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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**COVERAGE OF *THE BIG FOUR AGENDA* IN THE DAILY NATION AND
THE STANDARD NEWSPAPERS IN KENYA**

By

**JOHN KURU NGIRACHU
535179**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Digital Journalism

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020

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APPROVAL PAGE

The Aga Khan University
Graduate School of Media and Communications

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Digital Journalism

Members of the Thesis Evaluation Committee appointed to examine the thesis of
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DECLARATION

I, **JOHN KURU NGIRACHU-535179**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my own research endeavours.

Signature

30/01/2020

Date

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ABSTRACT

This thesis set out to study the coverage of the Kenyan government's Big Four Agenda by Kenyan newspapers between December 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018. The Big Four Agenda was introduced to Kenyans on December 12, 2017, Independence Day, by President Uhuru Kenyatta. He framed the Big Four Agenda as the most important policy of his second term and had specific objectives to be met by 2022: to construct 500,000 affordable houses, to increase the contribution of manufacturing to the Gross Domestic Product, food security for all, and Universal Health Coverage. This thesis was provoked by a study by Infotrak Research, published by The Star on December 18, 2018, which established that 53 per cent of Kenyans did not know about the Big Four Agenda. This lack of awareness was considered worthy of research considering the central role of the media in informing society about the government's policies. The media also provides spaces for interrogating the policy, and this has been the case with the Kenyan media. Newspaper coverage was selected for research because newspapers are ubiquitous in Kenya and also play an intermedia agenda-setting role. The research set out to establish the frequency of newspaper coverage, the dominant sources, the placement of articles on the Big Four Agenda, the dominant issues as well as the factors that influenced coverage. A mixed method was used to approach the research and content analysis used as the research method. Data was generated using document review of the Daily Nation and The Standard and interviews with journalists from the two newspapers. The research established that while journalists were eager to provide coverage of the Big Four Agenda, there was inadequate comprehensive information on the policy, government officials often avoided going into details on it, and the topics were considered complicated and therefore were denied publication in the prime pages. The thesis therefore concluded that the media was enthusiastic to cover the Big Four Agenda but was frustrated by a lack of information. All these factors resulted in a majority of Kenyans lacking awareness about the government's key objectives. The thesis recommended that media houses develop policies and templates for reporting on development policies, that the government develop communication plans for disseminating information about its development policies. This study should benefit the media in Kenya as well as the government and policymakers.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
ICT:	Information Communication Technology
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
KARF:	Kenya Audience Research Foundation
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
NHIF:	National Health Insurance Fund

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background of the study, an overview of the Big Four Agenda, an overview of the print media in Kenya, the role of the print media in reporting the Big Four Agenda, the statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, the scope and limitations of the study, the significance of the study, the justification of the study, and the definitions of terms and concepts.

1.2 Background of the Study

The government of Kenya announced on November 28, 2017, that there would be four major priority areas for development in the second term of the administration under President Uhuru Kenyatta. The prioritization of food security, affordable housing, inexpensive healthcare and manufacturing would augment the legacy of the administration under Kenyatta, who said he would concentrate on using them to transform Kenya economically and leave a lasting legacy (Kimanthi, 2017). Stiglitz (1996) views the government's role in development as being to establish infrastructure in the broadest sense in order to increase wealth and living standards. Stiglitz's school of thought supports President Kenyatta's agenda which he (Kenyatta) described as a "beacon of hope" in a speech on Jamhuri Day, December 12, 2017.

The Big Four Agenda is perceived by the Kenyatta Administration as an urgent response to the needs of the country. According to the speech from the Presidency issued on December 12, 2017, the underlying motivation of the Big Four Agenda is the creation of jobs, which would enable people to not only meet their basic needs but

increase their comfort and well-being. This would be achieved by directing energies towards ensuring more Kenyans get involved in commercial fishing, working in the leather industry, the textile industry and in agro-processing.

On affordable housing, the President said in his Jamhuri Day speech that the specific objective was to have 500,000 more Kenyans own affordable houses by reducing the cost of mortgages, construction and by raising finances for investment in large-scale construction of housing. With the range of skilled labour needed for the achievement of this pledge, jobs would also be created.

Universal healthcare would be achieved by a combination of major administrative and policy reforms to enable collaboration between the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) and private insurance companies. Food security would be achieved by a range of efforts ranging from changes to the law to tax idle land to encouraging large-scale farming and enabling small-scale farmers access markets to irrigation, and, to lease idle arable land owned by the government.

The Parliamentary Budget Office, which advises Members of Parliament on budgetary and economic issues, outlined the high hopes attached to the Big Four Agenda in its analysis of the first Budget of 2018, stating:

The idea behind the big four plan is to implement projects and policies that will accelerate economic growth and transform lives by creating jobs, enabling Kenyans to meet their basic needs, improve health standards, improve living conditions, lower cost of living and reduce poverty and inequality. If properly implemented, the Big Four Agenda has the capacity to enhance the country's economic performance and improve the livelihoods of Kenyans.

The Parliamentary Budget Office posited in its analysis of August 2018 that the success of the Big Four Agenda would depend on how effectively and efficiently the projects under it are implemented but pointed out that Kenya did not have a particularly good record in the implementation of development of its development budget. The Big Four Agenda would also require partnership between the national and county governments, which would require an elaborate framework for collaboration. The Parliamentary Budget Office identified the key enablers of the Big Four Agenda as continued investment in infrastructure, which would require capital expenditure, human capital development and governance and security. Beyond this, the Big Four Agenda would also need public acceptance and the involvement of the media in explaining to the society what it is about. With projects such as the affordable housing programme eventually having to involve the demolition of old estates in Nairobi to put up bigger and better buildings, the public would certainly need to support the idea. The same would apply in the programme on Universal Healthcare, which would involve the enactment of laws that would affect the public and which is perhaps most intimately connected with the people as health is important to everyone.

1.3 Print Media in Kenya

The Kenyan media is often described as vibrant and dynamic and among the most developed on the African continent (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2019). The rights of the press in Kenya are entrenched in law, with the Constitution expressly providing for its freedoms in Article 34, which states: “Freedom and independence of electronic, print and all other types of media is guaranteed...” The industry is regulated by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), which accredits media houses and journalists.

There are 44 newspapers and more than 62 magazines in Kenya, according to the Kenya Audience Research Foundation's report for September, October and November 2018, but according to the MCK's survey of 2018, most Kenyans who read newspapers prefer five main publications, listed here in descending order of readership: Daily Nation, Standard, People Daily, The Star and Taifa Leo. The Kenya Audience Research Foundation (KARF) adds the Business Daily to this list in its report for September, October and November 2018. The Standard is the oldest English-language newspaper in Kenya, having been established in 1902, while the Daily Nation was set up in 1960. According to the KARF, the Daily Nation had an average daily readership of 962,489 in the months of September, October and November 2018 while The Standard had an average daily readership of 500,876 during the same period. It is thus evident that the Daily Nation and The Standard are the most widely read print media in Kenya.

Relations between the government and the media in Kenya have historically been uneasy. While the State has continually accused the media of being unpatriotic, the media has been of the view that it should be allowed the space and freedom to inform and educate the public on matters of public importance, whether good or bad (Wanyande, 1995). Kenyan print media has over the years been particularly keen on playing its role in the national anti-corruption crusade. It has been a whistle-blower, has piled pressure on government officials to account for their acts of commission and omission and has educated the public about corruption and in investigative journalism (Jarso, 2010). Kenyan media has been accused of relying on government narratives and failing to include the voices of ordinary people, experts and critics while covering government policy. However, Onyebadi (2008) has established that in Kenya, there has been a significant media agenda setting influence on the public agenda.

The government established a newspaper called My.Gov in February 2017. The newspaper's purpose is to articulate the government's agenda and to serve as a channel for the government's ministries, departments and agencies to advertise their services and convey requests for services from the market (Namunane, 2017). My.Gov's development was endorsed by the Cabinet and it is circulated as an insert in the Daily Nation, The Standard, The Star and People Daily newspapers. It is labelled as sponsored content, meaning that it is advertising material, and indeed carries advertisements about tenders, requests-for-proposals, vacancies in government institutions, and advertorials about the government's projects reported about by Kenya News Agency reporters and correspondents and cannot therefore be deemed to be part and parcel of the newspapers *per se*. The media houses that distribute it are paid for the circulation.

1.4 The Media and the Big Four Agenda

The media plays an important role in getting the public to know about government's policies and to provide a platform to solicit the views of citizens on the national visions (Kakonage, 2013). Nordestreng (1997) argues that there are many ways to characterise the roles of the press and other media in society but broadly classifies them in four stages based on varying degrees of media autonomy: collaborative, surveillance, facilitative and critical/dialectical. The collaborative role is differentiated from the rest by the aspect of its coming into play when a nation state is young and insecure, in times of war, emergency and such conditions.

In Kenya, the media can be said to have played the roles of; surveillance – exposing violations of the moral and social order; facilitative – the creation and sustenance of public debate; and critical/dialectical – public debate about the existing political order. Like other media in Africa, Kenyan media has been used by government

forces to influence and sometimes control the messages that go to the public (Yusuf & Eckler, 2010). Comparing the media in Africa to that in Western society, Yusuf and Eckler (2010) argue that there are more relations between the media, the public and policy in Africa because governments here have more control over the media and the public, and this also being the case with local leaders.

In Kenya, this control over the media agenda has increased with devolution, which was first fully implemented after the General Election in 2013, the first under the Constitution enacted in 2010 (Ndisi, 2017). There would, therefore, have been a legitimate expectation that the government would use the media to inform the public about the Big Four Agenda. While there have been differing views amongst scholars on the roles and effectiveness of media in Kenya and their effectiveness in shaping the public opinion (Ireru, K., Ongus, E., Laboso, E., Mwiti, K., & Onsongo, J., 2017; Nyabuga, 2017), they agree that the media are critical players in Kenya's democratic and political processes.

Print media is particularly important in this regard. Apart from the bigger space it has compared to TV and radio, it is also portable and can be carried away and read later (Mogambi, Kiai, & Ndati, 2013). Newspaper readership is also higher than circulation as one newspaper is often shared by up to 10 people (Simiyu, 2014) and newspapers carry a variety of information, offer space for public debates and are often the sites of intellectual combat between not only news sources and subjects but social commentators carrying opposing views. They can be said to have played the surveillance, facilitative and critical roles described by Nordestreng (1997). The Kenyan public also has confidence in the media and believe that it reports important issues, according to the 2019 Status of the Media Report by the MCK. It is therefore

important that print media journalists understand the Big Four Agenda well enough to tell their audiences about it confidently and comprehensively.

It is evident that it would have been possible for the government to use the media to promote the Big Four Agenda or for the media itself, while playing its facilitative or critical roles (Nordestreng, 1997) to scrutinise the government's objectives and goals. The media would therefore have played an agenda-setting role in this respect, telling the public about it, explaining its importance, the rationale behind its formulation, its implementation and the role of both government and non-governmental agencies in its achievement.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

The media plays an important role in informing the society about policies that the government seeks to implement. It also plays a role in building ownership and support for government policies and projects by the people and is seen as playing an essential role in democracy (Besley & Prat, 2006). It is therefore necessary for the media to understand the policies of the government. The media is an important ally of the government in the implementation of development because early coverage in the process of implementing government policy can affect subsequent policy discussions and has the potential to influence how officials think about policies, especially when the media help frame the issue (Goppal, 2006).

The Big Four Agenda is arguably the most important policy of the Kenyatta administration. Successful implementation of the policy would result in improved healthcare, housing, more jobs as a result of increased manufacturing, and increased food security across the country. According to an analysis by the Parliamentary Budget

Office (2018), the agenda is overall a blueprint to transform Kenya into a middle income economy.

There is a legitimate expectation that the media in Kenya would have played a role in getting Kenyan society to know about the most important development policy of the government of Kenya in the first year of that policy's existence. There has been a credible concern that the media did not play that role adequately. The Star newspaper published the results of a survey by Infotrak Research on December 20, 2018, stating that a year after the Big Four Agenda was introduced into the national conversation, 53 percent of Kenyans were not aware of the policy. The International Commission of Jurists published a survey by Twaweza Communications carried out between October 26 and November 18, 2018 which established that 40 per cent of the Kenyans sampled had not heard about the Big Four Agenda. These surveys suggest there is a lack of adequate information on the Big Four Agenda in the Kenyan media. This is despite the fact that newspapers are ubiquitous in Kenyan society. Newspapers are widely read and are a source of information for many. The 2019 Status of the Media report by the Media Council of Kenya states that 24 percent of Kenyans read newspapers. Newspapers are accessed at social places such as hotels and public service vehicles, offices, vendors' selling points, shops and other places. Print media is the medium of record (Obonyo & Nyamboga, 2011) and its intermedia agenda setting effect is evident in the fact that morning television shows and radio presenters often make reference to the contents of the day's newspapers.

This study, therefore, sought to investigate how print media journalists carried out their duty to inform the Kenyan public about the most important policy of the government of the day by evaluating the nature of coverage of the Big Four Agenda by

the print media in the first year of the policy's existence. This was done by (1) evaluating the frequency of coverage, (2) evaluating the placement of articles on the Big Four Agenda, (3) evaluating the issues covered, (4) evaluating the sources of information on the Big Four Agenda and (5) evaluating the factors that informed coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the print media. These evaluations and the recommendations made are likely to inform future coverage of the Big Four Agenda and guide coverage of development policies in the future.

1.6 Research Objectives

1.6.1 General Objective

To establish the nature of the coverage of the Big Four Agenda between December 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018 by the Daily Nation and The Standard.

1.6.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine the frequency of stories on the Big Four Agenda in the Daily Nation and The Standard during the first year of the policy's existence.
2. To assess the priming of articles on the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first year of the policy's existence.
3. To establish the issues highlighted in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first year of the policy's existence.
4. To establish the dominant sources in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first year of the policy's existence.
5. To evaluate the factors that influenced coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the first year of the policy's existence.

1.7 Research Questions

1. How frequently did the Kenyan print media cover the Big Four Agenda in its first year of existence?
2. How has print media in Kenya covered the Big Four Agenda in the first year of the existence of the policy?
3. What were the dominant issues in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the first year of the policy's existence?
4. What were the dominant sources of information for the print media in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda during the first year of the policy's existence?
5. What influenced the decisions made by print media journalists in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the first year of the policy's existence?

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This was a study of one year of coverage, between December 2017 and December 2018, of the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard, the biggest newspapers in Kenya. During the study, the researcher evaluated content in both daily and weekly editions of the two newspapers. Analysis focused on the frequency of coverage of the Big Four Agenda, the placement of stories, and the dominant issues covered and the sources of information evident in the coverage.

Because of the 12-month period covered, and the fact that the five-year period of the implementation of the Big Four Agenda has not ended, it was not possible to assess coverage of the policies beyond December 2018, meaning that some of the dynamics could have changed, both on the side of the government, which could have

changed its approach, and the media, which is likely to have undergone significant changes and adjusted how it scrutinises the government of the day.

The use of the Daily Nation and The Standard limited the study as there are other print media in the country and there are chances that their coverage of the Big Four Agenda could be significantly different from that of the two. There could also be significant coverage of the Big Four Agenda in My.Gov, the insert published by the government and circulated by the Daily Nation, The Standard, The Star and People Daily. Because My.Gov is identified as sponsored content and is a paid-for insert, it fell outside the scope of the proposed study and could perhaps be the subject of a separate study by itself. Newspaper circulation has also reduced and it is possible that the People Daily, which is handed out free of charge, could have surpassed the two newspapers in circulation and readership.

Time was also a limiting factor as the study needed to be concluded and submitted by January 2020, meaning the researcher had to prepare the research instruments, collect and analyse the data, and then compile their recommendations and submit their research project within a short time. It was not possible to mitigate against these limitations.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The media is an important tool for passing messages to the society and for providing a platform for debate. The Big Four Agenda is the Jubilee administration's signature target in its second five-year term in charge of Kenya. However, there had not been, so far, to the researcher's knowledge, no evaluation so far of the manner in which

this set of objectives have been covered by the print media in Kenya. This study therefore evaluated that coverage and sought to fill this knowledge gap.

This study illuminates further the relationship between the media and society and through the lens of the agenda-setting and priming theories, enriches knowledge on the subject. It adds to the body of literature on the two theories and their application to the Kenyan context.

This study concludes with recommendations that can inform policy – how the government informs the society about its policy through the media as well as the media’s own set of rules and norms on the interrogation of government development and related policies. The recommendations can be taken up by the media and used to inform the coverage of the Big Four Agenda specifically in the remainder of the term of the current government.

Given that a future government is also bound to make promises as it seeks the vote and then come up with objectives once it takes power, journalists would also apply the recommendations made at the end of this study. The findings of this study can also inform policymakers in the future on how they can propagate their ideas to the masses in order for the ideas to be understood and to have the support of the society.

1.10 Definition of Terms and Concepts

Print Media: mass communication in the form of printed materials such as newspapers and magazines.

Story: An article whether on hard or soft news.

Content analysis: A research technique used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material in order to systematically evaluate texts and convert qualitative data into quantitative data.

Priming: This is the process in which the media attend to some issues and not others and thereby alter the standards by which people evaluate election candidates.

Agenda building: This is the process by which news organizations and journalists feature, emphasize, and/or select certain events, issues, or sources to cover over others.

1.11 Summary

This chapter has presented the introduction to the study, the background of the study, the state and place of the print media in Kenya, the nexus between the media and the Big Four Agenda, the statement of the problem, the research objectives, research questions, the scope and limitations of the study and a definition of the terms and concepts used in this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study as well as the conceptual framework.

2.2 A Brief History of Development Policy in Kenya

Kenya's first post-independence economic development policy was articulated in Sessional Paper No. 10 on 1965 on *African Socialism and Its Application to Kenya*. The plan was for Kenya to develop a mixed economy with state and private sector participation to ensure a high rate of growth and it encouraged domestic and foreign enterprise as the State encouraged the integration of the Kenyan economy into the world capitalist system. This involved the creation of a conducive environment for foreign investment, the promotion of private enterprise in agriculture and industry and the Kenyanization of the economy (Zezeza, 1991).

Sessional Paper No. 10 in effect described a mixed capitalist and socialist model and politically, the instructions from the then Head of State, Jomo Kenyatta, were that the policy paper should make it explicit that Kenya would chart the mixed capitalist route and he made it clear in the introduction to the paper that it was intended to end the discussions on Kenya's economic policy, and not to end it and a politician who was briefed to prepare a competing paper had his life ended (Hornsby, 2013). Under that development policy, a number of state corporations in agriculture, industry, transport and communications, commerce, finance and services were either created or reorganised.

Zeleza (1991) states that the articulation of this development strategy did not remain static and it had by the early 1970s that economic growth by itself could not solve some of the problems of economic development in Third World countries like Kenya, where social inequalities, poverty and unemployment persisted and were becoming worse. There was a subsequent shift to the policy of Redistribution Through Growth, which was essentially about creating income-earning opportunities, the improvement of expenditure patterns and the provision of basic needs. This policy was expressed via the Fourth Development Plan of 1979-1983. The plan was poorly implemented because there were no serious structural reforms. The scholar argues that poor development plan implementation in Kenya was attributed to weaknesses in the planning itself, shortages of key personnel, lack of political will and the economy's vulnerability.

The 1980s were a period of decline for Kenya in terms of development. A recession affected the international economy in the late 1970s and that affected Kenya, forcing it to adopt the Structural Adjustment Programmes designed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Kenya adopted these in 1980 in Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1980 on Economic Prospects and Policies. Kenya committed to structural reform in international economic relations, fiscal and monetary affairs, income and wages, industrial strategy, agricultural development, and energy (Zezeza, 1991). The scholar argues that the same ideas were continued in Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1986 on *Economic Management for Renewed Growth* but were undermined by inefficiency, mismanagement and corruption.

The National Development Plan of 1989-1993 was the sixth development policy by the government since independence. It was implemented via the District Focus for

Rural Development Strategy and the Budget Rationalization Programme (Zezeza, 1991). The scholar was critical of the plan as well, arguing that it “suffers from a strong and systematic tendency to over-optimism in its growth targets”. He was also not optimistic about chances that the targets would be achieved going by the poor implementation record of earlier plans.

Retired President Mwai Kibaki had been behind the scenes as Sessional Paper No. 10 was drafted and when he took over in 2003, the government he headed created the Economic Recovery Strategy. It worked and by the time its implementation ended in 2007, the Kenyan economy had recovered and was growing. It was the first time a policy had been implemented and worked as desired (Ndung'u, Thugge, & Otieno, 2011). Vision 2030 was created to succeed the Economic Recovery Strategy and its ambitions were “to transform Kenya into a newly-industrialising, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens in a clean and secure environment by the year 2030.” It was anchored on three key pillars: economic; social; and political governance.

Under the economic pillar, the objective was to achieve economic growth rate of 10 per cent per annum through implementation of several flagship projects in six priority sectors. The social pillar aimed at creating a just, cohesive and equitable social development in a clean and secure environment while the political pillar's objective was to have an issue-based, people-centred and accountable democratic system. Ndung'u, Thugge, & Otieno (2011) posited that the success of Vision 2030 would depend on the management of political transitions and reform of institutions, a realignment of the policies so that development could be financed domestically, reforms in the pensions

sector, the insurance industry, the capital markets and the strengthening of the banking sector.

The Big Four Agenda has been taken to be the next phase of Vision 2030, according to the Vision 2030's explanations on its website (vision2030.go.ke) with President Uhuru Kenyatta taken to have been guided by a need to accelerate the achievement of the aspirations of Vision 2030 by adopting a new approach to medium-term planning by focusing on issues that would have the greatest impact on the well-being of Kenyans. The Big Four Agenda is thus seen by the Vision 2030 secretariat as constituting what the economic planners call The Third Medium Term and implemented on the foundations put in the place in the First and Second Medium Term Plans.

2.3 Media and Government Policy

The media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace (Herman & Chomsky 1994). It is the media's function to amuse, entertain and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviours that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. The media enjoys a certain amount of freedom in Kenya to go about its business as Kenya has, by committing to various international statutes, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Yaoundé Declaration, committed itself to making information available to the society. That commitment has also been entrenched in law via the Constitution promulgated in 2010.

Despite the often problematic relationship between the media and the government, they need each other and every government has a structure and a system for working with the media. The media also has a system of working with the government, from editors who oversee coverage of the three arms of government to the

reporters who are charged with generating stories of importance from the same (Walgrave, Soroka, & Nuytemamans, 2008). Governments need the media because they are one of the main ways to communicate with the public and government officials often understand that the more coverage there is of an issue, the higher the profile and attention it receives and the more the government's ideas are entrenched in the minds of the people (Levin, 2004).

Because citizens have imperfect information about the actions of governments, the media can enhance their ability to scrutinise the actions of governments and to interrogate them (Besley, Burgess, & Prat, 2002). The media plays a dual role: it serves as a watchdog, informing the public about the actions of those in power, and as an enabler of development by passing on information about what institutions do (Coyne & Leeson, 2009). By getting the society it serves to know about a policy the government has created and then sought to implement, the government can get support from the society, and the consequences of losing that support can be fatal to the government and the people at its head, the politicians.

The State cannot govern without considering the consequences of its policy decisions on its society. Effective communication of the government's agenda and policies should be the concern of the media, the State and civil society and coverage early in the process of implementing government policy can affect subsequent policy discussions and has the potential to influence how officials think about policies, especially when the media help frame the issue (Goppal, 2006). This would be the case regarding the Big Four Agenda, where the State would go out of its way to educate the society whether through its own resources such as websites or through the media

through advertising or earned media, where journalists access the information, interrogate and analyse it and then package it for their audiences.

Development policies are characterized by uncertainty, the involvement of players outside the formal political process, many access points to the decision process, involvement by quasi-governmental organisations in policymaking, high public salience, and crucial time constraints (Goppal, 2006). Because of the shared characteristics, there is no certainty that the policies that the government intends to implement will be met, which would also apply to the Big Four Agenda, despite the fact that it was introduced to Kenyans by their President, an individual at the highest political level. It is therefore important for the media to constantly have their eyes on their implementation.

Kakonage (2013) argues that for the media to communicate government policies and plans to the people, policymakers need to do three things; adjust their messages and use the media as a tool for dialogue with the society, use the media as a tool for marketing ideas and use vernacular language to reach the masses. Collaboration between the media and civil society for the media to make a meaningful contribution to the society's knowledge of governments' development goals.

Frequent coverage of Big Four Agenda would therefore be expected to put the policy in the minds of the people and frequent coverage of the policy would have gotten the society to know more about it.

2.4 Coverage of Government Policy by the Kenyan Media

A number of scholars have evaluated coverage of important government policies by the media over the years. Tuwei (2011), carried out a content analysis of the online

editions of the Daily Nation and The Standard between January 2006 and December 2010 to determine; the main actors driving discourse and delivery on e-learning, the issues emphasised in media coverage of e-learning and how they compare with the national ICT policy and the tone adopted by the media in the coverage of e-learning. In the study published by the Kansas State University in 2011, the scholar established that journalists in Kenya tended to use the framework given by government officials when reporting on e-learning and therefore let the government set the agenda on the subject. A content analysis of stories published between January 2006 and December 2010 established that there was almost a near absence of education professionals informing coverage of e-learning despite their central role in education. The researcher also established that despite the fact that the ICT policy on education had been in place for a long time, there was very little to show on the ground, and called into question the efficacy of the government's machinery in the diffusion of its own ideas. This was interesting because just like the Big Four Agenda, which is the subject of the proposed research, the ICT policy on education had been introduced as a new policy by the government to spur development.

Kimani (2018), conducted an analysis of the Daily Nation and The Standard's coverage of basic education policies by a content analysis of 216 stories in the two newspapers published between December 2017 and February 2018. The objectives of the study by the scholar were: to find out the frequency of media coverage of educational issues in Kenya, the prominence given to coverage of the said issues, the dominant educational frames, audience responses and to compare and contrast coverage of education issues by the Nation and Standard newspapers. In the study published by the University of Nairobi in 2018, the scholar was critical of the manner in which the issues were covered. Most of the coverage was confined to the inside pages of the

newspapers and the media rarely interrogated pertinent issues to the education sector and tended to focus on issues to do with national examinations, which are seasonal. The researcher recommended that the media become more proactive in the coverage of education issues, cover more of the success stories, provide more space for well-researched information, develop a policy on coverage of education issues and establish special segments in newspapers for the coverage of education matters.

Mogambi (2016) has been critical of the way the media has covered major infrastructure projects, with his criticism based on evaluation of coverage by The Standard and the Daily Nation between January and December 2014. The researcher used content analysis to evaluate articles on infrastructure projects published by the two newspapers. He established that both newspapers tended to place articles on infrastructure in the inside pages of the newspapers and there was more coverage in the months of May, June and December because of the public holidays in those months, which gave the government an opportunity to address matters it considered important. The researcher established that the most covered theme was transport, with the Standard Gauge Railway, the Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor, the Northern and Southern Bypasses dominating articles. The government was the most cited source of information in the articles and infrastructure was deemed important because the articles were often allocated between a quarter to half a page. Corruption was a dominant theme in the stories, however, and the tone was mostly negative. The researcher was critical of the media's approach to reporting on infrastructure as it ended up informing the public of projects without stating how they would affect them, downplaying the media's capacity to influence public opinion. The researcher recommended that the media give more space and time to stories on infrastructure and go beyond the 5Ws and H by showing the impact of any infrastructural project.

Ngare (2017) has evaluated the coverage of Vision 2030, a policy direction taken by the government that came to being in 2008. The aim of Vision 2030 was to accelerate the growth of the Gross Domestic Product to 10 percent annually and transform Kenya into an industrialised middle income country (Bolo & Nkirote, 2012). The researcher based her analysis on articles on Kenya Vision 2030 published by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first and the last years of the policy's existence. She used content analysis to do her research and established that the highest number of articles on the policy was published in the first year of its existence and that both newspapers did not give adequate coverage to flagship projects as most of the articles on the subject were published in the inner pages of the newspapers.

The frequency of publication of articles on the flagship projects was also found to lack consistency and the editorial policies of both publications also did not prioritise the Kenya Vision 2030. The researcher recommended the review of editorial policies by the two newspapers to give priority to development policies such as the Kenya Vision 2030, which she argued would enhance public awareness of the flagship projects and result in citizens demanding honesty and accountability from their leaders. The media was also encouraged to turn more of its focus to coverage that can improve the steering of the projects and expose corruption. The media was also asked to diversify and increase coverage of the flagship projects.

Still, the media in Kenya has had a significant impact on its society, especially in exposing the misdeeds of its leaders and especially corruption and the abuse of power that comes with economic crimes (Nyabuga, 2017). The media was among institutions that Jomo Kenyatta, the country's first post-Independence president, used to contain and delegitimize opposition to his rule (Ogola, 2011). The Nation, now known as the

Daily Nation, and The Standard directly and indirectly participated in the promotion of the government's political project of nation-building. The scholar has argued that the two newspapers were deliberately mild in their criticism of the government of that time and helped popularize the State's invented mythologies. Nyabuga (2017) has argued that while the power and capacity of the media has been questioned, it can still be exercised. With its history and as demonstrated by the scholars above, it is therefore possible for the media in Kenya to explain, critique, analyse and interrogate the Big Four Agenda and through comprehensive reporting point out to the society and the government where there are issues in the implementation of the policy.

The common thread in the findings of studies on how Kenyan media has covered developmental policies has been the apparent overreliance by the media on the narratives from the government. There has also been a failure, evident from the studies, by the media to interrogate the government's significant policies on development. It is also evident that the media is more likely to cover a policy by the government with more frequency in the period immediately after its launch or commencement. All these studies also share two common aspects. First, the scholars start by evaluating the frequency of coverage and then go on to examine the issues or themes brought out in that coverage. Some of the researchers also used the placement of articles in the newspaper as a measure of the prominence that was given to the issues by the media.

The Big Four Agenda is the most important policy of the government under Uhuru Kenyatta's second term. Before this study, there had not been an evaluation of how the media has covered the Big Four Agenda, which means that this study has broken new ground in this respect. Given the evident fact that the media tends to give more coverage to a significant government policy in its first year of existence, it was

useful for this study to evaluate whether this was also the case with this agenda. This therefore meant that the study started with an evaluation of the frequency of coverage to establish how much coverage there was. The study then evaluated the placement of articles in the Daily Nation and The Standard to determine whether there was priming of the coverage of the policy deemed most important for the long-term development of Kenya in the second term of President Kenyatta. There was an evaluation of the issues that dominated coverage during that period. None of the researchers cited in this thesis have conducted interviews with key decision makers in newsrooms. This study went a step further and sought out the journalists at the Daily Nation and The Standard to gain an understanding of the practical realities they deal with as they go about their work. The information obtained from the journalists points to the factors that influenced the coverage.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1 The Agenda-Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory is one way of examining the impact of the media on society. Developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, the theory states that the media provides cues to the public and tells them where they should focus their attention (McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2014). In its agenda-setting role, the media influences which issues, persons and topics are perceived as the most important of the day. Agenda setting is about influencing the topics of discussion, the agenda, of others and a majority of studies around this theory have aimed at clarifying when, how, and to what degree the agenda of the mass media influences the agenda of the public (Noije, Kleinnijenhuis, & Oegema, 2008). Mass media has pervaded the society and the repetition of messages about public issues has made the media a major influence on the audience and makes

issues move quickly from the media agenda to the public agenda (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007).

The agenda setting theory has been widely used in media effects research across the world and has become one of the most influential paradigms in this research. As cited by Ileri et al (2017), the study has “engendered more than 400 published studies”, proof that it is a useful and practical theory that can be used for this study as well. These studies have established that there is a strong media effect on the focus of public attention as a first step in the formation of public attention (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). In Kenya, Ileri et al (2017) applied the theory in research on the relationship between the press and public opinion. The scholars argue that with the media conferring status on certain issues more than others, they end up increasing the levels of importance assigned to issues and the audience then considers these issues as more important than others. The scholars state that the agenda-setting theory constitutes three main agendas – the media agenda, the public agenda and the policy agenda and when the agenda-setting process takes place, the three are interconnected.

One of the notable aspects of agenda-setting is the manner in which it has expanded beyond its original theoretical domain. McCombs and Shaw played a part in this by going back to the field even before their original research had been published in 1972 (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). In their second study, the two scholars pursued two objectives: to replicate their original findings and to investigate the conditions that enhance or limit media agenda-setting. More research by other scholars throughout that decade and the 1980s expanded the theoretical domain. The first level of agenda-setting focuses on relative salience or the perceived importance of issues or subjects while the second level examines the relative salience of attributes or issues (Weaver, 2007).

This study used the agenda setting theory as a lens in evaluating the frequency, establishing whether there was priming in coverage of the government of the day's most important policy as well as establishing the dominant issues. With the survey by Infotrak having established that 53 per cent of Kenyans did not know about the Big Four Agenda, this study sought to establish whether the media sought to bring the important policy of the Jubilee administration to the attention of the public by publishing information about it often. An evaluation of the frequency of coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the two biggest print media, through a systematic content analysis, enabled the researcher to establish the media agenda. By doing this, the researcher sought to establish whether Kenyan print media told the public where to focus its attention.

2.5.2 The Agenda Building Theory

Closely related to the agenda setting theory is the agenda building theory, which suggests that the process of forming and transferring agendas involves reciprocal influence among several stakeholder groups (Kiousis et al, 2013). The theory's central concern is on the interplay of sources, the media and public agendas, with information subsidies, such as news releases, press conferences, speeches and interviews important agenda-building activities in the shaping of media, policy, and public dialogue. In researching agenda-building, scholars seek to establish who influences media coverage (Parmelee, 2013). In various studies cited by Kiousis et al, (2013), there was a positive association between news releases and media attention toward government offices. Politicians such as retired United States President Bill Clinton were effective in driving the media agenda by writing more news releases than their opponents in campaigns.

With rapid advances in technology, the volume of information subsidies has increased, meaning that journalists and the society have more ways of accessing

information than before (Kiouisis et al, 2013). The public consumption of posts on the microblog Twitter, for example, may make them more influential than traditional press releases as they bring to the public more views and issues that the journalists may feel the need to cover (Parmelee, 2013). For governments, this would therefore mean that there are multiple opportunities for communicating its objectives and policies to the public, either directly or through the media, as there are more ways to reach them. In establishing the issues that were dominant in the coverage and the dominant sources of information on the Big Four Agenda, this study evaluated the use of information subsidies by the government in informing the public about the Big Four Agenda.

2.5.3 Priming Theory

While the central principle of the agenda setting theory is that the media might determine what the public takes to be important, Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder (1982), examined a different version of agenda setting that they called priming. Their central assertion was that “by attending to some problems and ignoring others, media may also alter the standards by which people evaluate government.” Through extensive research, these scholars established that problems that were positioned prominently in television broadcasts made a significant impact on evaluations of presidential performance.

Priming is founded on the notion that when individuals are exposed to information cues, they retain that information and use it to form opinions. In print media, the focus of this study, the techniques of priming a story have been identified as: placement, diction, headline formulation, image selection and typographical emphasis (Reisner, 1992). For the Big Four Agenda to be primed, it would need to have been placed on the front page and prime pages of the newspapers; be described and discussed in positive terms; and since the font size in the newspapers is uniform, be placed on

bigger spaces and thus have bigger headlines than other articles in the newspapers. With priming, the Big Four Agenda would have been at the forefront of the minds of the readers. This would in turn place the agenda at the front of the minds of the members of the public. They would not only know about it but be in a position to call the government to account about it.

2.5.4 The Hierarchy of Influences Model

It is also important to understand what shapes media content and for this, the hierarchy of influences model by Stephen D. Reese and Pamela J. Shoemaker has been used by scholars and offers useful insights. This model considers five factors from the micro to the macro: individual characteristics of specific people in the newsroom, their work routines, organizational-level concerns, institutional issues, and larger social systems.

According to Reese & Shoemaker (2016), the model analyses how the multiple forces simultaneously intrude in the media and suggest how they influence at their level and interact with each other. In the hierarchy of influences model, scholars are interested in disentangling the relationships among professionals and their routines, the organisations they work for, the institutions into which they cohere and the social systems they operate and help maintain. In the present case, this model was useful in looking at what journalists considered important and newsworthy about the Big Four Agenda and how their newsroom operation and management influenced how they covered the Big Four Agenda. It was also important to understand whether their editorial policies influenced their view on this policy considered important by the government of the day.

Interviews with decision makers in the newsrooms of the Daily Nation and The Standard enabled the researcher to establish the factors that come into play in the consideration of what is to be given prominence in coverage.

There has not been, to the researcher's knowledge so far, an evaluation of the manner in which the Big Four Agenda has been reported in the Kenyan media so far. The researcher used content analysis to establish the frequency of coverage of the Big Four Agenda, assess whether there was priming of the Big Four Agenda in the two main newspapers and evaluate the issues that dominated coverage during the periods in the first year of the Agenda when it would have been in the coverage. The research therefore broke new ground in this regard.

These theories were significant to this research because they helped the researcher evaluate the coverage of the Big Four Agenda. A measure of the frequency of articles on the government policy helped determine whether the media sought to set the agenda for the public by publishing articles about it. In evaluating the placement of the articles in the Daily Nation and The Standard, it was possible to establish whether there was priming.

This research was predicated on three variables – the public, the Big Four Agenda and the print media. Print media is the independent variable. Through the print media, the public would get to know about the Big Four Agenda and understand it, interrogate, critique it and use it to follow its implementation by the Jubilee administration and ultimately to benefit from it by getting access to healthcare, affordable housing and employment. The public is the dependent variable and it would be dependent on the agenda-setting by the print media, priming of the Big Four Agenda and the bringing out of significant issues in its coverage.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented a brief history of development policies in Kenya, the nexus between the media and government policy, a review of literature on the coverage of development policies by Kenyan media and then the theoretical framework exploring the four theories that served as a lens for viewing the phenomena discovered in this research, as well as the conceptual framework for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the research approach, research design, the site selection and description, techniques of data collection, techniques of data processing and analysis, and the ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Approach and Research Design

This research adopted a mixed methods approach to investigate the newspaper coverage of government policy on the Big Four Agenda in Kenya. Mixed methods research approach employs both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. This approach was selected because the phenomena that the researcher set out to evaluate was directly observable and could be enriched by interviews with decision-makers in the newsrooms of the Daily Nation and The Standard. The researcher adopted a concurrent mixed method design to investigate the newspapers' coverage of the Big Four Agenda. A concurrent mixed method means that the researcher simultaneously collected quantitative data and qualitative data, and analysed, presented and interpreted the data concurrently.

On the quantitative side, the articles were quantifiable and the first four research questions were primarily about the quantity of information. Frequency, which is addressed in the first question, is about the number of times the Big Four Agenda has been the subject of an article in the print media analysed. By assessing the placement of articles and counting the number of times the articles were placed in prime pages, the researcher established whether there was priming in coverage of the Big Four Agenda.

Similarly, an evaluation of the issues that were dominant in coverage was based on the number of times they were seen to occur in the coverage. This also applied to the sources of information on the Big Four Agenda.

Once this information was obtained and analysed, the researcher formulated a number of questions for the semi-structured interviews. This approach gave a comprehensive set of answers to the questions identified as the researcher took a formal and scientific approach to the questions, proceeding on the basis that the reality on the coverage of the Big Four Agenda was out there, and could be established by an evaluation of the coverage in the two biggest newspapers in Kenya. The quantitative and qualitative data converged to provide a better understanding of the research problem.

3.3 Site Selection and Description

This research was carried out at the head offices of the Daily Nation and The Standard, the libraries in particular, and both of these are in Nairobi. This is because the data is available easily at these locations in hard copy and in soft copy. The researcher established that both libraries keep soft copies of every newspaper that was published during the intended period of the study.

The Daily Nation and The Standard and their variations published on the weekend are the biggest sold newspapers by circulation as per the report by the Kenya Audience Research Foundation (2018). This study also targeted journalists who were involved in coverage of the Big Four Agenda. Reporters – writers - were identified using their bylines in the newspapers analysed while the editors were the news editors and the chief sub-editors of the Daily Nation and The Standard. The researcher used his

own networks to reach the journalists, all of whom are based in Nairobi and are known to him from his experience in the newsroom.

3.4 Techniques of Data Collection

3.4.1 Target Population

The target population of this study was all the articles about the Big Four Agenda that were published in the Daily Nation and The Standard between December 2017 and December 2018. All these made up roughly 681 items as the target population for this study.

The semi-structured interviews with key informants were intended to provide insights and analysis that were difficult to measure using the quantitative approach employed in the content analysis, and enabled the researcher obtain answers to the fifth research question. The researcher interviewed reporters/writers, news editors and chief sub-editors of the two publications.

The sample of key informants was drawn from a list of a combined six individuals from the two newsrooms— two chief sub-editors, two News Editors, and two reporters. The reporters/writers were identified from their bylines and the researcher identified the reporter who has most stories in the sample used for analysis. The news editors were interviewed because they oversee the news gathering process and are in charge of assigning reporters, debriefing them and giving direction on the angle they should give to stories. The news editor also develops the docket of stories for discussion at the editorial board meeting and therefore has a key responsibility in determining what would be designated as the big stories of the day. The chief sub-editors were singled

out for interviews because they are primarily responsible for placing the stories on the page and would therefore have a key role in priming.

3.4.2 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this research was each article in which the Big Four Agenda was reported, both hard news and soft news: general beat stories, spot news stories, news analyses, news round-ups, editorials, features, opinion pieces, commentaries, and stories in the question-and-answer format. It also included writers and editors of the Daily Nation and The Standard. The writers selected for the interviews were among those whose bylines were on stories about the subject while the editors – news editors and chief sub-editors – were selected because of the roles they play in the newsroom in identifying the important stories of the day and determining where they are placed in the newspaper.

3.4.3 Sampling Procedure or Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was used to select the articles that were analysed during this study. The method was selected because the researcher intended to purposively locate every article on the Big Four Agenda published by the Daily Nation and The Standard between December 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018 for analysis. The researcher then purposively selected a sample of articles from days or periods during which there was more coverage on the Big Four Agenda. These were the specific points between December 2017 and December 2018 during which there was a higher chance than normal that the Big Four Agenda would be the subject of coverage arising from statements made by government officials. Specifically, these were in the days following national holidays and on significant days during preparation of the national budget by the National Treasury and Parliament.

There would also be a mention of the Big Four Agenda on the day the Presidents makes his annual address to Parliament, which is known as the State of the Nation address. The national holidays are: Jamhuri Day - December 12, Madaraka Day – June 1, and Mashujaa Day – October 20. The significant days in the preparation of the national budget were; the day the Budget Policy Statement is tabled in the National Assembly, the day the Budget and Appropriations Committee tables its report on the Budget Policy Statement, the day the report is adopted by the National Assembly, and Budget Day, when the Cabinet Secretary for the National Treasury reads the Budget Speech in Parliament. Some publications were therefore bound to contain more information on health, food security, manufacturing, and housing. Purposive sampling would ensure that the researcher's sample is representative of all the publications during the stated period. Purposive sampling ensured that the researcher locates every article in the publications during the stated period.

There were six key informants that the researcher sought out for the interviews. These were: two News Editors, two chief sub-editors and two reporters/writers. The writers were identified using probability sampling from the writers whose bylines appeared in the stories reviewed in the first part of the study while the editors were selected because of the roles they play in the news gathering and production of the newspapers.

3.4.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected using a document review of articles in the Daily Nation and The Standard. The articles reviewed were a sample of all articles on the Big Four Agenda published between December 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018. The manifest content reviewed was any article published in the two newspapers over that period,

which had the words; Big Four Agenda, affordable housing, food security, food security, Universal Health Coverage or manufacturing in it. In the second phase of the research, data was collected using semi-structured interviews with key informants from the newsrooms of the Daily Nation and The Standard. An interview guide had been developed for the semi-structured interviews.

3.5 Techniques of Data Processing and Analysis

3.5.1 Types of Data

The study collected quantitative data using a document review guide while an interview guide helped collect qualitative data. The document review enabled the researcher to answer the following questions:

1. How frequently did the Kenyan print media cover the Big Four Agenda in its first year of existence?
2. How did the print media in Kenya treat articles on the Big Four Agenda in terms of placement, story size, page allocated and other elements of priming in the first year of the existence of the policy?
3. What were the dominant sources of information for the print media in Kenya in its coverage of the Big Four Agenda during the first year of the policy's existence?
4. What were the dominant issues and who were the dominant sources of the coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the first year of the policy's existence?

The interviews helped answer the fifth question: What influenced the decisions made by print media journalists in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the first year

of the policy's existence? The interviews also gave context to some of the findings from the content analysis.

3.5.2 Data Processing Procedures

The researcher sourced newspaper articles from the Daily Nation and The Standard for the period between December 01, 2017 and December 31, 2018. The articles were then classified according to the months of publication, the type (whether news, editorial or opinion or commentary) and also by placement – whether on the prominent front page or back page or inside the newspaper.

The researcher developed a code sheet to capture the following variables

- The frequency of articles bearing the Big Four Agenda or affordable housing, food security, food security, Universal Health Coverage or manufacturing as a subject
- The genres of Big Four Agenda stories
- Placement of Big Four Agenda stories
- Amount of space allocated to Big Four Agenda stories
- Issues addressed by Big Four Agenda stories
- Sources of information on the Big Four Agenda

High frequency was taken to mean that journalists found information on the Big Four Agenda to be newsworthy and relevant to their audiences. Low frequency was taken to mean that there was not much newsworthiness in the Big Four Agenda. The analysis of the information filled in the code sheet was done using Microsoft Excel, a

software that also made it possible to convert that information into graphs and charts for presentation in graphical form.

Placement of Big Four Agenda stories on the back or front pages or the front pages of the newspaper – pages 1 to 6 – was taken to mean that there was priming of the Big Four Agenda by placing it in the newspaper’s most important and accessible pages (Reisner, 1992). A similar assessment would be made if the articles were allocated the dominant space, the biggest amount of space, in the pages of the newspapers. In a newspaper, the article that occupies the biggest space in the page is known as a page lead. It has the biggest headline and occupies half or more than half of the top half of the page.

The issues anticipated in coverage of the Big Four Agenda would be: funding, challenges, legislative changes, policy changes, benefits to the public, targets, criticism. The issues that were dominant in coverage would suggest the agenda-setting that was done by the media during the first year of the Big Four Agenda and enabled the researcher to establish why a majority of Kenyans said they did not know about the most important development policy of the government of the day.

3.5.3 Data Presentation Methods

The data collected via document review was presented in worksheets, tables, and bar graphs. The pie charts and bar graphs were colour-coded to make it easier for a reader to decipher and distinguish the content. These formats were the most adequate for this data as they make it easier to consume the data. They are accompanied by written descriptions.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

The raw quantitative data was entered in a worksheet and analysed. Descriptive statistics has been used to describe what the data shows.

Frequency entailed the total number of stories that were published on the Big Four Agenda. High frequency was taken to be where there were stories published on more than half the number of days within the period of analysis. The implication of high frequency was that information on the Big Four Agenda was considered newsworthy and important for the public.

Priming is determined by placement of articles in the newspaper – whether on the front or back pages of the newspaper or in the first six pages – and by the sizes of the articles in the newspaper, headlines and usage of photographs. Priming was to be deemed to have occurred if it was established that more than half of the articles sampled were placed in the prominent pages of the newspapers.

There was a count of the issues evident in the coverage. The issues were ranked in descending order from the most frequent. This answers the research question on issues and informs the study's findings in that regard. The issues that were dominant were taken to be an indicator of the agenda that the media set about the policy during the first year of its existence.

The researcher similarly categorized the sources as either government or non-state. This is important as the most dominant sources of information on the Big Four Agenda serve as a pointer to the agenda setting and agenda building that happened, or failed to happen, during the first year of the policy's existence. Overdependence on one source of information, such as the government or government officials, would imply

that the media did not seek information from a variety of sources and therefore had a restricted or one-sided view of the policy.

The qualitative data collected via the semi-structured interviews is analysed thematically, and the researcher discussed the explanations and experiences of each journalist interviewed according to their circumstances and point of view.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research proceeded upon clearance from the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications' Ethics and Research Board (See *Appendix D*). The researcher also obtained a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, an agency of the national government (See *Appendix F*).

This research involved the collection of data using document review of the selected sample of articles from the Daily Nation and The Standard for the period between December 01, 2017 and December 31, 2018. The two libraries are open to the public at a fee and it was necessary to pay that fee and to give an explanation that the study is in fulfillment of a master's study. For the semi-structured interviews, the researcher contacted the journalists he intended to interview, explained his intention and the purpose of his study and arranged to meet at a convenient time and venue with the journalist. The journalists were verbally informed that the interview was anonymous but recorded and consent was obtained. Two journalists had travelled out of Nairobi and asked to be sent the questions while one expressed the desire to send written responses rather than sit for an interview. The written responses were followed up with phone calls for clarifications.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has detailed the research methodology from the research design to the selection of the site, the techniques used in data collection containing the target population, the unit of analysis and the sampling procedure. It has described the data collection/generation techniques and then how the various types of data collected in the study were processed. The chapter also detailed how the data was presented and analysed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data, a summary of the main findings and a summary.

4.2 Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Research Question 1: The first objective of this study was to establish the frequency of coverage by the Daily Nation and The Standard of the Big Four Agenda between December 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018, which translates into one year of the policy's existence.

The researcher established that there were 301 stories published in the Daily Nation for that period, and 380 in The Standard. This means that the Daily Nation published stories on the Big Four Agenda 76 per cent of the time during the first year of the policy's existence while The Standard published stories on the Big Four Agenda 96 per cent of the time during the same period. The Standard Media Group, publishers of The Standard, sponsored Transform Kenya forum, where professionals and experts would meet regularly to discuss topical issues affecting Kenya, and The Standard's higher frequency can be attributed to that factor.

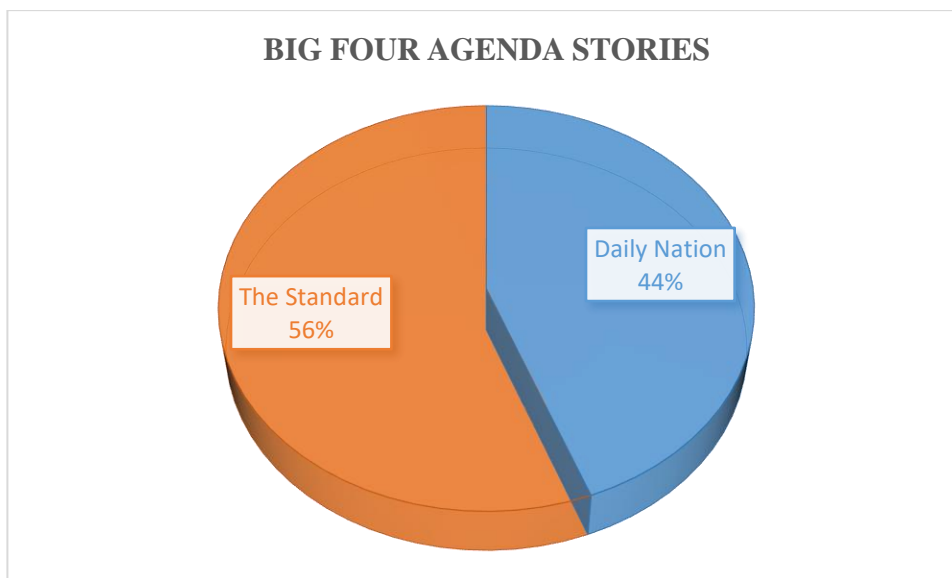


Figure 1: A comparison of the number of Big Four Agenda stories in The Standard and The Nation between December 2017 and December 2018

The figure above represents the total number of stories on the Big Four Agenda published in The Standard and the Daily Nation between December 2017 and December 2018. Of all the stories on the subject published during that period, 56% were in The Standard and 44% in the Daily Nation.

The journalists interviewed attributed their interest in the Big Four Agenda to the fact that the agenda was introduced by the President and therefore was viewed as a key political objective for him and was mentioned a lot by Cabinet Secretaries at events they presided over. The Big Four Agenda was viewed as having the potential to affect a lot of Kenyans by creating jobs, improving access to healthcare, and by bringing about food security and was therefore of great public interest and newsworthy. One of the key informants said:

It was a topical issue, there was public interest in the agenda and the objectives stated by the President were going to have an impact on ordinary Kenyans.

Another key informant stated:

We had a commercial collaboration that gave the coverage some impetus – the Transform Kenya Agenda, and the forums were covered every time they happened. Manufacturing was one of the topics discussed a lot.

The coverage was also driven by conflict and controversy, according to one of the journalists, who cited Universal Health Care and housing as specific examples. In doing this, it is evident that the media had taken seriously their role as a watchdog as described by Coyne & Leeson (2009) by informing the public about the actions of those in power. The finding that there was a high frequency of coverage corresponds with the study by Ngare (2017) which established that the media is likely to cover a government policy with much frequency in the first year of the policy's existence. The researcher obtained a sample of 67 stories from the Daily Nation (22 per cent) and 95 stories from The Standard (25 per cent) for analysis for this study.

The research established that most stories in the sample from the Daily Nation referred to the Big Four Agenda broadly, without delving into the specific objectives. There were also many instances where the stories referred to more than one of the four objectives of the Big Four Agenda. The objective to have affordable housing, 500,000 houses built by 2022, received most coverage compared to the other three, with the manufacturing pillar receiving least coverage in the Daily Nation. Food security and Universal Health Coverage received an almost equal amount of coverage individually. This implies that while the Big Four Agenda was mentioned frequently, focus on the objectives was not consistent and it likely, as said by one of the journalists interviewed, that government officials felt a need to associate themselves with the objectives outlined by the President but could not elaborate beyond the mere mentions. The graph below

illustrates the frequency of coverage in the Daily Nation by objective, viewed against the frequency of coverage broadly and instances where two or more objectives were the subject of coverage.

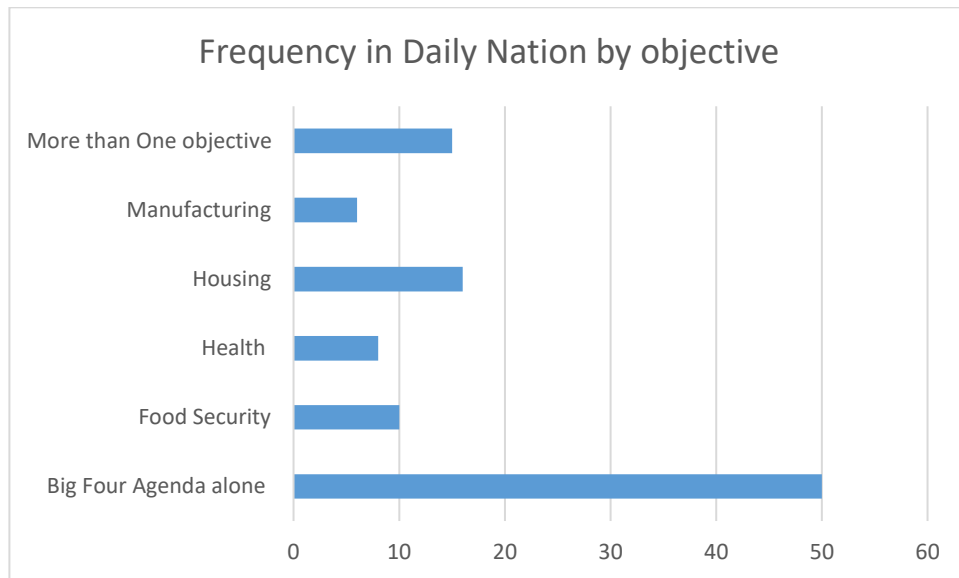


Figure 2: Frequency in Daily Nation by objective

The research also established that like was the case in the Daily Nation, the Big Four Agenda received most coverage by itself in The Standard, with the objectives also receiving coverage mostly when they were named together. Affordable Housing also received most coverage in The Standard, followed by food security, Universal Health Coverage and manufacturing. The implication here is that journalists were more inclined to cover the Big Four Agenda or an objective under the Agenda if there were events or developments around it, and depended on being prompted by circumstances rather than venturing out on their own to research and write stories about an issue. This was evident at The Standard, which had more stories on the Big Four Agenda than the Daily Nation had, and this because the company that publishes the newspaper had

sponsored a forum to discuss topical issues and therefore had a commercial interest driving it.

The graph below illustrates the frequency of coverage in The Standard by objective, viewed against the coverage broadly and whenever two or more objectives were the subject of coverage.

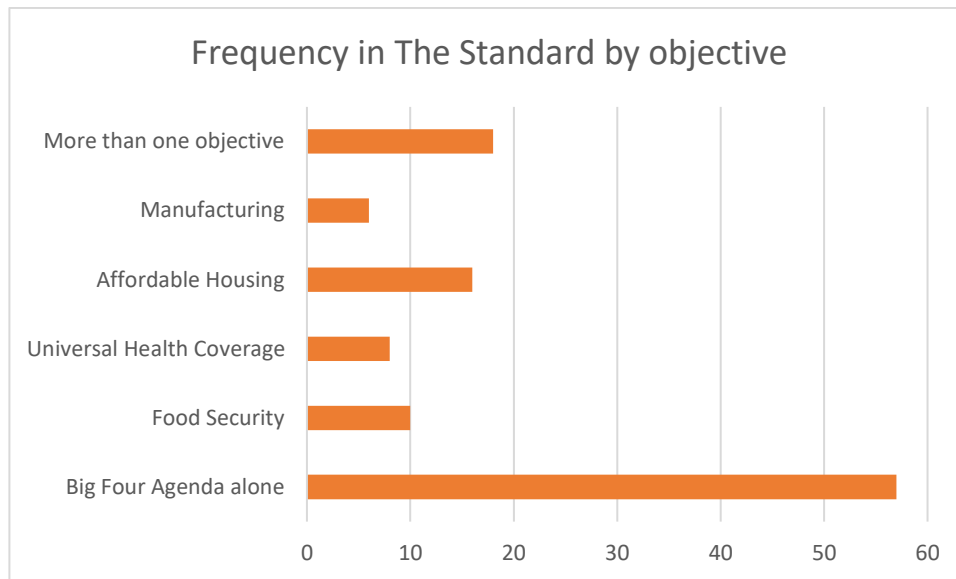


Figure 3: Frequency in The Standard by objective

From the samples from the two newspapers, it was evident that the coverage had similar characteristics in terms of the frequency of coverage for every objective of the Big Four Agenda. The Big Four Agenda was covered broadly, often being mentioned in coverage without the four objectives being discussed, and most stories on the Big Four Agenda also had the objectives mentioned together.

It was also established that in both the Daily Nation and The Standard, affordable housing received the most coverage, and manufacturing the least. The more frequent coverage of affordable housing could be attributed to the proposed introduction of the Housing Levy in the Budget and the announcement of plans to demolish some

old estates in Nairobi to make way for the new and affordable housing units. The objective on manufacturing, as stated elsewhere in this thesis, required the introduction of a variety of regulations that would enable the sector to increase its contribution to the economy. Universal Health Coverage and food security received almost equal coverage in both newspapers, and this could be attributed to the shortage of comprehensive information as stated by the journalists interviewed.

Research Question 2: Priming

Table 1: Prime placement, page leads and the use of photos

Parameter	Daily Nation	Standard
Number of stories in prime pages	17	13
Percentage of stories in prime pages	25%	13%
Number of stories in page leads	37	51
Percentage of Page Leads	55%	53%
Number of stories with colour photos	49	59
Percentage of stories with coloured photos	73%	62%

The researcher established that 25 per cent of stories on the Big Four Agenda were placed in the prime pages of the Daily Nation and 13 per cent in The Standard's prime pages. The Daily Nation had 55 per cent of stories on the Big Four Agenda used as page leads while The Standard had 53 per cent. The Daily Nation had coloured photographs accompanying 73 per cent of the stories published on the Big Four Agenda while The Standard had coloured photographs on 62 per cent of the stories on the Big Four Agenda.

It is evident from the sample analysed that there was no priming of the Big Four Agenda when considering the placement of stories on the prime pages. That only a

quarter of the stories on the agenda in the Daily Nation, and slightly more than an eighth in The Standard, were placed on the prime pages shows that while editors deemed the Big Four Agenda important, there was not enough newsworthiness to prompt them to use the stories in the prominent pages. One of the journalists interviewed attributed this to the fact that the Big Four Agenda was considered a technical, complicated field and was mostly covered by business reporters. One of the key informants interviewed said:

The Big Four Agenda was a specialised technical field and if you want to deploy general news writers, it's an area that is more technical and most of the time it would not end up in the national news and would end up in the business section.

The business sections of both The Standard and the Daily Nation are buried deep in the newspapers, which would explain the small number of stories that were published in the prime pages. Another editor revealed that there was initially very little knowledge on the Big Four Agenda yet the journalists were eager to report about it because it was considered the president's most important political promise and it was deemed necessary to follow up progress on it. This could explain the finding by Infotrak and Twaweza, which provoked this research and the problem, that one year after the Big Four Agenda was launched, a majority or a significant percentage of Kenyans did not know about it, and this despite the ubiquity of newspapers and news in the life of the ordinary Kenyan. The Daily Nation had 55 per cent of stories on the Big Four Agenda used as page leads while The Standard had 53 per cent. This signifies that the chief sub-editors considered the stories important enough to warrant prominent usage most of the time. It also signifies that despite the fact that section editors fight to have stories from their sections published on the front page (Reisner, 1991), there was not enough material in them to warrant their publication on the prime pages.

Research Question 3: Issues

Table 2: Dominant issues in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda

	Daily Nation	The Standard
Total number of sampled stories on the Big Four Agenda	67	95
Funding	4	6
Challenges	10	-
Legislative/policy changes	8	7
Benefits	20	47
Targets	2	-
Criticism	12	19
Other – specify	Advice 10	Advice 13
	Humour 1	Warning 2

The research established that the benefits of the Big Four Agenda were the most dominant in coverage of the policy. Of the 67 articles in the Daily Nation, 20 had the benefits as the main issue while there were 47 stories in the 95 sampled in The Standard. This could be attributed to the fact that the reporters would include the anticipated benefits of the Big Four Agenda in every piece of reporting. There was also plenty of criticism of the Big Four Agenda, with 12 stories in the Daily Nation and 19 in The Standard focusing on criticism of the policy.

The implication from this finding is that there was not much thought given to the question of how the Big Four Agenda would be funded and the legislative and policy changes that would be necessary to achieve the objectives, which corresponds with the information obtained from reporters, who said they used to get information on the Big Four Agenda from events presided over by government officials, and there was no

comprehensive information from them, even when prompted, and there was thus a significant gap in information. Another implication from these findings would be that the media provided a platform for debate on the Big Four Agenda, and this is evidenced from the high number of articles on criticism of the government's grand objectives.

The issues covered were as follows, listed in order of the most dominant to the least dominant in both newspapers combined, and illustrated in the graph below.

1. Benefits
2. Criticism
3. Advice
4. Legislative and policy changes
5. Funding and challenges
6. Warning and targets
7. Humour

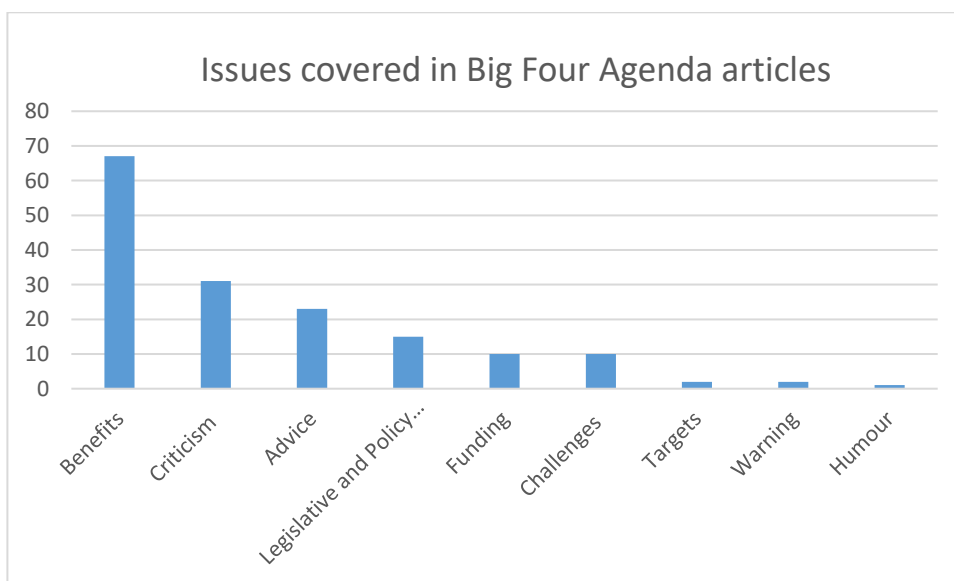


Figure 4: Issues covered in Big Four Agenda articles

Research Question 4: Sources

Table 3: Sources of information on the Big Four Agenda

	Daily Nation	Standard
Government officials	28	38
Non-State	39	57

In terms of sources, reporters got information on the Big Four Agenda more from non-state than government officials. This is different from the studies by Tuwei (2011), Ngare (2017) and Kimani (2018), which established and were critical of the fact that journalists relied more than was necessary on the narrative sold by the government in coverage of policies.

The paucity of information from the government is reflected in the finding that the media used more non-state sources than government officials when covering the Big Four Agenda. It reflects the lack of proper planning referenced by Zeleza (1991) in his analysis of the implementation of development plans in Kenya. It is also evident that unlike the ideal developed by Levin (2004), where there is a symbiotic relationship between the media and the government, there was no such relationship between the media and the government in the first year of the Big Four Agenda's existence.

Research Question 5: Factors that influenced coverage of the Big Four Agenda

Responses to this research question were gleaned from interviews with key informants, who were six journalists from the Daily Nation and The Standard. These were two writers, whose by-lines were identified in the content analysis, and the newspapers' respective news editors and chief sub-editors. From the interviews, it was established that the Big Four Agenda got frequent coverage because it was considered

newsworthy, useful to Kenyan society because it sought to provide solutions to some of the problems that have troubled Kenyans - unemployment, poor housing and inadequate healthcare – and was deemed as politically important because its creation was announced by the President, who also indicated that he hoped to establish his legacy by ensuring the objectives are achieved. Housing and Universal Health Coverage had conflict and controversy and that also informed coverage. One of the key informants explained newsworthiness this way:

Newsworthiness was one factor. It was the President's big agenda and he named the projects that he would want so it was considered important. There was significant public interest in it.

There appears to have been a consensus that because of the knowledge that Kenyans face direct challenges in accessing good housing, healthcare and a regular supply of food as stated in the sessional papers and other economic policies over the years, the effort by the administration to focus on them was important and the public needed to know about it. One of the key informants said:

The President's Big Four Agenda focuses on food security, healthcare, affordable housing and manufacturing which are key issues that affect many Kenyans who are our readers. These are also key sectors that will help create jobs for our millions of unemployed youth. Since this is a government-driven agenda, coverage was informed by the frequency with which the President and his administration launched or spoke about projects on the Big Four.

One of the informants interviewed explained how the currency and the fact that the President was behind the Agenda informed coverage:

Currency was one of the factors. It was framed as the President's main ambition and was viewed as politically important so we deemed it important and newsworthy. Some of the aspects, such as housing and Universal Health Coverage, drew conflict and controversy.

The study established that there were no policies at either the Daily Nation or The Standard to guide coverage of an important government policy and the stories on the Big Four Agenda were therefore assessed and judged on the basis of their newsworthiness. Two key informants, one from The Standard and another from the Daily Nation, said:

We did not see a need to have a special policy on how to cover the agenda since we considered it news like any other. It was covered like any other news but we realised that all ministers would say their projects are part of the Big Four Agenda.

At The Standard, one editor said there was more coverage of the Big Four Agenda because it was among the areas of focus in Transform Kenya, a forum that brought together professionals and experts to discuss topical issues that the Standard Media Group supported.

One of the editors at The Standard said that the view formed at that newsroom was that the Big Four Agenda was a technical area and therefore needed the expertise of business reporters:

The Big Four Agenda was a specialised technical field and if you want to deploy general news writers, it's an area that is more technical and most of the time it would not end up in the national news and would end up in the business section.

Even as the agenda attracted coverage, the journalists were frustrated in their endeavours as their efforts to get comprehensive information on the Big Four Agenda came up short. Two journalists interviewed for this research had the following to say:

Government officials were big on grand plans and short on details. The budgets were not forthcoming. There were delays in responding to questions. On food security, the Agriculture ministry did not even cooperate.

Another one said:

Challenges were normally on follow up of Big 4 success. Most departments are not providing sufficient information on the Big 4 agenda. Other than the Housing Department, the other three are 'silent' on what had been achieved over time. Thus, the contact persons/sources are not providing enough information.

This lack of information was frustrating for editors as well, and one of those interviewed said:

There was a lack of information from government officials on the aspects, such as the housing project, and at some point it became so controversial and sensitive that getting information on it was hard and government officials started stifling information and even those who would ordinarily be forthcoming with information were reluctant to provide it.

There was thus a lack of information from the government on the Big Four Agenda and the journalists did not, as a result, get to write comprehensive and analytical articles about the policy. It is possible that the government could not provide information because of the “weaknesses in the planning itself” that Zeleza (1991) pointed out in his analysis of the implementation of other development plans by the Kenyan government. It is also notable that apart from the sources cited in this study – the President’s speech on December 12, 2017, the website of the Vision 2030 and the analysis of the Budget by the Parliamentary Budget Office – there is a paucity of sources on the Big Four Agenda, and this is likely to have been worse in the first year of the existence of the agenda. One of the journalists interviewed stressed the fact that the Ministry of Agriculture did not provide any information when requested.

There were different views on the quality of journalists in the two newsrooms. At The Standard, one of the editors was confident about the calibre of journalists and

stated that they could be relied on to write comprehensive articles about the Big Four Agenda if there was adequate information from government officials. The editor had the following to say:

We have them (competent reporters), particularly at our business desk, but the biggest challenge is from the government officials and you are not able to get enough data to do an analysis. We have seen a similar trend on the Standard Gauge Railway and we generally face that challenge when covering government.

On the other hand, one of the editors at the Daily Nation said the departure of a number of reporters competent to interpret the economic, financial and policy analysis implications of the Big Four Agenda affected the quality of coverage.

There was a small number of reporters with that capacity at the time as a lot of writers who were well grounded on that issue left the newsroom – juniorisation of the newsroom affected coverage of economic issues.

The editor said that to deal with this weakness, they would regularly seek the assistance of other sections and a sister newspaper, the Business Daily. He would also lobby for the articles to be allocated more space in the newspaper, albeit with limited success, as the stories were not considered significant enough to warrant placement on the prime pages.

To address reporters' lack of grounding on the subject, help was sought from reporters on other desks such as the Business Daily and the Business Desk. Sought to convince colleagues on the editorial board meeting on importance of information. There was no access to information about the agenda – they couldn't do much about that. The stories were not deemed big enough to warrant prime placement because they were not considered important enough.

The Big Four Agenda was deemed technical and needing the expertise of specialist business reporters, which in turn meant that the articles were not placed on

prime pages. Overall, most journalists believed they could have told stories about the Big Four Agenda more comprehensively and would have done a better job had the government matched their enthusiasm by providing more detailed information. One of the key informants was of the view that the newsrooms were prepared to handle complicated subjects but were constrained by a lack of information:

I think it is for the government to change how it handles policies and the sharing of information with the public and with journalists.

4.3 Summary of Findings

This research has established that there was a high frequency in coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard between December 1, 2017 and the December 31, 2018. There were 301 stories on the Big Four Agenda published in the Daily Nation during that period, and 380 stories in The Standard. This was considered high because it implied that there were stories on the Big Four Agenda in the Daily Nation on 76 per cent of the days in the first year. There was a higher frequency in The Standard as there were stories on 96 per cent of the days in the first year.

The high frequency was attributed to the importance attached to the fact that the objectives were announced by the President and his indication that they were the most important things he felt he needed to do in his last term in office.

It also established that housing was the objective that received the most coverage, and manufacturing the least, with Universal Health Coverage and food security receiving almost equal coverage. This was attributed to the fact that there were plans announced specifically regarding the creation of the Housing Levy and this was subsequently discussed frequently in public.

The research established that there was no priming of articles on the Big Four Agenda as a majority of the stories were published in the inside pages of the newspapers. The lack of priming was attributed to two factors. First, the Big Four Agenda was viewed as an area needing expertise, and the newsroom managers therefore turned to their business sections, which were deemed to have the required expertise. Second, there was a reduction in the number of reporters with the competence required to understand the policy, economic and legal implication of the Big Four Agenda, depriving newsrooms of expertise and forcing editors to seek the assistance of other sections of the newsroom, or sister newspapers. The striking finding on priming was that while the stories were mostly published in the inside pages of the newspapers, more than half of them, in either newspaper analysed, were allocated the biggest space on the pages, making them page leads, which reflected the importance attached to them despite the fact that they were considered complicated and therefore needed expert reporters to unpack them for the audience. The research also established that a majority of the stories on the Agenda were accompanied by colour photographs, which would have attracted readers to them.

A high percentage of the reporting on the Big Four Agenda was centred around the benefits of the policy, with criticism, advice and the anticipated legal and policy changes also among the significant issues covered by the newspapers. The many references to the benefits of the Big Four Agenda were attributed to the fact that government officials routinely mentioned the Agenda and tried to associate themselves with it even when there was no material link between it and their work. It was also evident that journalists did not devote their attention to the legislative and policy changes that were necessary for the implementation of the Big Four Agenda, reflecting

the lack of information and focus on the part of government officials and the lack of planning documented in the Literature Review.

Most of the articles on the Big Four Agenda were based on information provided by non-state sources, underlining the dearth of information from government officials. This reflects the lack of planning stated in the Literature Review but also the readiness by the media to give a platform to competing voices about the Big Four Agenda. The finding was considered significant because other studies of the coverage of government policies had pointed out the overreliance on government sources by journalists. In this case, there was balance in the sourcing of information on the Big Four Agenda, and a willingness to give platforms to competing voices, but there was not enough information from the government to work with.

The research has established that there was a lot of interest in the Big Four Agenda but that was not reciprocated by the government, whose ministers were happy to associate themselves with the Big Four Agenda, spoke of it at their events, but did not provide material to improve coverage. The Big Four Agenda was also deemed a technical subject that needed specialist writers and was therefore not considered to have the appeal to the masses that would have seen it placed in the prime pages of the newspapers. The result of this was that the stories, while so significant that they were mostly published as the leading stories in the pages, were buried deep inside the newspaper. This explains the finding that one year after the Big Four Agenda was launched, a majority of Kenyans did not know about it.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has comprehensively presented the findings and interpretations of the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of this research. The next chapter puts these findings into context.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains discussions of the study's key findings, the conclusions, recommendations and areas for further research.

5.2 Discussions of Key Findings

This research had five specific objectives:

1. To determine the frequency of stories on the Big Four Agenda in the Daily Nation and The Standard during the first year of the policy's existence.
2. To assess the priming of articles on the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first year of the policy's existence.
3. To establish the issues highlighted in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first year of the policy's existence.
4. To establish the dominant sources in the coverage of the Big Four Agenda by the Daily Nation and The Standard in the first year of the policy's existence.
5. To evaluate the factors that influenced coverage of the Big Four Agenda in the first year of the policy's existence.

The objectives are analysed in the order in which they appear above.

5.2.1 Objective one

This research established that the frequency of newspaper coverage of the Big Four Agenda was high. The policy was considered newsworthy and of great public

interest by journalists and they were eager to get hold of information about it in order to write. There was, however, limited information about the Big Four Agenda and it was not possible to write comprehensive articles about the policy. This was consistent with the literature reviewed ahead of the research, which stated that there is usually more coverage of government policies in the first year of their existence. The media was on a mission to enhance the ability of the society to scrutinise the actions of the government and to interrogate them, part of their roles as described by Besley, Burgess, & Prat (2002) as cited in Chapter One but the government officials did not reciprocate that enthusiasm by providing adequate information about the agenda. Using the agenda-setting theory as a lens, the media could be said to have attempted to set the agenda for the Kenyan public by approaching the Big Four Agenda as an important policy, because it had been flagged as important by the Head of State and because its objectives were deemed to be in the interests of the public.

This research also established that the agenda on affordable housing received most coverage in both the Daily Nation and The Standard, and this was attributed to the fact that there was relatively more progress in that objective than in others. The least frequently covered objective was manufacturing, and this was attributed to the fact that there was little evident progress in implementing this agenda, which required a number of policy and legislative measures.

5.2.2 Objective Two

Using the parameters stated by Reisner (1992), cited in Chapter Two, and using a content analysis of a representative sample, this research established that there was no priming of articles on the Big Four Agenda. It has been established that the media was enthusiastic about the policy but did not come across enough information to publish it

in the sections of the newspaper where it would have caught the attention of readers the most. This was attributed to the perception by some journalists that the agenda was technical and therefore deserved to be written about by journalists who have specialized in writing about business and economic affairs. The articles on the Big Four Agenda were competing for space with other issues of importance and without detailed information available, were relegated to the inside pages of the newspapers.

The lack of information from government officials on the Big Four Agenda could be attributed to the weaknesses in the planning suggested by Zeleza (1991) in his analysis of the poor implementation of economic development plans by the government. Tuwei (2011) had also established in an analysis of coverage of the Kenyan government's e-learning policy that there was very little to show for it on the ground despite the fact that the government had sufficient machinery to diffuse its ideas about the subject. The paucity of information on the Big Four Agenda was also evident in the literature view. The most comprehensive information on the policy was in the speech by the President on December 12, 2017 cited in the Introduction, the report by the Parliamentary Budget Office also cited in the Introduction based on information obtained from the Treasury and from the website of the Kenya Vision 2030 secretariat cited in the Introduction and Literature Review, which did not go beyond three paragraphs on the home page.

5.2.3 Objective Three

The research established that the dominant issues in newspaper coverage of the Big Four Agenda were its benefits, criticism and advice. It is not surprising that the benefits of the policy were the most dominant issue given that it would be necessary, when writing about the Big Four Agenda, to (re)state the government's objectives and

how they would be of benefit to Kenyan society. The finding that criticism was also dominant in coverage of the Big Four Agenda runs contrary to what has been evident in other studies of how development policies have been covered by the media, which established that journalists were unquestioning and failed to give attention to non-state voices when writing about government policy. The journalists interviewed for this research expressed their frustration with the lack of detailed information from government officials, which could in turn have been because the Big Four Agenda had not fully developed by the time the President was announcing its launch. It was also possible, the journalists said, that government officials were afraid to give information about the agenda when some aspects of it started generating controversy.

Driven by the fear that the information could be used to generate bad publicity for them or the government, the government officials therefore kept off and the critical voices were allowed to dominate coverage unchallenged. Using the agenda-setting theory as the lens in this case, then, it is evident from the issues that were dominant in the coverage that newspapers made an effort to set the agenda for their readers by frequently highlighting the benefits of the Big Four Agenda. Journalists were however not blinded by what one of them described as ‘the best laid plans’ of the government and alerted their readers to the fact that the government could fail to meet its objectives by giving space to criticism of the Big Four Agenda. They, almost equally, also gave voice to the advice that came on how the policy could be implemented.

5.2.4 Objective Four

Overall, there was more sourcing of stories on the Big Four Agenda from non-state sources. This suggests, going by the agenda building theory, that there were not enough information subsidies from government officials to provide material for

reporting. This finding corresponds with earlier findings on the lack of priming and the issues that were dominant but contradicts the findings in similar studies on the coverage of development policies in that the government is not the most dominant source of information. This could be attributed to the paucity of information from the government on the Big Four Agenda and its failure to develop information subsidies to be used by its own officials and the media to inform society about the benefits of one of its most important policies. There was a lack of reciprocal influences among the several stakeholder groups that is necessary, according to Kioussis et. al., (2013), cited in the Literature Review for agenda building to occur.

5.2.5 Objective Five

The Hierarchy of Influences Model cited in the Literature Review considers five factors, from the micro to the macro, to analyse how multiple forces simultaneously intrude on the media. The factors are: individual characteristics of specific people in the newsroom, their work routines, organizational-level concerns, institutional issues, and larger social systems. This research was able to identify a number of factors that can fit within the Hierarchy of Influences Model.

Because of their training and experience, business reporters were deemed the appropriate individuals to cover the Big Four Agenda, which in turn resulted in coverage of the policy ending up mostly in the inside pages of the newspapers. Their work routines also dictated coverage, and it moved from the mere reporting of what the government had announced as its main objectives to analysis and then monitoring of the implementation, which generated controversy and propelled coverage. The Big Four Agenda was deemed important because with its four big objectives, it is an attempt to address issues within the social systems that were deemed of great public interest. From

the interviews with journalists, there were institutional issues within the government that made it difficult to have comprehensive coverage of the Big Four Agenda, which was eventually detrimental to the government as the society was not well informed about its plans.

5.3 Conclusion

There was high frequency in coverage of the Big Four Agenda, like has been the case with development policies by the governments in their first year of existence, and this was driven by the fact that it was considered newsworthy, of great political importance and was seen to be aimed at solving real problems in Kenyan society.

There was a lack of priming of stories on the Big Four Agenda. This was because they were considered complicated, and needed the expertise of reporters experienced in covering business and economic affairs to report. The stories were thus published in the inside pages of the newspapers. The stories were considered important enough that when they were used, were allocated the biggest space per page and were accompanied by colour photographs.

Print media journalists were willing to cover the Big Four Agenda comprehensively but their zeal was not matched by the government and there was not much beyond the announcements by the government. There was thus much repetition of the benefits the Agenda would provide but not much beyond that and it was thus not possible to get comprehensive coverage and the information of audiences about the important policy. The journalists were however willing to give competing voices a platform. They also did not pay much attention to the legislative and policy changes that were needed to implement the Big Four Agenda.

A variety of factors influenced the coverage. Internally, newsrooms struggled to understand and interpret the Big Four Agenda and left it to expert reporters or were overwhelmed because of the departures of experienced reporters. Externally, the dearth of information from the government meant that non-state actors informed more of the stories than the government did. Journalists were also frustrated by the lack of information.

5.4 Recommendations

While there was interest in covering the Big Four Agenda, it was evident that the government did not provide sufficient information to enable the media to give it prime space in the newspapers and to make that coverage comprehensive. The government should be reminded of the place of the media in disseminating information about it as well as the media's capabilities to get the public to know and support its development objectives. To this end, the researcher recommends the development of communication strategies that enable the media to access sufficient information on the development policies such as the Big Four Agenda. This would enable the media to have a consistent source of information on important policies and to develop the relationships that can enable the sharing of information in an environment devoid of the fear that the media will distort or misunderstand it. It would also help avoid the repetitiveness that created the impression by journalists that government officials were merely citing the Big Four Agenda and were neither serious nor strategic about it. As argued by Kakonage (2013), the policymakers need to adjust their messages and use the media as a tool for dialogue with the society and as a tool for marketing ideas.

The media formed the impression that the Big Four Agenda required expertise and assigned reporters in the business section to cover related stories. This in turn

resulted in the stories being buried deep in the business sections of the newspapers, denying the government's foremost objective the coverage that would have resulted in more Kenyans knowing about it. The researcher recommends that the media dedicate resources towards training journalists on the coverage of policies generally and development policies specifically. This will give journalists the capacity to report on and scrutinise government policies and to rid newsrooms of the perception that whatever they consider 'technical' does not deserve publication in the prime pages.

It was evident that the two major newspapers do not have specific editorial policies guiding the coverage of development policies. The researcher recommends that media houses develop policies and templates to guide the coverage of development policies so that the journalists can approach them in a more systematic manner. This can be done in collaboration with non-governmental organisations which Kakonage (2013) also recommends for there to be a meaningful contribution to the society's knowledge of governments' development goals.

None of the journalists interviewed for the study mentioned using the methods detailed and defined in the Access to Information Act as a means of collecting information on the Big Four Agenda. The researcher recommends that media houses train journalists and encourage the use of the Access to Information Act whenever government agencies resist to share information that should be available to the public.

5.5 Areas for further research

There is plenty of room for future research on the media's treatment of development policies developed by the government in general and specifically, the Big Four Agenda, since it was still under implementation by the time this thesis was concluded. It should be possible for future research to concentrate on the media

treatment of the agenda as a whole or the objectives specifically. Future research can also centre on the media's treatment of the policies brought about by the Jubilee administration over the past 10 years.

There are also opportunities to conduct more in-depth research, extending that done by organisations such as Infotrak, on how audiences receive and consume information on the policies that a government develops and implements. This research can narrow down on the Big Four Agenda, and can extend to the influence of the various media – broadcast, print and social media – to establish the most useful for disseminating information.

It is possible for future research on the role and effectiveness of My.Gov in disseminating information on the government's policies and objectives.

This study did not include an evaluation of the People Daily, a newspaper given to the public free of charge and published by MediaMax Network Limited, which has been associated with the family of President Uhuru Kenyatta. It is possible to conduct research to evaluate the People Daily's coverage of President Kenyatta's policies and development frameworks.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Document Review Guide

Criteria	Details	Codes
Source of the story	Indicates which newspaper the article was published in.	Daily Nation-DN- 1 The Standard- ST- 1
Dates	Date of publication	Date Format DD.MM. Code 1-13 starting with December 2017 as 1 and December 2018 as 13
Number	Number of road safety stories in the newspaper- ordinary Number	1,2,3,4,5 etc.
Day of the week	Indicate the day of the week when the story was published	Monday=1 Tuesday=2 Wednesday=3 Thursday=4 Friday=5 Saturday=6 Sunday=7
Keyword	Indicate the keyword which was used in the analysis	Big Four Agenda – B4 – 1 Affordable Housing – H – 2 Food security – F – 3 Universal Health Coverage – H – 4 Manufacturing – M – 5
Genre	Indicate the type of story	News article – A1 Opinion/Column/Editorial – A2 Feature – A3 Advertorial – A4

Placement	Indicates the level of importance accorded to the story in a newspaper. Main headline/splash Back Page Puffed on Page 1/teaser Prime pages (1-6)	F1 F2 F3 F4
Position on page	Page lead – biggest story on the page in size Sidebar – second biggest story on the page in size Filler/brief – smallest story on the page in size	F5 F6 F7
Size	Area (in cm ²) or word count	
Photo	Coloured Black and White	P1 P2
Sources cited	Indicate the dominant source	Government official – S1 Non-state – S2
Issues	Indicate the dominant issue in the story	Funding – Q1 Challenges – Q2 Legislative changes – Q3 Policy changes – Q4 Benefits – Q5 Targets – Q6 Criticism – Q7 Others – Q8

Appendix B Interview Guides

Interview Guide for reporters/writers

PART A -Background

1. What media house do you work for?
2. What is your role/ position?
3. What beat do you cover?

Part B – Coverage of Big Four Agenda

1. What was your main source of information on the Big Four Agenda?
2. How did you find information on the Big Four Agenda?
3. Did you get feedback on your coverage of the Big Four Agenda? If yes, what was the feedback?
4. Did you encounter challenges while covering the Big Four Agenda? If yes, what challenges were they and how did you overcome them?

Interview Guide for editors

PART A -Background

1. What media house do you work for?
2. What is your role/ position?

PART B – Coverage of government policy and the Big Four Agenda

1. What informed your coverage of the Big Four Agenda in its first year?
2. What determined the amount of space you allocated to the Big Four Agenda?
3. How did you settle on the placement of stories on the Big Four Agenda?
4. Did you face any challenges covering the Big Four Agenda? If yes, how did you overcome them?
5. Did you have an editorial policy on the Big Four Agenda?
6. Does your newsroom have reporters who are competent to interpret the economic, financial and policy analysis implications that come with the Big Four Agenda?

Appendix C Analysis of Responses to Interview Questions

QUESTION – EDITORS	RESPONSE
Part A – Media House Position	
What informed your coverage of the Big Four Agenda in its first year?	
What determined the amount of space you allocated to the Big Four Agenda?	
How did you settle on the placement of stories on the Big Four Agenda?	
Did you face any challenges covering the Big Four Agenda? If yes, how did you overcome them?	
Did you have an editorial policy on the Big Four Agenda?	
Does your newsroom have reporters who are competent to interpret the economic, financial and policy analysis implications that come with the Big Four Agenda?	

Appendix D AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

REF: AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/011

Date: November 30, 2019.

Dear John Ngirachu (Student No. 535179)

**RE: NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF GOVERNMENT POLICY: THE CASE OF THE
BIG FOUR AGENDA**

This is to inform you that Aga Khan University – Graduate School of Media and Communications Ethics Review Committee has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your approval period is November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020 and your application's approval number is AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/011.

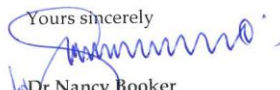
This approval is subject to compliance with the following, under the supervision of your two supervisors:

1. Only the approved documents including the informed consent form and the data collection instruments will be used.
2. Any changes, made on the approved documents that may increase the risks or affect the welfare or safety of the participants or compromise the integrity of the study must be reported to GSMC within the shortest time possible. The amended documents will be taken through a fresh review and the due process of approval.
3. In the event that the research cannot be completed within the one year approved period, the researcher will request for renewal of approval 30 days prior to the end of the approved period.
4. The researcher will be required to submit a comprehensive progress report when applying for renewal of approval.
5. Submission of an executive summary report to the GSMC's Ethics Review Committee within 90 days of completion of the study.
6. Produce all the data collected using the approved tools as and when required by the Ethics Review Committee within the 90 days of completion of your study.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be required to obtain a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). You can access the application portal from the website on <https://www.nacosti.go.ke/>.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely



Dr Nancy Booker
Director Academic Affairs
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P. O. Box 30623 – 00100
Nairobi

December 3, 2019

Dear Sir/Madam.

JOHN KURU NGIRACHU (STUDENT NO. 535179)

John Kuru Ngirachu is a registered student at the Aga Khan University, Graduate School of Media and Communications. He is enrolled in the Master of Arts in Digital Journalism Programme and has completed his course work. He is now working on his Master's thesis. Mr Ngirachu's topic is "Newspaper Coverage of Government Policy: The Case of the Big Four Agenda."

The purpose of my writing is to request you to assist Mr Ngirachu complete this important academic exercise. Any information collected will be used solely for academic purposes. Upon completion of the research, Mr Ngirachu's thesis will be available at our library. He will also submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of his completed work to your department.

We appreciate your support to our student towards his successful completion of his thesis research.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Booker
Director – Academic Affairs

Appendix F NACOSTI Research Licence


REPUBLIC OF KENYA



NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **152199** Date of Issue: **18/December/2019**

RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Mr., John Ngirachu of Aga Khan University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: Newspaper Coverage of Government Policy: The Case of the Big Four Agenda for the period ending : 18/December/2020.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/19/3292**

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Director General
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