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ARTICLE

Agenda setting via gate-keeping theory in the press coverage of presidential candidates in Kenya

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Full Length Research Paper

Agenda setting via gate-keeping theory in the press coverage of presidential candidates in Kenya

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The paper uses gate-keeping theory to explain how the press sets agendas. It analyzes how the press covered the presidential candidates in the Kenya's 2013 General Election. Three newspapers are analyzed: the Nation, the Standard and the Star Newspaper. All have a country wide presence and are considered mainstream newspapers. The major aim is to cement understanding about how the press performs its duties of disseminating information. It proceeds to argue that, through gate keeping, informational 'zoning' occurs. This zoning determines the footprint implanted in the 'cognitive maps' of readers. Consequently, gate-keeping theory is projected as a powerful tool at the disposal of media practitioners. The media terrain is explored through content analysis of the coverage of the presidential candidates by three newspapers. The paper identifies major lessons which act as lenses to the future operation of press and casts an important light upon which the role of media in a democracy is to be understood.

Key words: Gate-keeping, agenda setting, theory, democracy

INTRODUCTION

Frère (2011) argues that in the history of any state, elections are key moments. They offer an opportunity to observe not only how leaders behave but also how the public and private media position themselves. Elections are seen as pillars of democracy, enabling voters to elect representative to exercise a public mandate on their behalf. The media's role in this process is crucial. A voting citizen need to be properly informed, in order to be able to decide who will best represent his/her interests and views. Thus, mass media coverage of candidates and the issues they represent in a given general election is an important parameter for measuring how effective a mass media institution fulfills its obligation of informing

and educating the public. It is also through media's coverage of election issues that voters can distinguish between candidates and parties. The media also gives voice to the population. For instance, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) argue that, people craves news out of basic instinct, the awareness instinct. They need to know what is going on over the next hill, to be aware of events beyond their direct experience. Exchanging this information becomes the basis for creating community, making human connections.

What needs to be emphasized is that, how the media plays its role in any social setting - political or otherwise has consequences. For instance, mass media can

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cement support for a social phenomenon such as: political ideologies – capitalism and socialism, social revolution and even social unrest. This paper focuses on both gate-keeping and agenda setting theories of mass media for various reasons; first, gatekeeping theory has (in author's opinion) a direct bearing on how mass media sets agenda. To use Lewin's metaphor, if only two channels (food growing and food sold on the supermarkets) were the only available channels upon which foodstuff flow to the to the kitchen table, then those deciding what to grow and what to sell in supermarket fundamentally influences what reaches the kitchen table and what people eat. From this metaphor, it is easy to see how mass media gatekeepers use their power of items selection as an instrument of control and influence. Jones and Wolfe (2010) in their analysis about how mass media influences policy making, project four theoretical approaches to explain the process:

1. Influence theory: the media tell the politician (policy makers) what to think.
2. Agenda setting theory: the media tell the politician what to think about.
3. Indexing theory: the politician tells the media what to write about.
4. Detection theory: the politician and the media struggle to identify and prioritize multiple complex streams of information.

The influence and Agenda setting theory closely, reflects the paper's position that, content of media is a fundamental and powerful variable in any process intended to cast light on Agenda setting discourses. Cohen (1963) argued that, while the media do not tell voters what to think, the public are told what issues to think about. As a consequence, mass media set parameter of debates on policy issues. But perhaps, the greatest lesson learnt from agenda setting studies: McCombs and Shaw (1972), Becker (1977), Lyenger (1991) and Lipmann (1922) is that, the media educates the public about how much importance it should place on one issue versus another. Second, the two theories are selected as platform upon which the topic is engaged and as Lewin (1951) (father of gatekeeping) would say 'they are selected as conceptual apparatus for studying human behaviour and motives in a methodological way'. The paper posits that, mass media is able to set agendas because it has control of information that passes their gates. Gate keeping is conceptualised as the selection of news, where a small number of news items pass a gate manned by journalists. In making their selections gate keepers construct social reality for the gated. In short, journalistic outputs such as newspaper article or a radio documentary vividly communicates how a given journalist has created a social reality.

Gatekeeping theory is about translating of phenomenon in the world to concepts in the mind. Or what Cartwright

(1951) calls 'the influence of a given life-space by a gate keeper'. The argument is that, since the gatekeeper determines what things are to be included in the representation of any given life-space at any particular time with a series of 'in' and 'out' decisions about what to include and exclude from an individual life space, then gatekeeper influences the individuals behaviour in a discernible way. In short, mass media get into people's 'life-space' through what it reports to them. The papers uses reverse approach. It analyzed the contents that reached the audience via content published. The major aim is to visualize how the print media gate keepers projected the eight presidential candidates. This is close to what Deluliis (2015) opine about media, when he says...'the media gatekeeper determines not only what events the public knows about, but also how the public thinks about events based on gate keepers attitude and expectations'. Thus, media contents can reveals about attitudes and expectations of media institutions. The paper only focuses on content analysis of the final articles published in selected newspapers. It doesn't analyze the reasoning about the selection of the item selected. This is what we call reverse approach.

Deluliis (2015) proposes four ways of analyzing gatekeeping theory: First, micro-system; under this a researcher can analysis how the gate keeper operates the gates. This cements understanding about how an individual select news items and how he/she decides about newsworthiness. It is about a reporter's interpretation of the issue(s) at hand. What is generally called the immediate context. Second, meso-system: in this system, the events are analyzed from a wider context. For instance, how the events is a product of competing interests among news outlets. Third, exo-system; this concerns the factors and forces which are beyond the gatekeepers control, for instance, the organisational policies. Policies at this level make some news organizations different from others. And fourth, the macro-system: cultural interpretation of the phenomenon. The macro level concerns how cultural systems influence selection of a news article, for instance, issues of ideology, economics and politics. The paper does not concern itself with any of the four analysis lens, rather, it focuses on the contents that has already gone through the evaluative process and has been published as a news items. It deals with news items that make it through all the gates. And therefore, which has the potential of reaching what Deluliis (2015) calls 'cognitive maps' of news consumer. These maps implant on the readers the kind of agenda to be considered as important to think about.

Democracy and the media

It is true that mass media freedom is an essential prerequisite of democracy. The paper holds the view that,

how the media covers campaigns and elections in a given country provides a vast terrain from which lessons could be learnt about how mass media performs its democratic function. From the onset, it must be stated that, a major element that rob the citizen their right to speak is lack of access to information. Human beings cannot exercise their right to say if they don't know what power-holders are doing or what instruments are available to hold them to account. Seen this way, a crucial determinant of the depth and breadth of democracy is the information about the exercise of power available in any society. Since the mass media are the prime source of information, they wield considerable power over the dissemination of information citizen needs to exercise sovereignty. The implication of this observation is that, if the material published by the mass media fails to reflect the full range of social experience, then, they undermines the growth of deeper and broader democracy. Media should not only tell part of the story, or tells the story only of a part of society, for to do so is to fail in its professional duties and obligations. The point being made is that, media accountability rests on how it adheres to giving the society holistic reports on phenomenon which they cover. The paper emphasizes that, media objectivity and unbiased reporting are hallmarks of mainstream media definition.

Print newspapers in Kenya

Print newspapers in Kenya command a relatively small market (Mbeke, 2010). It also reaches a narrower audience than the ones reached by television and radio. Kenya's newspaper readership stands at 23% of the total population, about 9,000,000 readers according to Steadman Group (2008). The dominant publishing houses are the Nation Media and the Standard Group. Together they command about 33%, (Nation 23% and Standard 10%). The star controls about 1% readership. The Nation Group also has a *swahili* language daily newspaper called *Taifaleo*. It commands about 6% of the market share. The People Daily has a 2% share of the market. In Kenya, the Daily Nation, The Standard, the People Daily, the Star and the Taifa Leo are the only newspapers with a national presence. All the rest have less than 1% share of the market. All of them are privately owned and managed. And a part from the People Daily, which has introduced a free daily concept, the rest has a cover price of about half a dollar (American dollar). Print media in Kenya is largely urban based. Despite this seemingly small penetration, Kenya boasts one of the most vibrant mass media environment in the world. Indeed, press freedom is among the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under the Kenyan constitution. And by the time Kenya was going for its fifth multiparty election in 2013, the country had met one of the pre-conditions of democracy. That is, it had sufficient mass

media outlets spread out fairly broadly throughout the country and whose operations were generally independent.

The problem

Kenya is characterized both by a relatively abundant independent media outlets and a comparatively free operational media space (Kenyan Constitution Bill of rights, 2000). Unfortunately, the immense growth of independent media outlets and a free operational space has not been matched by commensurate growth in democratic ethos and civic culture. As a result, almost all multiparty general elections in Kenya have become, what William (2011) calls, a veritable site of contestation: tensions, conflict and struggles. Furthermore, elections in Kenya tend to promote political intolerance. They also (as was demonstrated by the post poll violence of 2008) illustrate the fragility of the state and its embryonic democracy. Specifically, from the 2007/2008 post poll violence, the Kenyan mass media were accused by many commentators among them (Bert (2007), Kibwana (2008), Koigi (2008), Kamau (2011) and Mutua (2008) of having contributed to the poisoning of the political environment. In summary, they were accused of failing to adhere to professional standards; were used as propaganda tools by the politicians and they were accused of inciting audiences to political violence among many other accusations. Indeed, one journalist Joshua Arap Sang was among the six Kenyan taken to the International Criminal Court to face charges of crimes against humanity.

The paper analyzes the coverage of the presidential candidates in the Kenyan 2013 general election by the mainstream newspapers. The main aim is to discern the kind of pictures they painted (through news articles) about the eight presidential candidates. The content analysis is intended to cast an illuminating light on the mechanics used by the gate keeper to reach the 'cognitive map' of the news consumer. This 'cognitive map' is conceptualized as an arena where the gate keeper plays his games of agenda setting. Similarly, from the audiences' cognitive maps, the decision about what content is to be considered as more important is facilitated. In short, we are moving in what we are calling reverse logic and asking ourselves, how did the newspapers' gate keepers 'look' at the eight presidential candidates? How is this 'look' presented in the stories they wrote about the candidates.

The study is in line with Walter Lippmann (1922) arguments that 'the role of the media is to provide us with views of "the world outside" from which we can form "pictures in our heads"' (Shearon and Defluer 1988, 328). A process we alluded to earlier on, as the route a gate keeper uses to get into people's life spaces. Finally, the paper posits that, the malaises of deformed democracies

cannot be cured without re-functioning how the media role is played in such democracies. Consequently, Media appraisal is an important activity in the study of democracy. Thus, this study is an additional voice to the debates of mass media discourse in general, and in particular, an assessment about how gatekeeping theory could be used to transform society. In other words, it is about understanding how representations which permeate the media act as powerful mechanism of socialization.

METHODOLOGY

The paper uses content analysis method. In particular, an analysis of the coverage of the eight presidential candidates in Kenya's 2013 General Election is done. The candidates are: Mr. Raila Odinga, Uhuru Kenyatta, Musalia Mudavadi, Martha Karua, Peter Kenneth, Muhammed Dida, Ole Kiyapi, and Paul Muite. Purposely, three leading daily newspapers are selected. They are; the Daily Nation, the Standard and the Star newspaper. The newspapers were analyzed to see how they covered the presidential candidates during the official campaign period which run from 14/1/2013 to 2/3/1013 (60 days) as declared and gazetted in the *Kenya Gazette (Gazette no 55)* (the official tool used by Government of Kenya to publish Laws and By-laws, and other communications which have legal force in Kenya) by the Independent Electro Commission of Kenya. From the sixty days of official campaign, a sample of twenty five days was selected randomly. The reasoning for this selection was informed by the realization that, the coverage of the presidential candidates was largely a homogeneous activity and thus, a census of the entire 60 days would not necessarily add value on the results. The dates for the 60 days were listed and serialized from one to sixty. And using random numbers 25 days were selected (25 days reflected 25 specific day dates in the 60 day campaign period). The days distribution per month was: 9, 14, and 2 days for January, February and March, respectively. The story was analyzed in terms of: dateline, origin of story, presidential candidate in the story, story type, placement, space (cm²), theme, and direction. For instance, the following critical variables were conceptualized as follows:

1. Story types: Straight News; Editorial; Interpretative/commentaries /opion/and analysis; Illustrations/cartoons; Letters to the editor; International news; Business news; Sports; Advertisements and Pullout.
2. Placement: Headline /lead story pg1and 2; Subhead line story; page 3 and back page; editorial and opinion; regular column/analysis/commentaries/opinion page; Middle pages.
3. Direction of story: Positive; Negative; neutral.
4. Themes Thematic reference.

a. Presidential Candidates

- i. Suitability/acceptability/intergency
- ii. Non suitability/acceptability
- iii. leadership skills
- iv. Achievement
- v. Ideology
- vi. Political parties
- vii. Support by international community
- viii. Not supported by international community
- ix. Management of electro process

b. Corruption

- i. Ability to fight corruption vice

- ii. Inability to fight corruption
- iii. Candidate is corrupt

- c. Implementation of constitution/devolution
 - i. Champion of constitution reform
 - ii. Can deliver constitution implementation

- d. Community reconciliation/cohesion
 - i. Candidature for peace/order
 - ii. Candidate cannot promote/peace/order

e. Presidential debate

- i. Presidential debate will enhance democracy
- ii. Presidential debate will influence voting
- iii. Raila performed better than Uhuru
- iv. Uhuru performed better than Raila Odinga
- v. Presidential debate was a tie

THE FINDING

Coverage of presidential candidates per newspaper and space

As Table 1 illustrates, the mainstream print media were variegated in the terms of space allocation to presidential candidates. From the table, it is clear that candidates Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga were treated very differently as compared to other candidates. Combined, the Nation Newspaper allocated them 68% space, with 43% (36247cm²) and 25% (20862cm²) of space going to Uhuru and Raila, respectively. Other candidates were given very little space by this newspaper. Indeed, a quick arithmetic reveals that the Nation Newspaper gave Uhuru Kenyatta twice as much space as it gave to candidates Musalia, Dida, Karua, Kenneth, Kiapi and Muite combined. The standard also gave Uhuru more space than Raila. He had 41802cm² (30%) against Raila 36673cm²(26%). It should also be noted that, these two candidates took more than half (56%) of the spaces available in Standard Newspaper during the official campaign time. In the line with the other two newspapers, about 71% of all the spaces available in Star Newspaper went to the two leading presidential candidates, with a 33 and 38% going to Uhuru and Raila, respectively. The table indicates that, during the campaign period, The Star newspaper lead in space allocation (79679cm²) followed by the Standard newspaper (78475 cm²) and Nation Newspaper (67009cm²).

Clearly, the concept of 'space allocated' is an important mechanic that is used by the gate keepers to reach the 'cognitive mind' of the audience. Generally speaking, any keen reader of these newspapers would be able to observe that, two candidates in a field of eight were treated in a special way in terms of space allocation. They took more than half of the spaces available in the three newspapers. It can be inferred that, because the newspaper readers are socialized to associate (especially for news) space given as an indicator of how important an issue is, then, the important candidates in the 2013 Kenyan General Election were the

Table 1. Presidential candidate and space allocated for each newspaper in cm².

Presidential candidate		Newspaper name		
		Nation	Standard	Star
Raila	Number of stories	56	66	114
	Total space allocated	20862.00	36673.00	42945.00
	Row Sum %	20.8%	36.5%	42.7%
	Column Sum %	24.6%	25.9%	38.4%
Uhuru	Count	67	70	128
	Sum	36247.00	41802.00	36734.00
	Row Sum %	31.6%	36.4%	32.0%
	Column Sum %	42.7%	29.5%	32.8%
Mudavadi	Count	30	39	30
	Sum	6532.00	14975.00	9680.00
	Row Sum %	20.9%	48.0%	31.0%
	Column Sum %	7.7%	10.6%	8.7%
Dida	Count	5	7	13
	Sum	1099.00	1579.00	3165.00
	Row Sum %	18.8%	27.0%	54.2%
	Column Sum %	1.3%	1.1%	2.8%
Karua	Count	14	21	16
	Sum	3351.00	8215.00	3728.00
	Row Sum %	21.9%	53.7%	24.4%
	Column Sum %	3.9%	5.8%	3.3%
Kenneth	Count	16	37	23
	Sum	4369.00	12668.00	6471.00
	Row Sum %	18.6%	53.9%	27.5%
	Column Sum %	5.1%	8.9%	5.8%
Kiapi	Count	8	14	8
	Sum	2310.00	5909.00	2834.00
	Row Sum %	20.9%	53.5%	25.6%
	Column Sum %	2.7%	4.2%	2.5%
Muite	Count	4	5	4
	Sum	702.00	1211.00	3001.00
	Row Sum %	14.3%	24.6%	61.1%
	Column Sum %	0.8%	0.9%	2.7%
All	Count	17	19	5
	Sum	9475.00	18598.00	3282.00
	Row Sum %	30.2%	59.3%	10.5%
	Column Sum %	11.2%	13.1%	2.9%

Source: Author's data

candidature of Uhuru and Raila. Gatekeepers used the variable space to communicate an implicit conclusion concerning how presidential candidate are evaluated.

The same Table (1) and the concept of space allocation can assist us discuss the concept of what a mainstream media is. It ought to be recalled that, a major element that

rob the citizen their right to speak is lack of access to information. That is why, we indicated that, a crucial determinant of the depth and breadth of democracy is the availability of information about the exercise of power and about those exercising the power and also about important matters in the society, in our case, the treatment of the presidential candidates by these three newspapers. What we are saying is that, the three newspapers ought to reflect some universality in informing their readers who the presidential candidates were in order for them to make an informed choice.

From the table apart from Uhuru and Raila, the rest individually received less than 10% from each of the three newspapers under the analysis. But a closer analysis reveals that, although the Nation Newspaper projects a skew in favour of the leading presidential candidates, it allocated 11% space for all candidates. A percent other candidates could not generate when left alone. In other words, Mudavadi and other less known candidates' presence in the Nation Newspaper would have been very severely limited if the Nation Newspaper didn't give them what we are calling 'coverage to all'. Without this 'coverage to all' only the two leading presidential candidates would have gained meaningful visibility in the Nation Newspaper. The Standard Newspaper just like the Nation Newspaper also gave less known candidates a 13% space in the 'coverage to all' category. This figure is much more than the candidates are able to get on their own capacity in the Standard Newspaper. The star did not play this role when one analyses what we call 'coverage to all'.

Types of stories and presidential candidates

The number of stories were counted and categorized into story types. It emerges that, like in the space allocation the two leading candidates also received the greatest number of stories. Indeed, for every ten stories written, six (60%) of them were either about Uhuru or Raila. Table 2, also indicates that, Uhuru slightly beat Raila for overall coverage, more important for candidate Uhuru is that, he generated more stories in editorial, interpretive and letters to the editors and even what we call 'others' such as photographs. What can be inferred is that the candidature of Uhuru Kenyatta generated more issues/debates than the other candidates. Perhaps, this could be attributed to the fact that, he was facing war crimes charges at the International Criminal Court. It can be deduced that, Uhuru's case at the ICC may have given him some leverage in terms of media coverage (Table 2). From an overall perspective and analysis, it can be inferred that, even though there were eight candidates in the race, two of them (Uhuru and Raila) lead in the frequency of coverage as reflected by number of stories. They were the key candidates in terms of coverage by the print media. Like the space allocation, the frequency of stories given to a particular issue is a

mechanic used by gate keepers to set agenda.

Direction of stories

The stories were analyzed to identify their direction, that is, to identify whether they were positive, negative or neutral in the way they projected a given presidential candidate. This process was intended to tease out the kind of agenda the gatekeepers were setting about the candidates and also see how they (gatekeepers) used the gatekeeping theory. For instance, a story was considered positive if it possessed parameters that had the potential of raising the esteem upon which a candidate was to be evaluated. The terms considered positive were: suitable to lead, acceptable leader, good leadership styles, good governance abilities, capable of promoting peace, had good manifesto and acceptable by international community's among other things. In a similar way, any story that undermined the positive parameters was considered negative. These were stories which were contrast of the positive stories. Neutral stories had parameters which neither promoted nor undermined the candidates. Neutral stories did not have explicit conclusion about how a candidate was to be evaluated.

Positive stories

Data from Table 3 indicates that, almost half (44%) of Uhuru's articles in Nation Newspaper were positive stories, almost twice of what his main rival (Raila) got (24%). He also received twice as much positive story than the rest of the candidates combined in this newspaper. Apart from Uhuru, other candidates posited better results for positive stories in the Standard. Raila Odinga received twice as much positive stories than Uhuru received from this newspaper. Similarly, Raila received almost twice as many positive stories than all the other candidates combined (50% against 30%). The data present an interesting reading. For once, in both the Nation and Standard Newspapers it is clear that, the pattern of two dominant candidates as was reflected by data from space allocation and the numbers of stories per each presidential candidate is vacated. The Nation newspaper has one dominant candidate (Uhuru) who gets over 50% of positive stories. Uhuru was treated preferentially by this newspaper. In a similar fashion, the standard newspaper treated Raila Odinga preferentially. Raila received half (50%) of all positive stories from this newspaper. The star newspaper also gave Raila preferential treatment. These data support the perspective that, these media institutions had taken a position about which presidential candidate was to be promoted.

Negative stories

Half of all negative stories about presidential candidates

Table 2. Types of stories and candidates.

Story Type		Presidential candidate								
		Raila	Uhuru	Mudavadi	Dida	Karua	Kenneth	Kiapi	Muite	All
Straight news	Count	163	183	81	17	40	54	24	11	14
	Column N %	69.1%	69.1%	81.8%	68.0%	78.4%	71.1%	80.0%	84.6%	34.1%
Editorial	Count	0	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
	Column N %	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	1.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Interpretative/Commentaries/Opinion/Analysis	Count	8	15	2	6	1	1	0	0	3
	Column N %	3.4%	5.7%	2.0%	24.0%	2.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	7.3%
Illustrations/Cartoons	Count	15	12	4	1	1	0	0	0	6
	Column N %	6.4%	4.5%	4.0%	4.0%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.6%
Letter to the editor	Count	8	11	3	0	2	1	0	0	1
	Column N %	3.4%	4.2%	3.0%	0.0%	3.9%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%
International News	Count	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Column N %	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Business News	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Column N %	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Sports	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Column N %	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Advertisements	Count	20	15	2	0	1	14	1	1	14
	Column N %	8.5%	5.7%	2.0%	0.0%	2.0%	18.4%	3.3%	7.7%	34.1%
Pullout	Count	20	21	6	1	5	4	3	1	3
	Column N %	8.5%	7.9%	6.1%	4.0%	9.8%	5.3%	10.0%	7.7%	7.3%
Other news	Count	1	4	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
	Column N %	0.4%	1.5%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 2. Continue

Total	Count	236	265	99	25	51	76	30	13	41
	Column N %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Author's data

from the three newspapers went to Uhuru Kenyatta (53%, 47%, 50% in Nation, Standard and Star). Similarly, Raila Odinga received a lot of negative stories from the three newspapers, 34, 20 and 31% in Nation, Standard and Star newspapers, respectively. Apart from candidates Kiapi and Muite, all the other candidates received negative stories from The Star newspaper. The table indicates that Star Newspapers was gravitating toward negative stories. All in all, the table brings out vibration that tabloid journalism may be finding foothold in Kenya (Figure 1 and Table 3).

Author's data

The data in this section clearly demonstrates how gate-keepers in media houses play their game of agenda setting by manipulating their outputs (news Stories). It is clear, from this data that, Uhuru was largely painted in a negative light. He was, one may say, not a candidate of media gate keepers. Indeed, because Uhuru Kenyatta finally won the presidential race in 2013, then other factors may explain his winning the election other than mass media support. Our data support the view that, mass media gates for the three newspapers and especially the standard and The Star were hostile towards his candidature. From this, gatekeeping process is a powerful tool for producing evaluative parameters upon which subjects of their content could be judged.

Presidential candidates and story placement

Candidates Uhuru and Raila dominated all the important pages' position (Pages 1, 2, 3, Opinion, Editorial and Back page) in the print media. Indeed, Candidate Uhuru took half of the stories written in editorial and opinion pages. Together with Candidate Raila, they took eight in every ten (81%) of the stories written in editorial and opinion pages during the official campaign period in 2013 General election. And with similar pattern, almost eight (75%) in every ten headlines stories written by the print media went to Uhuru and Raila. The same pattern is repeated in regular column, analysis and commentary pages. These two candidates were simply on their own league different from the other six candidates in terms of media visibility. Table 4 shows how the placement was done for individual candidates by the three newspapers.

Presidential candidates and placement of stories per newspaper

It emerged that, there was no significant difference in the way the leading presidential candidates Raila and Uhuru were treated by the three newspapers in terms of placement of stories. Suffice to say that, much of the newspaper positions went to them. However, candidate Uhuru generated more interpretative and analysis stories than any other candidature as the following

discussion indicates:

Nation Newspaper

Headline stories: 65% of headline stories in this newspaper went to Uhuru and Raila (35 and 29% respectively). The rest of the candidates scored less than 10%. Coverage to all candidates had 11%. In subhead line stories: the pattern was almost similar; about 60% of these stories went to Uhuru and Raila (37% and 21% respectively). Mudavadi had 21%, and Karua and Kenneth at 5% score each. Editorial: all editorial contents in this newspaper went to only three candidates; Uhuru, Raila and Mudavadi (60, 30 and 10%, respectively). Middle pages: 52% of these pages went to Uhuru and Raila (26% each) and the rest shared among the rest of the candidates.

Standard newspaper

Headline stories: 73% of headline stories in this newspaper went to Uhuru and Raila (41 and 32% respectively). Mudavadi scored 17% and the remaining percent was shared among the rest. In Subhead line stories: about 35% of these stories went to Uhuru and Raila (21 and 14% respectively). Mudavadi scored 15%, and the rest shared the remaining percent. Editorial: 70% of editorial content in this newspaper went to Uhuru and Raila (40 and 30% respectively). The other 30

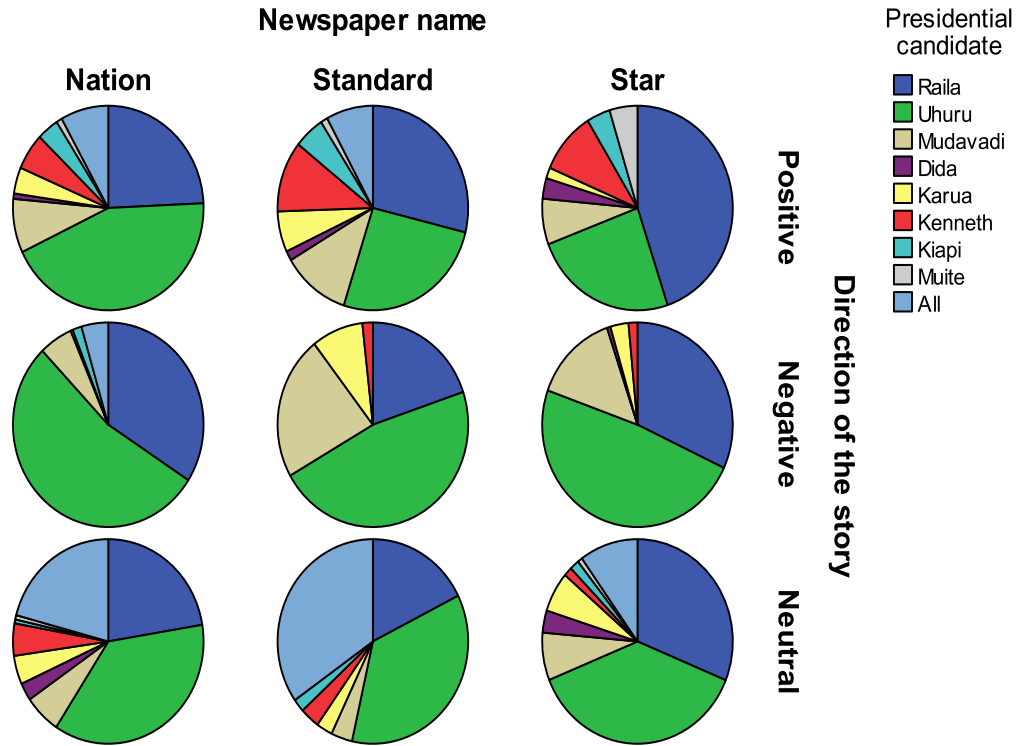


Figure 1. Presidential candidates and story direction.

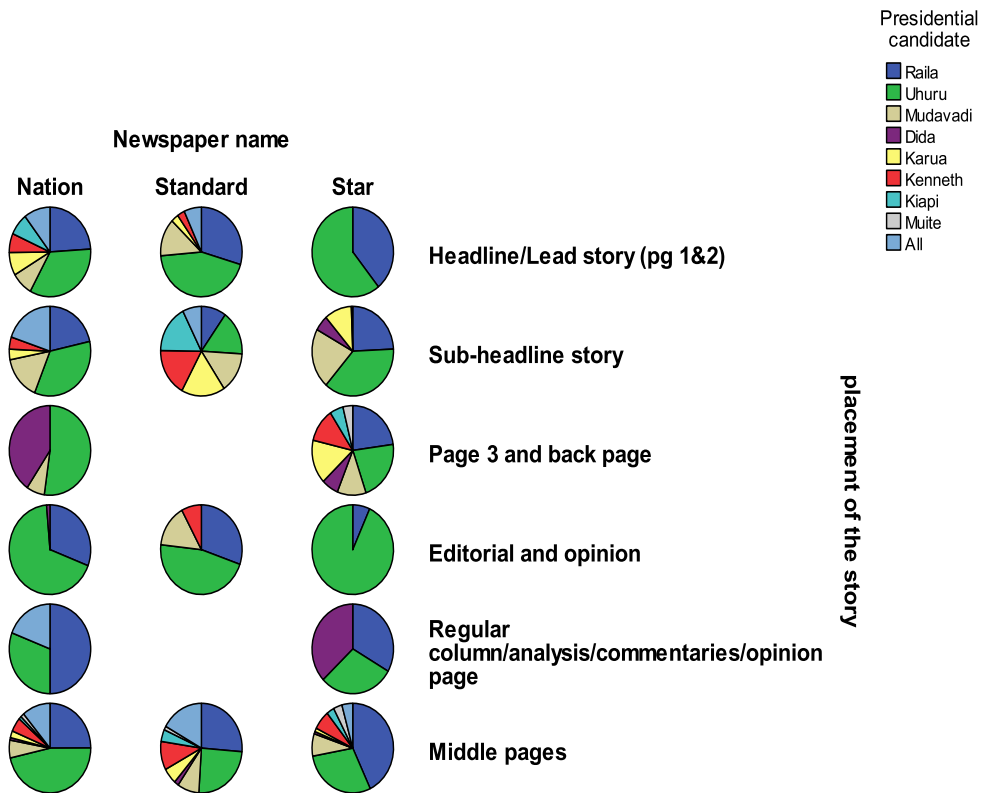


Figure 2. Presidential candidate and placement of stories.

Table 3. Presidential candidate and direction of story.

Presidential candidate		Direction of the story								
		Positive			Negative			Neutral		
		Newspaper name			Newspaper name			Newspaper name		
		Nation	Standard	Star	Nation	Standard	Star	Nation	Standard	Star
Raila	Count	32	57	70	7	3	22	17	6	22
	Sum	13604.00	29587.00	25899.00	2297.00	1791.00	6724.00	4961.00	5295.00	10322.00
	Row Sum %	19.7%	42.8%	37.5%	21.2%	16.6%	62.2%	24.1%	25.7%	50.2%
	Column Sum %	24.3%	28.9%	44.9%	34.1%	19.8%	31.9%	22.4%	17.6%	31.2%
Uhuru	Count	33	47	61	9	10	40	25	13	27
	Sum	24477.00	26775.00	14049.00	3616.00	4239.00	10213.00	8154.00	10788.00	12472.00
	Row Sum %	37.5%	41.0%	21.5%	20.0%	23.5%	56.5%	26.0%	34.3%	39.7%
	Column Sum %	43.7%	26.1%	24.4%	53.7%	46.9%	48.5%	36.8%	35.9%	37.7%
Mudavadi	Count	18	30	13	4	6	6	8	3	11
	Sum	4773.00	11835.00	4170.00	382.00	2056.00	3022.00	1377.00	1084.00	2488.00
	Row Sum %	23.0%	57.0%	20.1%	7.0%	37.7%	55.3%	27.8%	21.9%	50.3%
	Column Sum %	8.5%	11.5%	7.2%	5.7%	22.8%	14.4%	6.2%	3.6%	7.5%
Dida	Count	4	7	6	0	0	3	1	0	4
	Sum	479.00	1579.00	1878.00	.	.	126.00	620.00	.	1161.00
	Row Sum %	12.2%	40.1%	47.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	34.8%	0.0%	65.2%
	Column Sum %	0.9%	1.5%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	2.8%	0.0%	3.5%
Karua	Count	7	15	4	1	4	4	6	2	8
	Sum	2323.00	6599.00	981.00	25.00	791.00	647.00	1003.00	825.00	2100.00
	Row Sum %	23.5%	66.6%	9.9%	1.7%	54.1%	44.2%	25.5%	21.0%	53.5%
	Column Sum %	4.1%	6.4%	1.7%	0.4%	8.8%	3.1%	4.5%	2.7%	6.3%
Kenneth	Count	9	33	17	0	1	2	7	3	4
	Sum	3238.00	11511.00	5678.00	.	160.00	319.00	1131.00	997.00	474.00
	Row Sum %	15.9%	56.4%	27.8%	0.0%	33.4%	66.6%	43.5%	38.3%	18.2%
	Column Sum %	5.8%	11.2%	9.8%	0.0%	1.8%	1.5%	5.1%	3.3%	1.4%
Kiapi	Count	5	13	5	1	0	0	2	1	3
	Sum	2070.00	5288.00	2304.00	104.00	.	.	136.00	621.00	530.00
	Row Sum %	21.4%	54.7%	23.8%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	10.6%	48.3%	41.2%
	Column Sum %	3.7%	5.2%	4.0%	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	2.1%	1.6%
Muite	Count	2	5	3	0	0	0	2	0	1
	Sum	551.00	1211.00	2735.00	.	.	.	151.00	.	266.00
	Row Sum %	12.3%	26.9%	60.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	36.2%	0.0%	63.8%
	Column Sum %	1.0%	1.2%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	0.8%

Table 3. Contd.

All	Count	8	7	0	1	0	0	8	12	5
	Sum	4550.00	8167.00	.	306.00	.	.	4619.00	10431.00	3282.00
	Row Sum %	35.8%	64.2%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.2%	56.9%	17.9%
	Column Sum %	8.1%	8.0%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	20.9%	34.7%	9.9%

Table 4. Presidential candidate and story placement.

	Count	Raila	Uhuru	Mudavadi	Dida	Karua	Kenneth	Kiapi	Muite	All	Total
Headline/Lead story (page 1and2)	Count	26	33	8	0	3	2	2	0.0%	4	78
	% within placement of the story	33.3%	42.3%	10.3%	0.0%	3.8%	2.6%	2.6%	0.0%	5.1%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	11.0%	12.5%	8.2%	0.0%	5.9%	2.6%	6.7%	0.0%	9.8%	9.3%
	% of Total	3.1%	4.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0	0.5%	9.3%
Sub-headline story	Count	13	21	10	1	5	4	2	0.0%	3	59
	% within placement of the story	22.0%	35.6%	16.9%	1.7%	8.5%	6.8%	3.4%	0.0%	5.1%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	5.5%	7.9%	10.2%	4.0%	9.8%	5.3%	6.7%	0.0%	7.3%	7.1%
	% of Total	1.6%	2.5%	1.2%	0.1%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%	2	0.4%	7.1%
Page 3 and back page	Count	10	19	7	3	6	4	3	3.7%	0	54
	% within placement of the story	18.5%	35.2%	13.0%	5.6%	11.1%	7.4%	5.6%	15.4%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	4.2%	7.2%	7.1%	12.0%	11.8%	5.3%	10.0%	0.2%	0.0%	6.5%
	% of Total	1.2%	2.3%	0.8%	0.4%	0.7%	0.5%	0.4%	0	0.0%	6.5%
Editorial and opinion	Count	7	11	2	1	0	1	0	0.0%	0	22
	% within placement of the story	31.8%	50.0%	9.1%	4.5%	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	3.0%	4.2%	2.0%	4.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.6%
	% of Total	0.8%	1.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0	0.0%	2.6%
Regular column/analysis/commentaries/opinion page	Count	6	5	0	3	0	0	0	0.0%	1	15
	% within placement of the story	40.0%	33.3%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	2.5%	1.9%	0.0%	12.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.4%	1.8%
	% of Total	0.7%	0.6%	0.0%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11	0.1%	1.8%
Middle pages	Count	174	176	71	17	37	65	23	1.8%	33	607
	% within placement of the story	28.7%	29.0%	11.7%	2.8%	6.1%	10.7%	3.8%	84.6%	5.4%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	73.7%	66.4%	72.4%	68.0%	72.5%	85.5%	76.7%	1.3%	80.5%	72.7%
	% of Total	20.8%	21.1%	8.5%	2.0%	4.4%	7.8%	2.8%	41	4.0%	72.7%

Table 4. Contd.

	Count	236	265	98	25	51	76	30	13	4.9%	835
Total	% within placement of the story	28.3%	31.7%	11.7%	3.0%	6.1%	9.1%	3.6%	1.6%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within Presidential candidate	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	4.9%	100.0%
	% of Total	28.3%	31.7%	11.7%	3.0%	6.1%	9.1%	3.6%	1.6%		100.0%

Source : Author's data.

% went to Mudavadi and Kenneth (20 and 10% respectively). Middle pages: about 50% of these pages went to Uhuru and Raila (23% each). Mudavadi scored 13% and the remaining percent shared among the rest.

The star newspaper

Headline stories: all the headline stories went to Uhuru and Raila (56 and 44% respectively). In subheadline stories: About 70% went to Uhuru and Raila (42 and 27% respectively). Mudavadi scored 15%, Dida 4%, Karua 7% and Kenneth 4%. Editorial: all editorial content went to Uhuru and Raila (50% each). Middle pages: 73% of these pages went to Uhuru and Raila (36% each) and the rest shared among the rest of the candidates (Figure 2).

Placement of stories per newspaper and source authors' data

From Figure 2, one clearly sees that, the dominants candidates were Uhuru and Raila. But perhaps what comes out unmistakably was that, the mass media in Kenya seems to play a significant role in legitimizing inequalities in the way certain subjects are to be evaluated and treated. Implicitly, the data indicates that, the gate keepers in these media institutions practiced a

kind of informational 'zoning', that is to say, certain media spaces belonged to some candidates. Un-equivocally it is to be noted that, informational zoning is a direct consequence of gatekeeping activities. As a result, gate keeping theory is a powerful agenda setting tool at the disposal of media practitioners. Two critical conclusions about mass media operations emerge from our discussions: Firstly, there is vibrancy in the way the Kenyan print media covered the presidential candidates and in essence in the way it disseminated information about who the candidate were and what the candidature of each candidates meant. Consequently, the mass media in Kenya exists as influential social institutions that operate within the normative ideals of the Kenya's environmental dynamics. Thus, to fail to factor mass media in discussions about Kenya's democracy and governance would be to commit a vital mistake. Secondly, the Kenyan mass media are not homogeneous in the way they; gather, process and package their news. But their heterogeneity appears to be both thin and negligible. Thus, the paper opines that, by largely focusing on the leading presidential candidates, the Kenyan print media may have undermined the audiences' right to know. But whatever their short coming, the data demonstrates that, gate-keeping theory of media is a practical theory that which sheds insights about how mass media institutions in general and their gatekeepers in particular, implant their footprints in people's life spaces

through news selection.

Conflict of interest

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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