plays when citizens make their choice. If, for instance, loan defaulting has not been perceived as a big problem by the public so far, a communication campaign can put it on the public agenda (agenda setting) and make it a salient issue by repeatedly reporting about it (priming). The amount of communication and coverage of loan defaulting will then influence the importance of timely repayment in the customers' decisions.

The concept of priming has received a great deal of attention in diverse fields of study such as communication, political science, sociology, psychology, and linguistics in the recent past. In relation to the printed news, media priming is regularly used to package everyday realities, journalists limited by time and space prime news to convey sometimes complex issues in an instantly recognizable format (Reese 2001 & Entman 2004). In essence news priming can be seen as a useful, time-saving and 'common sense' approach in the work of journalists. However priming can also be used to perpetuate the status quo and confirm as inevitable and natural the powerful positions of some in society, thus frame analysis allows us to see how the routine, taken-for-granted structures of everyday thinking contribute to a structure of

dominance, explaining why Gramsci urged us to expand our notion of ideology to include the world of common sense (Gamson et al. 1992). The use of specific frames can slant a perspective in favor of a specific direction and a preferential outcome, some think it reasonable to suggest that when news clearly slants, those people favored by the slant become more powerful, and freer to do what they want (Entman, 2007). When the objective of a frame is to influence in a certain direction, there is evidence to suggest that it succeeds, as Entman (1993, p.56) proposes “if the text frame emphasizes in a variety of mutually reinforcing ways that the glass is half full, the evidence of social science suggests that relatively few in the audience will conclude it is half empty”.

Media coverage of banking issues has an impact on which concepts are activated for evaluation by selecting and emphasizing certain aspects – and ignoring others. Some studies attribute the actual priming effect mainly to frequency: The more prominent the issue is in the media, the greater is its accessibility in a person's memory. This issue will then be more important for making a decision than other issues that might also be relevant.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

In Kenya, various issues have come to dominate media discourses. The issues of political parties (and politicians of course), governance, corruption, violence (this continues to influence the national political narrative after the 2007/2008 postelection violence) and related issues of justice (the International Criminal Court (ICC), reconciliation, civil society and its role in the political processes, and ethnicity among others have come to occupy national socio-political discourses mainly because of the priming and prioritization by the

media and journalism. Indeed, these are critical issues that the Media Round Tables organized by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SoJMC) of the University of Nairobi, the Media Focus on Africa Foundation (MFAF), Media Institute (MI), and Kenya Editors' Guild (KEG) put on the table under the realm of the Media Round Tables. This has happened at the expense of other important news such as business and development agenda. It is almost undisputed that Daily Nation and The Standard's priming of non-business news is ideologically driven and that due to their status as the leading media companies in Kenya this raises serious issues that strike at the heart of Kenyan people.

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to a comparative analysis of how two leading newspapers in Kenya have primed banking news from October 2012 to March 2013. The specific objectives include;

- i. To compare how The Daily Nation and The Standard newspapers have been priming banking news over time
- ii. To what extent positive priming can influence customer choice and preference towards certain goods and services
- iii. To understand the current trends in print media coverage of banking news

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

The specific Research Questions included:

- i. What information about the banking industry in Kenya was communicated to the public and did it change over time?
- ii. What key banking issues themes emerge and in turn are disseminated to the public through print media?
- iii. Who are the key voices and agenda-setters represented in the media coverage and how were they primed over time
- iv. How are banking issues presented: as event-centered news or larger in-depth information? Specifically, what key media genres were used to cover banking news as they unfolded?
- v. What is the geographic diffusion pattern of the media coverage of the banking news?
- vi. What are the peak coverage days October 2012 to March 2013?

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

There has been tremendous growth in the volume of banking news appearing in the mass media during recent decades. This expanding business news coverage is of particular importance to organizations attempting to manage issues because much of what consumers and other external stakeholders learn about companies and the issues that surround them comes from the news media (Chenand Meindl, 1991; Deephouse, 2000; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). The day-to-day selection and display of news by journalists focuses the public's attention and influences its perceptions. The specific ability to influence the salience of both topics and their images among the public has come to be called the agenda-setting role of the news media (McCombsand Reynolds, 2002). Although most of the research exploring this agenda-setting role documents how media coverage of public issues and political candidates influences which issues and candidates the public thinks are the most important, and which attributes are the most important when describing these issues and political candidates, this paper explicates the applicability of agenda-setting theory for explaining the influence of the media on corporate reputations among the public. These agenda-setting effects result from routine coverage of firms in the media and, increasingly, coverage of firms' involvement in major problems and issues ranging from new products to financial scandals.

### **2.2. Agenda-Setting Influence of The Mass Media**

The core proposition of agenda-setting theory is that the prominence of elements in the news influences the prominence of those elements among the public or in the language of this

theoretical metaphor, the salience of elements on the news agenda influences their salience on the public agenda. This influence process begins with the agenda of objects receiving prominent attention in the mass media. The term 'object' is used here in the same sense that social psychologists use the term 'attitude object,' the thing that we have an opinion about. Although most agenda-setting research to date has analyzed an agenda of public issues, other objects on the media agenda include public figures, institutions, and corporations. Newspapers communicate a host of cues about the relative salience of the objects on their daily agenda. The lead story on page one, front page versus inside page, the size of the headline, and even the length of a story all communicate information about the salience of the various objects on the news agenda. The television news agenda has a more limited capacity, so even a mention on the evening television news is a strong signal about the salience of an issue, person, institution, corporation, or any other object that is in the news.

For all the news media, repeated attention to an object day after day is the most powerful message of all about its salience. The public uses these salience cues from the media to organize their own agendas, to decide which issues, persons or other objects are the most important. Over time, the set of priorities visible on the agenda of the news media becomes, to a considerable degree, the agenda of the public. In other words, the news media set the public agenda. The salience of issues on the public agenda corresponds closely to the salience of issues on the media agenda. For example, examining the civil rights issue in the USA across a 24-year time period, Winter and Eyal (1981) found a correlation of +0.71 between the level of public concern about civil rights measured by the Gallup Poll and the volume of news coverage in the weeks immediately preceding these polls. Eaton (1989)

found the same pattern over a 41-month period for each of 11 different issues. Studies in other countries have found similar effects. In Pamplona, Spain, Canel, Llamas, and Rey (1996) found substantial correspondence between patterns of news coverage and the public agenda of local problems. The public's agenda was highly correlated with each of the local newspapers (+0.90 and +0.72) and with television news (+0.66). Brosius and Kepplinger (1990) examined the issue of energy shortages in Germany, which initially had little salience on either the news agenda or the public agenda. However, a rapid rise on the media's agenda resulted in a major shift in the public agenda, and a level of public concern hovering around 15 per cent rose to almost 30 per cent within a week. Subsequently, the proportion of the public concerned about Germany's energy supply declined when the news coverage declined.

In addition to field studies from around the world, compelling evidence comes from laboratory experiments where the causal assertions of agenda-setting theory can be rigorously tested. In a series of experiment by Iyengar and Kinder (1987), the salience of various issues substantially increased as a result of exposure to television news programs that had been edited to emphasize those particular issues. Wang (2000) used an experimental design to examine the agenda-setting effects of an online newspaper. When subjects were exposed to various versions of an online newspaper that discussed racism, the issue became significantly more salient than among subjects not exposed to the stories. These are only a few examples. Wantaand Ghanem (2000) found a mean correlation of +0.53 between the media agenda and the public agenda in a meta-analysis of ninety empirical articles. Daily decisions by journalists do significantly influence their audience's pictures of the world. Although most of this research on the transfer of object salience from the media to the public

has focused on public issues, public issues are not the only objects that can be studied from the agenda-setting perspective. During election campaigns, the candidates vying for a political office are, in the abstract, a set of objects. The salience of each of these candidates — frequently measured in political research as ‘name recognition’ — can be influenced by news coverage and by political advertising. Here we extend the idea of the media’s agenda-setting influence to corporate actors. The proliferation of corporate ranking systems worldwide, including such publications as *Fortune*, *The Financial Times*, *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, *Asian Business* and *Management Today* has spawned an agenda of corporate objects (Fombrun, 1998). In the language of agenda setting, companies making the list are prominent on the media agenda and more likely to be prominent on the public agenda, while those companies not on the list are far less likely to be prominent in the public mind.

This research centers on the question of how financial institutions can more effectively use the print media to communicate to the public about banking issues. The business sector, following the successful history of other social movements, has already been actively using the mass media to rally support for business issues. The measurable success of various individuals, groups, and movements being able to use the mass media towards educational ends is a topic under much theoretical and practical debate. Much of this debate falls into the discipline of media effects research. Many media effects research studies have been conducted and published showing the impact that media messages have on public opinion and behavior.

However, there have not been studies that have specifically addressed the question of how financial institutions, as the leaders in the business sector, can more actively tap into the power of the mass print media to more effectively educate the public about the banking issues. While this study attempts to take advantage of that previously missed opportunity, the full ramifications and limitations of it cannot be understood without first extensively exploring previous similar studies.

### **2.3. Is the mass media an effective persuasive communication tool?**

People have been interested in more fully understanding and more efficiently harnessing the influential power of the mass media for a long time across and wide array of disciplines. As a result, the field of media effects research, or the study of the ways in which the media impacts people's perspectives, beliefs, and actions, has been established and gone through many changes over time. These changes can be traced through major theoretical frameworks that represent the major schools of thought with regards to how influential the mass media is. These major theoretical frameworks are the magic bullet theory, the uses and gratifications model, and the minimal effects model. The methods to study media effects include content analysis and polling data.

Reporters influence how issues are framed, conflicts are resolved, and citizens evaluate the political process (West, 2001). Because they hold this influence, mass media outlets have the power to direct public attention towards (or in many cases, away from) certain issues. This power, often referred to as "agenda setting," is what makes media outlets able to direct and influence social systems (Ferguson, 2000, & West, 2005). The media's primary job involves

communication, which often gets manifest through its ability to package and sell goods and ideas. Most often and most obviously, this is seen in the way the media packages and sells physical goods. It is important to note that the media is not only powerful in creating brands and selling goods, it has the power to introduce new ideals into the public's consciousness.

The media's power to create popularity can be used in a variety of ways towards a variety of social goods. Since its very beginning, the mass media has always played a role in making things – from individual goods, to celebrities, to politicians, to social issues –popular. Increased media coverage, and even media manipulation, is one way to encourage popularity. If the power of the mass media is harnessed and used effectively, the business sector can help empower local knowledge (Corburn, 2005) and make business issues more salient to the general public (West, 2005). The mass media also has the potential to gather that support currently surrounding banking sector reforms from the general public and turn that support into something tremendously politically and socially powerful (West, 2005).

#### **2.4. The mass media is very influential – the magic bullet theory**

In the 1930s and 1940s, the prominent media effects theory was the “magic bullet theory” also known as the “hypodermic needle theory.” According to this school of thought, media messages were injected into audience members who were otherwise blank slates (Campbell, Martin, & Fabos, 2000). Thus, according to the magic bullet theory, the influence of the mass media is incredibly large, often considered to be the primary influential factor over the general population. While not all media effects studies begin from the premise that the mass media is the most effective way to influence audiences, the results of many of these studies

support the magic bullet theory belief that the mass media is extremely influential. Studies have shown this influential ability of the mass media to be based in many different things. There are many qualities that the mass media possesses that lead to and illustrate its power to influence public opinion. These qualities include 1) the immediacy of the media, 2) the interactive potential of the media, 3) the media's simultaneous availability.

### **2.5. Significance: the power of the mass media**

The mass media can be a powerful institution under certain circumstances. Some dismiss the mass media, thinking that the only people who tune in and pay attention are people who do not vote, people who are constantly struggling to make ends meet, people who do not have better things to be doing with their time – in short, people who are not in positions of political, economic, or social power. They are gravely mistaken in this assumption. In fact, media effects research is a large and growing field, illustrating the rapid acceleration of the idea that the power of the mass media is in fact an important force to consider.

The mass media is so influential precisely because it appeals to and is actually able to reach so many people from all ends of the social, economic, and political spectrums (Gitlin, 1980, Ferguson, 2000). Business CEOs read newspapers every day. Politicians unwind at the end of a hard day's work by watching the television. Everyone listens to the radio while stuck in rush hour traffic. Everyone flips through magazines while standing in line at the grocery store. Mass media outlets are effective precisely because they have a large impact on a large number of people. The business of mass media outlets literally depends on their ability to make a large, diverse audience care enough about the issues they are dealing with that their

large, diverse audience will keep tuning in, keep subscribing, keep paying to get their perspective on the most current information, the most pressing news.

The power of the mass media can be seen on multiple levels. The mass media both reflects and helps establish public awareness (Kroll-Smith, Couch, & Levine, 2002). The media's influence on social systems has been studied and proved time and time again (McQuail, 1996, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1996, Ferguson 2000, West 2005, West 2001). This influence has been utilized to affect large-scale social change, especially throughout the past century (Trachtenberg 1989, Cieri & Peeps 2000, McChesney 2005, Reed 2005). These studies and more prove that media coverage does result in and impact the decision making processes of the general public (Gamson, 2001, Ferguson 2000, West 2005, Corbett, 2007, Klandermans & Goslinga, 1996).

Mass media outlets must attract the attention of a large public audience. If they do not attract the attention of a large public audience, they cannot attract and retain advertisers, and thus they cannot survive as viable business ventures. Audiences tune in to mass media outlets for a variety of reasons. One of these reasons is that audiences are attracted to the fact that they can be active participants in the information they are given and the events they are shown through the media. Audience members can be active participants in the media by calling in to radio stations, choosing to tune in even for advertisements, visiting certain websites, and sharing their favorite media outlets with friends, to name a few (Ferguson, 2000). However though audience members can be active participants, they are almost never actually in control of the media they are constantly exposed to. Thus, the power of the media is further

compounded. Not only do mass media outlets attract the attention of a large, diverse audience, they attract the attention of those audience members when they are fooled into believing that they are relaxing and they are actively in control of the content of what they are being exposed to.

In fact, the number of people who do understand the way the media works is such a minority that there is a phrase commonly used to describe them. Media literate audience members are audience members who understand how the media creates meaning about the world (Wicks, 2001). The rest of the members of the media's massive audience are simply consumers of the media, not active critics.

It is, of course, important to note the limiting factors implicated when talking about the power of the media, particularly the power of the mainstream print media. For many printed mass media publications, even the leading trend-setting publications, readership is declining (West, 2001). Young people, especially, are increasingly turning to alternative media outlets, including the internet, talk radio, and blogs. These limitations are important to consider, however, even given these and other limitations on the influence of the mass print media, the mainstream print media is still an incredibly important and influential institution.

The mass media has the power to direct public attention to certain issues. This power of the media is referred to as "agenda setting" (Ferguson, 2000 p. 232, West, 2005). The mass media also sets the standards by which we judge our leaders. This is called "priming" (Ferguson, 2000). These are only a few examples of the incredible power of the mass media.

It is an incredibly wasted opportunity that banking institutions are not currently effectively tapping into the powerful, wide-spread, influential powers of the mass media.

The mass media has been, and must continue to be, studied seriously as an incredibly powerful social and political tool. The mass media reaches a huge number of people across all demographic divisions. It also has the power to alter public opinion and therefore direct political action. Social movements have tapped into this power over time to greatly increase support for their causes. The banking sector can similarly tap into these powers of the mass media – it just needs to understand more fully how that can be done.

## **2.6. Policy Significance**

Given this groundswell of support for banking sector, the timing is ripe for an analytic, comprehensive study of the media coverage of this pressing business issue. For most Kenyans, review in the banking sector is the most tangible and important business issue facing their investment ability today. For the average Kenyan, bank loan is currently the most accessible hook into business issues. The banking sector stands to gain a lot of allies if it can manage to effectively tap into the immense public interest and attention that mass media priming currently holds.

Given all these powers of the mass media, it follows that banking institutions could be much more influential if only they more effectively tapped into the powers of the mass media by more consistently eliciting positive coverage of their services and research results. If banking institutions used the mass media as a means through which they could reach and recruit more

people, instead of being afraid of – or worse, abrasive towards and alienating to – the mass media, they could be so much more profitable. In order to sustain a viable social movement, it is important to attract and retain a large base of support (Gitlin, 1980). Therefore, in order for banking institution to be effective in its expansion plans, it too must be able to attract and retain a large base of customers. The mass media can be the tool that banking institutions use to attract and retain the large base of customers they need to be viable and profitable.

The mass media can be used to encourage people to learn more about an issue, empower people who already know a lot about the topic at hand, and harmonize the efforts of a variety of individuals and organizations. Given all these extraordinary powers of the media, along with how much the banks could benefit from the appropriate utilization of these powers, it is absolutely imperative that the media be used, as effectively as possible, by banking institutions as a tool to further their agenda, a way to be more visible and respond to sector issues.

The results of this work are of practical and immediate use to financial institutions like banks and micro-finance institutions. These institutions will extremely be helpful in informing the portion of the research that involved interviewing the actors to see what their current relationship with the mass media is and it is hoped that they will be able to use the study findings and recommendations to guide them as they continue to structure their future expansion and growth plans. The results are also of interest to academics who study banking issues as well as those who study the impacts of the media on business activities. Finally, the

results will be of interest to media effects researchers, or people who study the impacts of media coverage on individual habits, voting habits, and political actions.

## **2.7. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.7.1 Priming Theory**

The Priming Theory in media seems to differ from source to source. As I understand it, it says that media can selectively decide what it wants the consumer paying attention to by using physiological cues while also unknowingly having us complete an incomplete thought. These cues can be anything from suggestion to images and are things we subconsciously are attracted to therefore we unknowingly tune into. If entertainment media is trying to gain traction with a person or product, they will show that person or product in situations that please us (morally or socially) so we connect to that person or product. The cues almost act like binoculars, making us focus on what is good and filters out everything else thus priming us to like it.

Priming Theory is specifically shown to be a perfect model for political candidates. They use their media platform to speak about their issues while shaking hands with war veterans and kissing babies. The image is the cue. When we see it, a psychological connection between us and the candidate is made. We will now associate that candidate as being one who loves children and supports the troops. Additionally, is the idea that if media shows you these cues enough it will generate established ideas in your head, they could then give you a partial cue and since your brain is already "primed" on that train of thought, you would instantly think about the cues you already know.

### **2.7.2 Agenda setting theory**

Agenda setting is the process whereby the news media lead the public in assigning relative importance to various public issues (Miller, 2010). This is in the sense that the media has the capability of setting the agenda through repeated news coverage of raising the importance of an issue in the minds of the public. The media does not necessarily tell the audience what to think about but instead helps the audience to identify which issues to form an opinion on. It sets agenda not by informing the public what is more or less important. Instead the media creates the agenda by giving some issues preferential treatment through frequent coverage in electronic media and more space allocation in print. The font size and font color used to highlight the issue is one that catches and attracts the attention of the audience.

A systematic study was conducted in 1972 by Macombs and Shaw. They used the US presidential campaign of 1968, with a hypothesis that mass media sets the agenda for political campaigns and that they also influence salience of attitude towards the political issues (Miller, 2010). 100 respondents were interviewed and simultaneously conducted a content analysis of the press and newspapers that served the people. According to Miller (2010) the findings supported an agenda setting effect. For major and minor items there was a positive correlation between the emphasis in the media on issues and voter perception of those issues as important. Therefore, it became an issue of emergency. For example, when all media houses between 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 2013, gave the WestGate mall attack an exclusive coverage and the two main dailies the Daily Nation and The Standard allocated more space for that news thus created a mind set in the audiences that security in Kenya is wanting.

### **2.7.3 How the media sets the agenda**

The agenda setting takes place in two forms: media and public agenda. Media agenda refers to a list of issues or events that receive news coverage that is the media sources like newspapers, television and radio (Miller, 2010). While public agenda is the set of topics that the public believe is important. Intra-personal agenda depends on how an individual perceives an issue to be important. Public opinion also occurs depending on how important an issue is to other members of the society. For instance when the media announces that there is going to be downsizing in Kenya Airways (Mwangi, 2012). This creates a public opinion. Public opinion can also be formed basing on how relevant and vital an issue is to a society or community.

Usually preference is given to certain issues through framing. Framing is “the process of organizing, defining, and structuring a media story (Kovacic, 1997). These include factors such as: column inches for press stories, amount of airtime allocated for a story on television or even the position in which an issue is placed in a newspaper.

Framing further provides for news content which is shaped and contextualized within the same style of reference. This gives the audience an opportunity to adopt the same frames of reference thus view the world in the same way the media is reporting. This demonstrates the way people connect with the news that the media is conveying. Framing also helps the audience to place importance on certain news issues. For instance when newspapers say the roaring leopard silenced by “in-laws”.

The media also sets the agenda through priming. This is where the media proposes the values and standards by which objects of the media attention can be evaluated. Media’s content will provide a lot of time and space to certain issues, making it more vivid. Media is giving

utmost importance to news so that it gives people the impression that is the most important information. This is done every day the particular news is carried as a heading or covered every day for months. Headlines, special news features, discussions, expert opinions are used. Media can prime news by repeating the news and giving it more importance.

#### **2.7.4 Critique of the theory**

The media places certain importance on particular issues through framing and priming of these issues thereby making the public think that those issues are vital than the others. Despite this assertion that the media tells the public what to think the media does not have absolute control over the public's thinking. Another criticism of the agenda setting theory is that the media cannot change the worldviews of individuals because of the different categories of people in the audience (Miller, 2010). Personal experiences and perceptions in an individual cannot be changed by how the media reports an issue. A critical look at the agenda setting theory reveals that though people might be in constant touch with the media, they might not be involved, well-informed or deeply engaged in the public issues or affairs raised by the media since it might not be in their interest or might not appear to them as important issues (Miller, 2010). In essence the public though might be making use of the media; they might not be greatly involved or might even be ignorant of the details in these issues.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1: Introduction**

This chapter describes the procedures that were used in conducting this research. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative analysis was aimed at identifying general trends in the nature of the media content over time, and to establish the quality of the media portrayal of banking issues in Kenya. The qualitative analysis will focused on how the issues surrounding banking sector news were primed by the print media. The study used the print media content from two leading Kenyan daily newspapers – The Daily Nation and The Standard.

### **3.2: Research Design**

Content analysis is a method of research defined, in brief, as “the systematic assignment of communication content to categorize according to rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those categories using statistical methods (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005, p. 3). Under the consideration of framing theory, researchers are able to conduct content analysis by measuring clusters of messages also known as frames to see how these are then incorporated into their audiences’ schemata (Entman, 1993). Content analysis is essential to finding patterns, based on which scholars and researchers can methodically evaluate news media and its use of framing. In turn, this allows for the comparison of possible agenda setters’ bias of the event. By exploring the impact of a media sources, agenda, bias and priming, the author hopes to identify what effect these elements may play on news articles.

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze the differences between the way two mainstream print media report on the same news event.

RQ. 1: In what ways is news primed by print media?

RQ. 2: Does the way print media prime banking issues in their publications affect the perception of the sector to its readers?

RQ. 3: When comparing media coverage of Daily Nation and The Standard, are there differences and/or similarities between the two different groups of media and the way each has primed the events.

Articles were categorized by length - small (0-400 words); medium (401-800 words); long (801- 1,200 words); tone (positive, negative or neutral), and dominant frames, number of articles; type of the story; placement; prominence; main subject-which stories are published mostly as they vary depending on source of media.

### **3.3: Target Media Houses**

Print media (newspapers) coverage was selected for analysis rather than television or radio for two main reasons. Firstly, newspapers are generally considered as opinion leaders and set the news agenda for other mass media such as television and radio news. The second reason was simply that daily newspapers provided the highest volume and accuracy of data obtainable as compared with television and radio.

The Daily Nation and The Standard newspapers were chosen because of their prominence and extensive readership, and their ties with large media conglomerates. Furthermore, these two sources were picked because of their reputation among independent news media as being credible and authentic.

### **3.4: Sampling Procedure**

Slightly more than 50% of the print news stories – separate from the Letters to the Editor – in the two leading dailies were isolated to complete the quantitative content analysis. The adopted traditional media content analyses used a method referred to as a “constructed week” in order to create a representative sample of large amounts of media content. In this method, researchers randomly sample days of the year, including random Monday through Sundays, in order to account for content variation resulting from time and industry biases related to date of publication. Two constructed weeks of news content is considered statistically sufficient to allow for “reliable estimates” of stories in a year’s worth of newspaper content (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 1993: 139). However, in this case, a more rigorous sampling strategy was conducted for 32 weeks (6 months) in order to examine as much of the media coverage as possible.

The total sample of print news articles were organized chronologically across the period and a coding sheet with 4 variables was developed related to the goals and research questions of the inquiry and in order to make objective systematic inferences from the media texts. Variables, such as the date, are self-explanatory to some degree. Others are more complex and itemized here:

Genre/How the story is presented: examined whether the issues were presented as hard news, such as an event or news conference, or content providing in-depth information, such as a feature, which can be investigative and/or longer-form journalism.

Geographic/Region: this variable refers to the location of the news outlet identified in the news story. Specialized media, such as magazines and smaller publications and or pullouts, within the identified dailies were analyzed separately.

Other issues of consideration included the tone of the news, number of articles, size in terms of length, the type of the story, the strategic area of placement (front, inside or back), prominence and the main subject-which stories were published mostly.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis. The quantitative analysis focused largely on descriptive statistics and cross tabulations that provided details of trends in the nature of the media coverage.

### **3.5: Methods of Data Analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data analysis. Data was tabulated and classified into sub-samples for common characteristics with responses being coded to facilitate basic statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics was used to answer the research questions and objectives in relation to the research area.

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data collected with the aim of generalizing to the whole population. Quantitative approach to data analysis was used on aspects that could be quantified such as number of articles and size of the article. Qualitative data was analyzed using descriptive, narrative and thematic methods. This helped in identifying information that was relevant to the research questions and objectives. Data was then tabulated and classified into sub-samples for common characteristics with responses being coded to facilitate basic statistical analysis. Statistical Program for Social Sciences was used to process and analyze the data which was then presented using frequency tables, percentage graphs and pie-charts.

### **3.6. Limitation**

This research was based on information provided to a certain portion of the overall Kenyan demographic (namely wealthy, educated professionals), and thus the recommendations could be most valid and useful for a similar portion of the Kenyan demographic. It is important to note that the banking institutions which composed the target audience for this study recommendations have similar needs, which made these limitations, while still important to consider, not a huge complicating factor to the research.

Other important limitations to the findings included print-media specific limitations. While the researcher's decision to focus on mass print media was an intentional one, it is important to underscore the fact that the print media is only one of many mass media outlets. The argument can certainly be made that the print media can be used as a proxy for media coverage as a whole, though that certainly has its limitations. Similarly, while banking issues is arguably the most prevalent business issue of the present time, it cannot necessarily be used as a proxy for all other major business issues.

Specific limitations relevant to the print media included the fact that in recent years, newspaper readership has been shown to be declining rapidly. According to P. Meyer, if the current decline in newspaper readership continues, the last daily newspaper reader will disappear in 2044 (Luntz, 2007).

As explained thoroughly in previous chapters, the researcher's decision to focus on print media was intentional. In doing so, I was following precedent, as well as taking a section of

the mass media that was possible to analyze in great detail in the time frame available. While the recent decline in traditional newspaper readership does not make this research irrelevant or inaccurate, it is important to note as a relevant limitation to the research.

Another important limitation to the findings is the fact that researcher was not be able to contact and interview any media practitioners and or bankers themselves throughout this process. This was due to time limitations, the difficulty of contacting media practitioners themselves, and media practitioners lying outside the scope of the research study for this project.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Several interesting themes came through the content analysis of print media articles about priming of banking news. In order to more fully understand the themes that this coding process uncovered and use these themes to come up with accurate conclusions and meaningful recommendations, I first had to understand the context in which the articles were published – a context in which banking issues is enjoying increased momentum and prevalence on the public’s consciousness. I explored this context by examining the frequency with which banking issues articles appeared, as well as understanding the events that happened during the time in which the articles were published. In this chapter, I examine the articles published between October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 in depth, through the lens of the themes that came through across all or most of the mentions.

Particularly important and interesting themes that came through include: that the articles tend to frame banking news in policy shift ways; that many complex characters and stakeholders are mentioned and portrayed throughout the articles; that when one banking institution is mentioned in an article, its peer institutions tend to be lumped together and mentioned alongside it; and that the solutions offered are again policy-framed, most often directed specifically towards Kenyan policy makers. Using these themes, the paper was able to come up with the conclusions and recommendations that conclude this project.

#### 4.2. Setting the Scene: media attention relating to banking news is increasing over time

Before delving into the themes that came across through studying the content of the articles, it is also important to understand the media context in which the articles were published. In addition to the specific information on banking issues related current events explained above, it is important and interesting to note that overall, the number of published articles that use the words “banks” and/or “financial” has increased rapidly over the last couple of months (for specific methods on acquiring these numbers, please refer to Appendix Two).

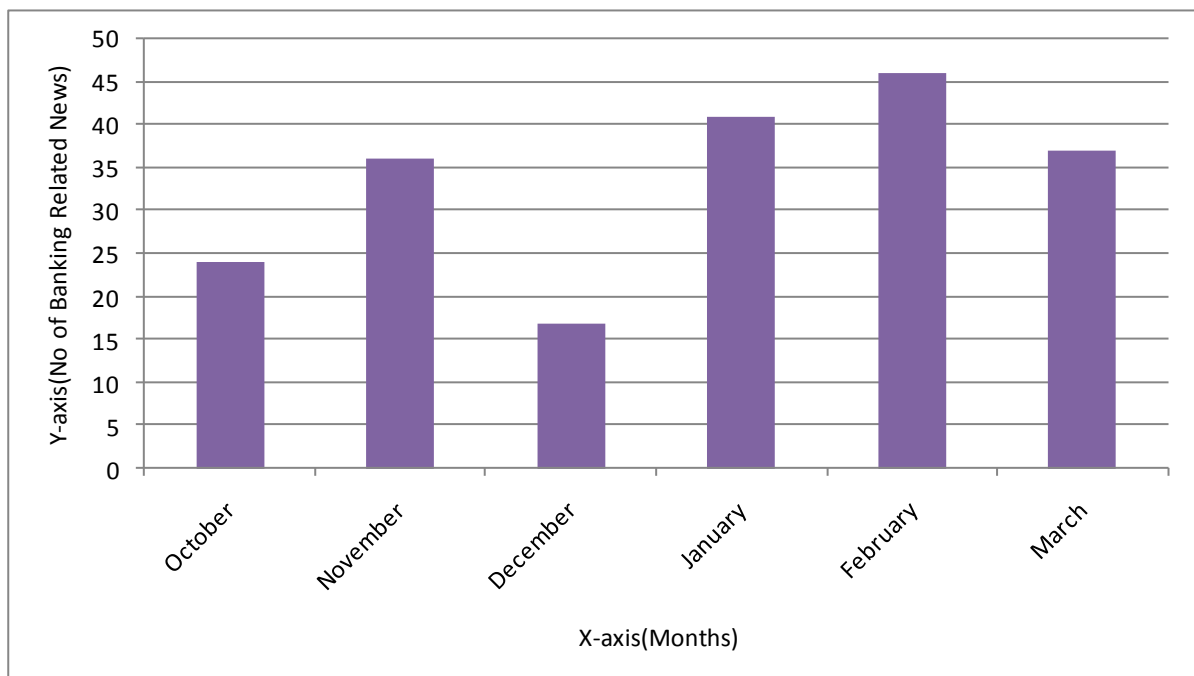


Figure 4.1: Number of banking news-related articles published by month

Some of the points that can be seen in Figure 4.1 can be explained by the fact that large-scale banking sector legislation was up for implementation in a given month. For example, the slump that can be seen between the November and December can be partially explained by the reduced banking activity as many people took Christmas break.

Similarly, the February - March spike could be attributed to the events surrounding the March 4<sup>th</sup> General elections in Kenya, at which politics was a predominant issue at the expense of let's say banking news.

### **4.3. Setting the Scene: the priming of banking news**

In order to fully set the scene for this chapter, I want to highlight some major banking news that have happened recently, beginning with previous major banking related events and focusing especially on those that happened between the dates of October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, when the articles coded and analyzed in detail here first appeared in print.

Despite the fact that these events happened at very different times throughout the review period, examining the number of articles published by month did not result in much notable differentiation. Some studies have suggested that political events and the release of financial statements of the banks are key drivers influencing the amount of media attention a bank receives (McCright & Shwom, 2008). As seen in Figure 4.1, the amount of print media attention banking news received was relatively stable throughout the review period, with only a couple of months during which the number of articles published deviated greatly from the 7.5 average and median number of articles. The largest spike in banking related articles happened in January, which is the month in which economic times were difficult and interest rates had reached peak high with uncertain elections in the looming. President Kibaki mentioned banking challenges and increased interest rates in his State of the Nation address.

### 4.3.1. Theme One: Venue, authorship, and article characteristics

When looking at the articles published between October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 as broken down by the publications they appeared in, the following pattern emerged.

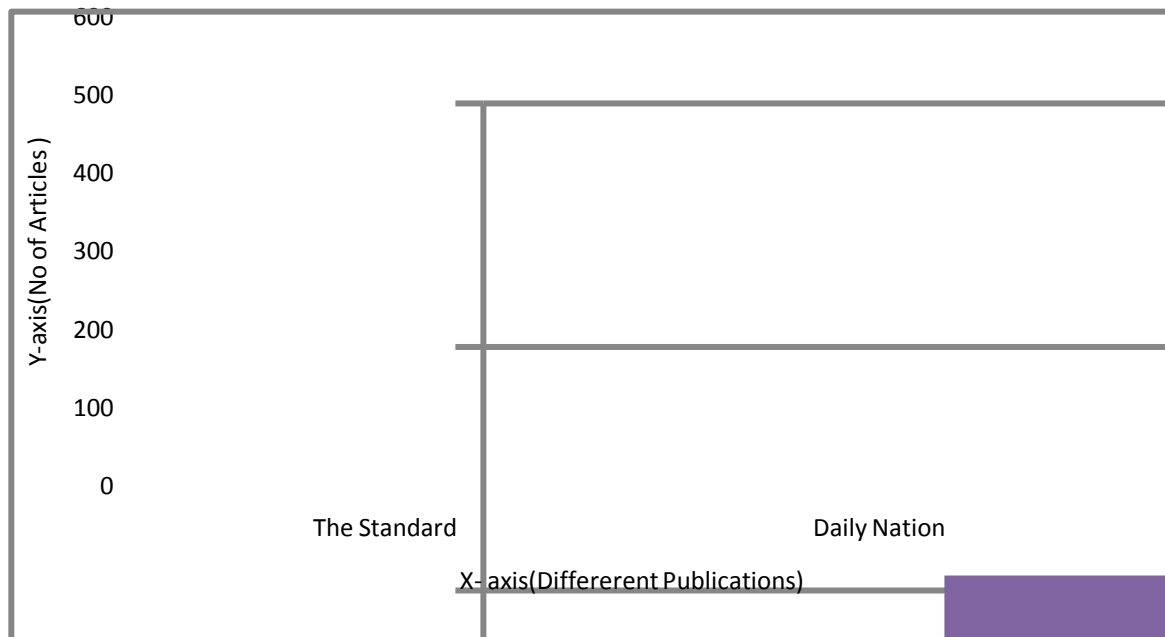


Figure 4.2: Number of articles published in each publication

The majority of the articles (55%) published about banking news were published in the Daily Nation. The Standard published the second largest amount of banking related articles (45%). In terms of authorship, it is interesting to note that over 15% of the articles (136 out of the 905), to be exact – were co-authored by two or more people. Aside from the prevalence of co-authorship, however, the authorship of those articles followed few reliable patterns. Some authors were cited in the bylines of many articles, but for the most part, an author having written one banking news related article did not seem to indicate that an author was necessarily going to be writing a lot of banking news related articles in the future.

While not every person who published one article on banking news was likely to publish another, a small cohort of journalists came up time and time again on the bylines of the articles. Mwangi S. Kimenyi of the Daily Nation authored or co-authored the most of anyone in this sample set. His name can be found in the bylines of most of the articles. Also from the Daily Nation, Joshua Masinde or co-authored several articles, while fellow Daily Nation staffer Charles Wokabi's name appeared on sixteen of the articles' bylines, and Mwenda Wa Micheni, Waga Odongo, Lilian Ochieng', Tomas Chamoro, and Benjamin Muindi, all of the Daily Nation , authored or co-authored several articles apiece. From the Standard, the authors with the most banking news related bylines were James Anyanzwa, who authored or coauthored most of the articles appearing, and Andrew Watila, Tobias Chanji, Kenan Miruka, and Kipkoech Tanui, all of whom authored or co-authored atleast six banking news related articles. With these notable exceptions, the majority of the articles were written by authors who only published one banking news related article over the six-month study period.

Between October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013, both the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard* had fairly even numbers of people cited as writing more than one banking news related articles. While it is noteworthy that certain authors come up again and again on the bylines of banking news related news articles, there are several fold more authors whose names only appeared on one banking related article. Thus, on the whole, article authorship varied greatly, with the few notable exceptions listed above.

8% (75 out of the 905) articles that came up when the keywords "banking news" and/or "financial news" were typed into LexisNexis were primarily about banking news. The remaining 144 articles only briefly mentioned financial institutions or micro-finance

institutions in the body of the text. It is important to note, however, that while most articles that published the words “banking news” and/or “financial news” were articles primarily about banking news, the length, and therefore the depth of engagement, of the articles varied considerably. On average, each banking news related article contained 983 words. The lowest number of words in an article was 94, while the largest number of words in an article came to 5,149. About one third (30 out of 905) of the articles included graphics of some sort, 22 of which included photographs specifically. Other types of common graphics included, in order of popularity from most frequently used to least frequently used: drawings, graphs, and photographs.

#### **4.3.2. Theme Two: Geographic focus of the articles is nationally-focused and Kenyan-specific**

Geographically, the focus of the articles overwhelmingly tended to be national. My coding methods primarily involved noting in Excel spreadsheets the major ways in which the articles framed banking news with regards to certain categories. For example, if an article talked about banking news as an issue that a country (for example, Kenya or Rwanda) had to deal with on a national level, it got coded as “National – Kenya” or “National – Rwanda.” respectively. If an article framed banking news as an issue that many countries (for example, Kenya and the Rwanda) had to deal with together, it got coded as “International.”

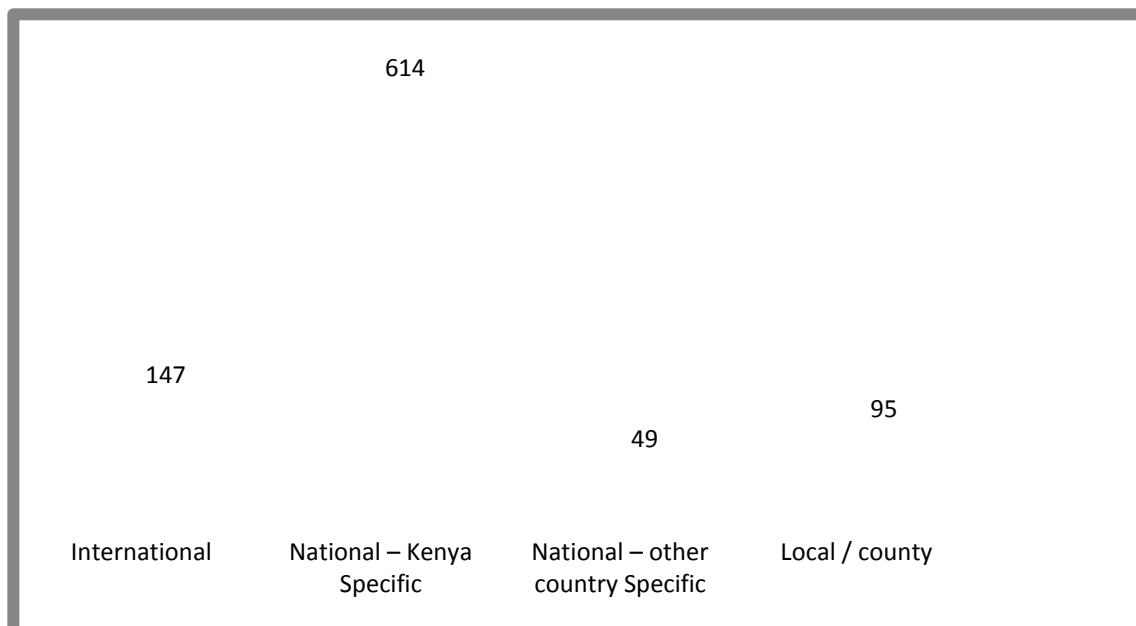


Figure 4.3: Geographic focus of article content

Geographically speaking, the majority of the articles framed banking news related issues in a very Kenyan-centric way. Of the 905 articles that focused on banking news related issues through the lens of one country in particular, 69% (614) of them focused specifically on Kenya. 147 articles approached banking sector news as an international issue that needed specifically international attention. While an international focus represents the second highest geographic focus, most internationally-focused articles pales in comparison to the total articles that focused on banking news as an issue that must be dealt with at the national level. A minority of articles (only 95) framed banking news as being an issue that particularly impacts counties or regions, though many more articles cited counties and/or regions as being the front-runners in coming up with innovative, effective ways of disseminating banking sector information to the customers.

### **4.3.3. Theme Three: Articles are placed in the A-section**

Examining where in each publication, banking news related articles tend to appear the most frequently reveals a distinct pattern. The majority of the articles containing the words “banking news” and/or “financial news” up to 51% appeared in the D section of newspapers. Many of the D section articles were financials 69 (347 out of 504), and six more financial news also appeared in the C section of the papers. 18 of the 905 articles appeared in the B section or “editorial” sections. Only four articles published about banking news were printed in “A-section” (cover page). In order to fully understand the implications of where all these articles appeared, it is important to understand which sections of newspapers are typically used for what purposes.

The front page, or A section, of trendsetting newspapers like those used in this study is typically reserved for major national and international news (McDonogh, Gregg, & Wong, 2001). Along with major national and international news headlines, editorials are usually included in this front page, or A newspaper section. Sometimes editorials also appear in the B section of newspapers. Editorials are articles by a publication’s editor, editorial board, or publisher that express the opinions of the editor, editorial board, or publisher as appropriate (Wikipedia, Editorial, 2008). An op-ed, called such because it is short for “opposite editorial,” is printed across from editorials. Op-eds are similar in content and form to editorials, but they represent the opinion of an individual, who may or may not be affiliated with the newspaper itself (Wikipedia, Editorial, 2008). The remaining sections of newspapers – those that do not only publish articles about current events and political happenings – have been added to major newspapers over time as a way for them to compete with their

other print media competition (McDonogh, Gregg, & Wong, 2001). These sections typically labeled with letters “C” and later, bearing names like “Lifestyle” and “Finance or Business,” deliver features articles focusing on topics of local concern as well as topics such as home improvement, sports, finance, and science (McDonogh, Gregg, & Wong, 2001). Given these conventions about where certain articles are placed in the newspaper, one can have a general idea of how articles are framed by looking simply at where in each newspaper an article is placed.

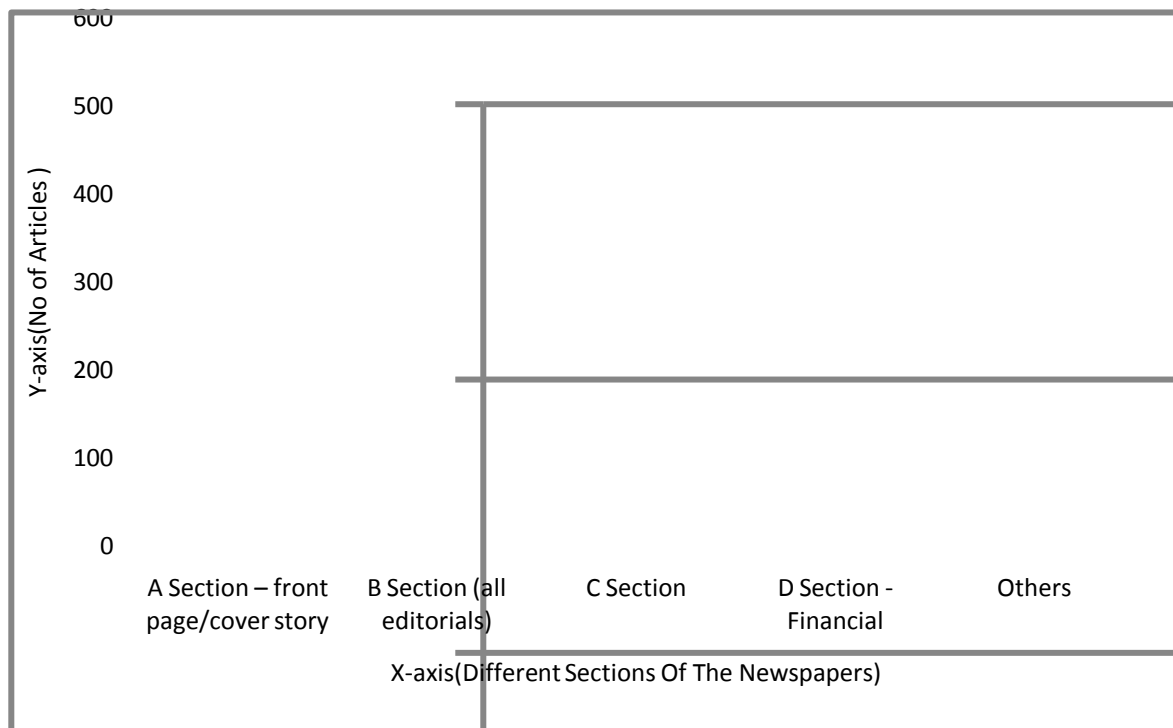


Figure 4.4: How many articles appeared in each section

The fact that so many articles were published in the D section of the newspapers is evidence of the fact that the frames used in these articles were most often financial. The A and B sections of papers are typically the prime sections of the newspapers. Speaking further still to the fact that these articles frame banking news in financial-specific ways, implies that banks have an opportunity to work with editors to ensure better priming through coverage in A and

B sections. The prevalence of editorials shows that banking news is not only policy related, but also salient to the general public. In total, 14% (126 of the 905) articles were editorials – either reader letters or staff editorials put together by the publications’ own writers. 23 of those were staff editorials while 103 were published as reader letters.

A total of 246 of the 905 mentions appeared in “Others” sections, which are areas of the newspaper that tend to focus on the intersections of current events and the everyday lives of the publications’ readership. The prevalence of articles in these sections speaks to the fact that banking news is not seen as an issue that is isolatable – instead, it permeates through many layers of intersecting areas of everyone’s lives. The fact that most of the articles were published in a “Financial” section shows that comparatively more people are looking at banking news through a primarily economic lens. The fact that so few articles (only four) examined banking news from a specifically prime news (A-section) lens further illustrates how banking news is yet to become more of an overall lifestyle for many people as compared to political news which for instance constituted 98% of the A-section news during the entire 6-month review period.

#### **4.3.4. Theme Four: Individuals – particularly politicians – are repeatedly mentioned**

The names of several individuals were mentioned repeatedly throughout the articles. When these names were cited it was to illustrate the individual in question both thinking that banking related issues is a problem as well as actively helping to solve the banking sector related issues.

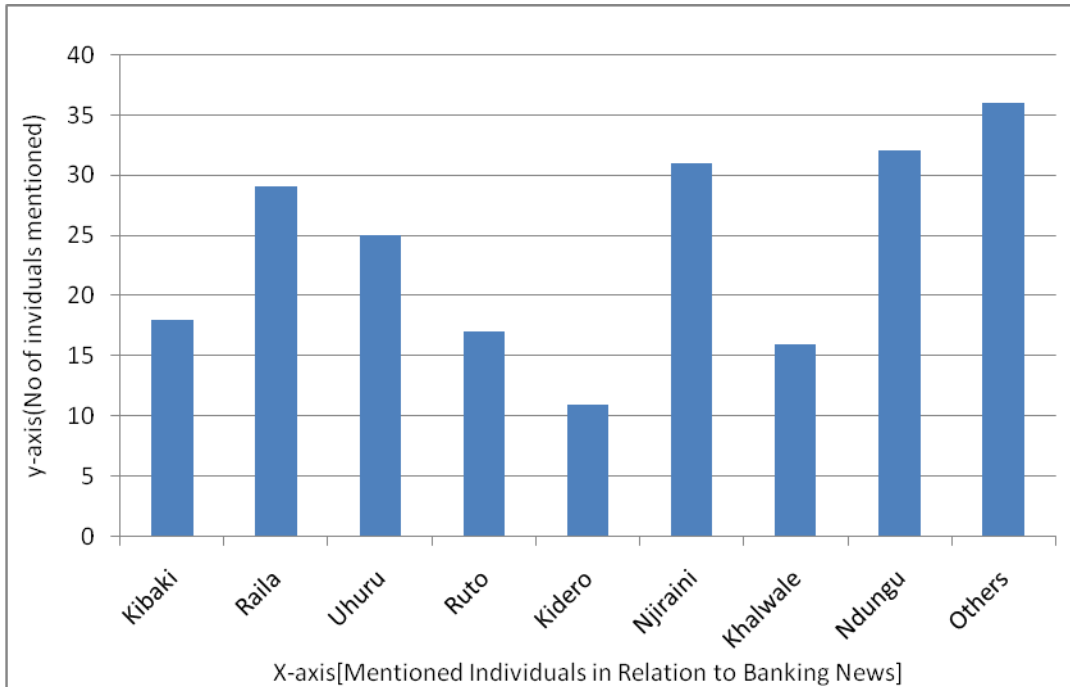


Figure 4.4: How many articles mentioned individuals in relation to banking news

Most articles mentioned the Central Bank Governor Mr. Ndungu, the Kenya Revenue Authority CEO Mr. Njiraini as actors in one way or the others as relates to the mentioned banking news. The two were mentioned as persons who thinks banking news were important issues and also as people who are actively working to help solve issues related to banking sector challenges. Hon. Kibaki, Hon. Raila and Hon. Uhuru led the pack of political leaders mentioned in most of the articles with each receiving at least 15 mentions. They were mentioned as people who were working to help solve banking sector challenges – specifically the high interest rates. More articles portrayed Mr. Ruto, Dr. Kidero and Boni Khalwale in a similar light, while many more noted that politicians were coming up with legislations that would cushion customers from exploitation by financial institutions.

Current and former politicians overwhelmingly dominate the media coverage of actors engaged in issues relating to banking related news. Of the political actors mentioned, Kenyan

leaders were most often cited as specifically trying to ‘fix’ the banking sector challenges, although substantial number of the political class were also cited as impediments to reforms in the banking sector. On the whole, the Daily Nation was the publication most likely to publish articles that specifically mention the Kibaki administration’s banking sector related stances and policies in a negative light.

Just as many of these articles mentioned individuals and groups actively helping to solve banking related challenges, many articles mentioned the names of individuals and groups that are actively halting or slowing the process of solving banking sector woes. The coverage of the latter groups and individuals was similarly politician-heavy.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

The primary conclusions that can be drawn from coding and analyzing all the articles include: that banking news coverage is increasing in prevalence as well as in complexity of the way it is covered, that much of the current banking news coverage is very Kenyan-based and Kenyan-focused, that stakeholders are mentioned often and are generally not differentiated within their umbrella category, and that the same names of responsible parties – most often, politicians – are continually mentioned. Overall, the major frames in which banking news tends to be covered are largely political.

The fact that politics so clearly dominate all aspects of the primed news at the expense of banking news related print media coverage is at once disheartening and promising. As discussed throughout Chapter Two, the readership of the publications I chose to focus on is

composed – at least partially – of members of a somewhat elite leadership class. Given the fact that the publications’ readers are generally quite politically-savvy, it makes some sense that the frames used in these articles are largely political.

These publications are clearly trying to play to their strengths. Their readership demographic information sets them apart from their other mass print media outlet counterparts, telling them that their readers are able to effect change on a national business and political scale. Answering to this, they gear their coverage towards that powerful demographic, trying to harness their unique media powers as best as they can. While it is important for each mass media outlet to play to their unique strengths as much as possible, they must also remember that they are mass media outlets, and thus they should cater more to the average person than perhaps these examples are currently doing.

Given the data described and explored in this and previous chapters, this paper has come up with the following concluding remarks and specific recommendations geared towards banking institutions about how they can more effectively use the power of the mass media to further their business growth. What follows in Chapter Five details those conclusions and recommendations thoroughly.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

News priming is the most pressing – as well as the most salient – media issue of the present time. In many ways, priming of banking news is the flagship issue currently associated with the cut-throat competition in the banking sector. Banking institutions have long been the leaders in marketing and media priming business. As such, their research findings and priming mechanisms about banking news and other financial issues are often understood to be the representative perspective of the entire banking fraternity. Throughout history, the mass media has been used as a tool to gain support for issues and further social movements. In many ways, the media has furthered business growth by acting as an educational tool, communicating the facts about the relevant issues and illustrating why those issues are important to a broader audience. People have been studying the social impacts of the media for a long time under disciplines such as media priming effects research. While there is ongoing debate about the exact extent to which the media priming impacts peoples' beliefs and actions, it seems both practical and imperative for the banking sector to evade its stakes and continue trying to utilize the mass media to the greatest extent possible.

The research argues that evidence of “priming” of banking news is manifest in the newspaper coverage of the Daily Nation. It further argues that this representation is symbiotic and reflective of the dominant discourse of government, business and employer elites because as Van Dijk argues news media generally do not act as major opponents of political or corporate policies and interests not because of their powerlessness, “but because of the fundamental similarities of their ideological positions” (Van Dijk 1996). In general this research suggests

that the print media priming of the Daily Nation is reflective of the editorial ethos at the Nation Media Group which is aimed at system maintaining rather than system challenging. The research findings raise issues as to how the media, in general, report and analyze the banking news. In essence one has to ask why the daily nation had not been as diligent in analyzing the origins and processes of vast profit accumulation by banks at the expense of consumers and or never had any banking news during the entire 6 month period in A-Section. The evidence suggests the media were more amicable to the vested interests of the political class.

The most effective way for banking institutions to do this is by pitching their findings in ways that fall easily into categories and frameworks that the media is already used to using to describe the issues at hand. By pitching their findings in this way, mass media outlets will be more likely to cover banking news more often. With this end goal in mind, I worked with media relations professionals at The Standard and Daily Nation Newspapers, and analyzed in great detail the print media coverage that banking news received over the course of the study period. In doing so, I have come up with the following recommendations. These recommendations are geared towards banking institutions and are designed to help them effect greater coverage of banking news in the mainstream mass print media.

My recommendations are based on two sources of primary data – interviews and print media articles. In order to understand the current media strategies of various banking institutions, I interviewed the communications professionals from several banks and asked them questions about their media strategies. Every bank interviewed had at least one or two, if not several,

professionals specifically dedicated to banking news communications and/or media relations. Conducting these interviews gave me a firsthand feel for both how important banking institutions view media-related professionals to be as well as how well banking institutions' media relations strategies are already doing.

I read all the articles about banking news printed over the course of the study period (1<sup>st</sup> October 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013); carefully coding the content of each article, ultimately revealing the themes that came across throughout all the articles. In doing so, I came to understand how the mass print media is used to covering banking news. By pitching their results in ways that fit into the frames that the mass print media is already used to using, the ways that the mass media find easiest to write in, banks can affect greater print media coverage of banking news.

By following these recommendations, and framing banking news in ways that the media already find to be compelling, banks can increase the number of articles written and published about banking issues in the mass print media. This increased number of articles is likely to result in more people understanding banking issues, more people having faith in banks, and more people becoming consumers of products offered by the banks. I am gearing these recommendations to banks in general, but it is important to keep in mind that each bank is unique, with its own special strengths and challenges. I have developed these recommendations as a rough outline that each bank can choose to follow selectively, adapting each recommendation as necessary to more accurately reflect their own values, furthering their own missions, and playing to their own strengths.

## **5.2. Recommendation**

Banking institutions should work together more often because when print media articles mentioned news about one bank, they were likely to mention its peer institutions as well. Very often, print media articles mentioned peer or rival banks in the same sentence. Given that media coverage tends to portray banking institutions as being somewhat interchangeable, it seems particularly important that the banks themselves work together more on their media communications strategies. Currently, it seems as though they do not collaborate as much as they could. Again, I would like to stress the point that I am not advocating for the banks to work together more on their actual research or events. In fact, I believe that the diversity in approach of these various banks is one of the major strengths of the banking sector. I am, however, advocating for the different banks to coordinate their media communications strategies more often and more effectively.

It is particularly striking that in all the interviews I conducted, each media relations professional that tracked media hits related to banking news specifically and/or financial issues in general only tracked the media hits that cited their bank by name. There was no collaboration that I could tell of between media relations professionals at each different bank. Given the fact that these media professionals all ostensibly have the same job and are working towards the same end goal, this lack of collaboration – or even simply communication – indicates a missed opportunity.

It is not completely surprising that banking institutions are not in the habit of working closely together. Each bank has its own unique mission statement and resulting individual niche, complete with its own challenges and strengths. These differences are important to maintain,

as diversity in approach is a major strength of the banking sector, which stems directly from the fact that the banking sector is led by independent, private sector actors. However, each of these banks is primarily a banking institution. As such, while each bank is unique, they are each working towards a similar end goal. Each bank wants more people to understand and consume its products. Given their similar, incredibly important, overall goals, it is imperative that banking institutions begin to work together more often and develop more cohesion with their respective media communications strategies.

There is need to establish personal relationships with a small cadre of print media professionals. Many of the published articles were co-authored by two or more people, and since many authors' names came up in the by-lines of several articles, it would be a fairly simple and certainly worthwhile endeavor for banking institutions to cultivate individual relationships with certain media practitioners. Specifically, given the large number of articles currently written about banking news by these particular media practitioners, banks should try to cultivate relationships with the following individuals. Below are the names of these practitioners, the print media outlet they work for, as well as the ways in which they can be reached.

Mwangi S. Kimenyi	<i>The Daily Nation</i>	Email as available through the <i>Daily Nation</i> website, postal service mail, telephone
James Anyanzwa	<i>The Standard</i>	Email as available through the <i>The Standard</i> website, postal service
Andrew Watila	<i>The Standard</i>	Email as available through the Standard

Figure 5.1: Media practitioners and contact methods

The Daily Nation writers can be reached by postal service mail at Writer's Name /C/O Nation Media Group, P.O.BOX 49010, Nairobi, 00100, Tel: 3288000, 0719038000, 0732138000 or [editor@ke.natiomedia.com](mailto:editor@ke.natiomedia.com); Fax 2213946. Those that can be reached by email can be contacted through the Daily Nation website directly. The Standard writers can be reached by email through the Standard website directly ([editorial@standardmedia.co.ke](mailto:editorial@standardmedia.co.ke)) or by telephone at (3222111); Fax 322027.

According to the desk review of the two leading daily newspapers during the reporting period, each institution's primary media relations strategies included press releases and website management. These two outlets are efficient ways to get large amounts of information to media outlets in relatively small amounts of time and space with relatively few resource expenditures. However, these banks do not have to be utilizing press releases and website management at the expense of other strategies. In fact, they should not be doing so at the expense of other strategies. By developing personal relationships with a select cadre of media practitioners, banking institutions can be more likely to effectively ensure more frequent and accurate reports on banking sector news.

While conducting this study of the current priming of banking news in the mainstream print media (Daily Nation and the Standard), one theme that emerged was that few articles published currently include anything that explains or complicates the basic knowledge behind banks and their products. Rather, the media's current priming of banking issues is very policy heavy.

Most aspects of the primed banking news tend to be written about from a policy-based frame. While most of the news covered and or primed are policy-related, the priming of these news is fairly superficial. Few articles go into depth about what the policy-related news they are advocating for really look like or what would really need to be done in order to make these potential news actual, successful realities. Given the fact that banking news priming tends to be increasingly policy-based, banks should re-allocate some of their time and energy away from advertising their products to towards explaining more of the specifics behind the policy implications that are likely to impart upon their businesses.

Since most print media priming of banking news portrayed banking sector reforms as an area that needs to be dealt with at a national level, banks should take care to present their findings about banking sector reforms through a national lens. Specifically, the articles tended to be Kenyan-centric, so banks should be sure to showcase Kenya-specific data and news appropriately.

This is not to say, of course, that banks should completely stay away from the local/county and international perspectives on banking sector issues. Those perspectives are certainly important ways to understand and effectively communicate issues involved with banking sector changes. Banks should simply recognize that mass print media outlets tend to portray banking news through national lens, and they should tailor their research, marketing, advertising and other events accordingly.

Specifically, banks can portray banking news as a national issue by highlighting national-scale illustrations of banking sector reforms and challenges as well as what individual and

political solutions need to be adopted on the national level in order to remediate some of the effects of banking sector reforms.

### **5.3. Summary**

The issues in people's minds about the banking news are significantly influenced by the mass media, both what those issues are about and what the issues are. The priming effects of the mass media also have significant implications beyond the pictures created in people's heads. In the original, traditional domain of priming, the salience of public issues, there is considerable evidence that the shifting salience of issues on the media agenda often are the basis for public opinion about the overall performance in office of a public leader. In turn, the salience of a leader in the news also is linked with whether an individual holds any opinion at all. At the second level of news priming, the salience of affective attributes intertwined with the public's cognitive pictures of these leaders represents the convergence of attribute priming with opinion formation and change. Beyond attitudes and opinions, the news on banking issues created by the mass media has implications for personal preferences, and ultimate uptake of the primed products.

### **5.4. Concluding Remarks and Areas of Future Research**

I started this project thinking that banking institutions were all but completely missing out on the powerful opportunity of using the mass media as an educational and marketing tool through news priming. As I conducted my interviews with a variety of media relations professionals at a variety of banks, I soon realized the erroneous nature of my original assumption. In fact, all of the banks I was able to be in contact with are already actively

trying to more effectively tap into and harness the power of the mass media through news priming. This is perhaps best illustrated through the simple fact that they all employ full-time media relations professionals. This is hugely uplifting, as I believe that the mass media is a tool that can – and should be – used for business growth.

Building from the solid starting point of having professionals dedicated to the cause, there are some ways in which these banks can focus their efforts slightly differently and effect even greater mass media priming of their news. As previous literature suggests, this better priming can be expected to result – at least marginally – in more customers understanding what the banking institutions offer and more people becoming consumers of the products and services offered by banks. The preceding recommendations are designed to help them do just those things. Hopefully, banks will find them to be useful and appropriate.

I would like to reiterate, in this last portion of this project, that while I chose to focus on banking news and print media priming for the scope of this study, this research strategy can be adapted to be applicable to other information that needs public consumption. I chose to focus on banking news because it is the premier business issue of the time, and I opted to follow print media priming because previous similar studies did so and it was important for me to follow precedent.

However, the choices I made in experiment design are only one option in a myriad of options. For example, there is ample room for future studies to explore how the print media primes other issues, related to banking sector news. There is also ample room for future

studies to explore how banking news priming is covered in other mass media outlets, not just the two mass print media outlets I examined in this study.

There are many other future studies that can follow my general experimental design but result in completely new findings. For example, this study leaves room for future research to focus how print media outlets' priming of banking news continues to evolve over time. Another interesting spin-off study would be to duplicate my exact methods, but with different publications – for example, focusing on *The People Daily* and *Business Daily* instead of the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*. In a similar vein, it would be interesting to see how print media outlets cover banking issues using more casual wording than the “banking news” phrasing that I chose to use.

I also think it would be particularly interesting, given the current, rapidly-growing internet culture, to do a study similar to this one that focuses entirely on new media outlets, like blogs and other online mediums. New media and digital media are particularly interesting topics for several reasons. For one, they are relatively new mediums, and thus have not been researched as extensively as print media outlets and other more established mediums. Thus, there are ample opportunities for new research focusing on priming of banking news on digital and new media outlets to be conducted and published. Also, unlike print media and other more conventional mass mediums, there are no intermediaries with digital media. With digital mediums, there are no editors deciding what gets published and what does not. Through digital and online mediums, any individual has direct access to the masses. While this fact makes digital mediums more difficult to fact check and reference in an academic

setting, it also makes them much more accessible and arguably therefore gives them a different kind of power over the masses. I am excited to see the directions and trends that media priming effects research exhibit in the future as well as the ways in which the banks will be able to benefit from a greater understanding of and aggressive utilization of the mass media outlets.

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## **Appendix One: Questions Asked of Interviewees**

In the first set of these correspondences in October 2012, I asked the interviewees the following questions.

- 1) Does your institution already keep any sort of running media inventory on what media outlets are priming banking news?
- 2) Would such a thing be useful for your institution to have?
- 3) What sort of information would your institution like to have from a media analysis study?
- 4) Does your institution actively seek media attention? If so, how?
- 5) How successful does your institution believe it is in acquiring this media attention?
- 6) In terms of your media strategy, what are your institution's unknowns?
- 7) In your experience, what major print media outlets or individual media practitioners have been particularly useful and helpful to your institution / willing to work with banking institutions in ways that portray them in a positive light?
- 8) Is there anything else about environmental communications you think I might be interested to know about?
- 9) Do you know of anyone else, either from within your institution or not, who might find my work useful or who I might be interested in contacting?

## **Appendix Two: Specific LexisNexis Methods**

To find the newspaper articles I used: In LexisNexis Academic, go to “Sources,” then “Find Sources.” In “Find Sources” select both “Daily Nation” or “The Standard,” and then click “OK: Continue.” Then, under “Enter Search Terms,” typed “banking news” or “financial news” (with “English language” option selected).

Finally, under “Specify Date,” select “date is between” and enter dates required (October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 through March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013). Then hit search and read all the articles that come up.

**Note:** This internet search engine model was also collaborated with physical browsing of Newspapers at the Mombasa’s Kenya National Library services.