

**THE COMMERCIAL VERSUS THE PUBLIC INTEREST: THE CASE OF
THE DAILY TIMES NEWSPAPER IN MALAWI**

MASTER OF ARTS (APPLIED ETHICS) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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MA(APPLIED ETHICS) THESIS

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degree of Master of Arts in Applied Ethics

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work, except where otherwise stated. It has not been submitted for examinations and any other award at this or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved mentor Prof. Robert Broadhead for his moral and material support. This work is also dedicated to my mum, Therese Mbosanje whose prayers have led to the completion of this work. May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob continue to bestow upon her many graces. I also dedicate this work to my late father Joseph Nachamba, may his beloved soul continue to rest in eternal peace.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates commercial versus public interest, with focus on the year 2020. The year 2020 was critical to efforts for consolidating democracy in Malawi; the country held fresh presidential elections at the direction of the High Court. It was also in this year that Malawi was faced with Covid-19, a pandemic which, as the study shows, was heavily politicised. This study uses the case of The Daily Times newspaper which is the oldest newspaper in Malawi and has been through both politically and economically volatile environments. Although The Daily Times newspaper has remained afloat through colonial, dictatorial and democratic epochs in the country, there is a dearth in literature on the strategies that the newspaper uses to remain afloat on the media market. As a theoretical framework, the study has adopted Habermas' concept of the public sphere, which is grounded in the ethics of communication. The key finding is that The Daily Times newspaper fails to ethically balance commercial versus public interest. This study establishes that The Daily Times newspaper prioritises commercial over public interest in its operations. Although the newspaper has the potential of contributing to the consolidation of democracy in Malawi, this potential is hampered by a trade-off between commercial and public interest. The study thus highlights the aforementioned potential as well as how this is challenged by commercial interests.

ABBREVIATIONS

BNL	Blantyre Newspapers Limited
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EU	European Union
MANA	Malawi News Agency
MACRA	Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MCM	Media Council of Malawi
MDBNL	Malawi Digital Broadcast Network Limited
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
MMLG	Malawi Media Landscape Guide
MRA	Malawi Revenue Authority
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
PP	People's Party
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UTM	United Transformation Movement

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter introduces the problem which this thesis endeavours to address. This problem consists in the acknowledgement of media as both an industry and an organ of the public sphere. As an industry, the media are expected to operate as a business which generates profits for its sustainability while as an organ of the public sphere, the media are expected to contribute to the formation of public opinion. A challenge which immediately ensues is how to negotiate the commercial which comes from the business impetus and public interest which comes from the imperative placed on the media as organs of the public sphere. This study investigates how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates commercial versus public interest in its daily operations, and emphasises the need for an ethical balance between such commercial and public interests.

1.2 Background

The relationship between commercial and public interest is contentious in news media literature. This is because commercial interest focuses on the mass media as a business which has to strive to make profit in order to survive while public interest applies to the moral obligation which designates the mass media as a fourth estate. Sharra (2020, p.6) captures the public interest idea when he notes, “In a democracy, a free press is expected to serve the interests of the society. It acts as a watchdog, monitoring the conduct of politicians and government officials, among others”. Sharra also suggests how this obligation by the media can be fulfilled. He posits, “The press holds politicians accountable through publication of news articles, opinions and one-on-one interviews on issues of public interest” (p.6). Therefore, public interest can serve as a normative idea for evaluating the performance of the mass media.

In Malawian news media literature, an investigation into how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates commercial versus public interest has not been considered before.

As Sharra (2020, p.8) has noted, “there are very few research papers on journalism practice in Malawi and it is difficult to quantify with certainty the status of professionalism in Malawian media”. He also observes that “The Media Council of Malawi (MCM) which is responsible for promoting professionalism has been on and off over the last decade”(p.8). MCM resurrected with the economic support of Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi chapter in 2019 and the fruits of its work on professionalism in Media is yet to be established (Sharra, 2020, p.8). However, there is ample literature on the subject of the challenges that the mass media face in performing their roles in Malawi.

Kanyang’wa and Mkwaila (2011, p.190) have observed that mass media companies do not generate enough income from the sale of media content but rely on advertisers as sources of revenue. In Malawi, the government is one of the advertisers in the mass media even though its advertising powers have been used as a deterrence against media houses that are considered critical to the government (Kainja, 2022, p.283). Kainja has cited the example of Muluzi’s government which had a “practice of withdrawing advertising from critical media”. The point is that revenue which is important for the survival of the newspapers is not always available. UNESCO (2022, p.21) also posits, “Advertising and sponsorship revenue available to the media is limited because Malawi’s labour market structure is dominated by the informal economy, where workers have inadequate social and income security”. Despite these observations, existing literature does not show any benchmarks which the print media have put in place to insulate themselves against pressure or neglect from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing institutions.

The commercial has also been shown to affect the media in Malawi when it comes to reporting on disasters, for example, in the case of Cyclone Idai. Chapambali (2021, p.22) in discussing the role of the mass media in reporting disasters, especially cyclone Idai, observes that the media in Malawi are faced with the challenge of prioritising disaster related news.

Chapambali argues that financial shortfalls faced by most media houses in Malawi “drives them to prioritize more on news that has commercial value to the media house” (p.22). This challenge also affects journalists who have to balance between social

responsibility and financial benefits. This suggests that there is a thin line between commercial imperatives and public interest hence the need to investigate how this relationship is negotiated.

The commercial side of news media has also been associated with the perception that newspapers are for the elite. This suggestion is supported by UNESCO (2022) which states,

The print media have remained an exclusive privilege of few rich Malawians. Since the majority of Malawians live on less than one US dollar a day, the domestic media market is highly confined to the richest 10%, whose income median is three times that of the poorest 10%. (p.28)

The observation that print media in general and newspapers in particular have been associated with the elite makes the consideration of the negotiation between commercial and public interest more imperative since this might have a bearing on the agenda that is set for the Malawian nation.

It is from this background that the current study is set to investigate how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates commercial versus public interest in its operation. In the next section we will proceed to present a brief biography of The Daily Times newspaper.

1.2.1 A Background to The Daily Times newspaper

The Daily Times newspaper is the oldest newspaper in Malawi (Kakhobwe, 2009, p.4; Manjawira, 2014). It has operated from the time the country was under British rule, to Hastings Kamuzu Banda's one-party rule and then to the multiparty era championed by Presidents Bakili Muluzi, Bingu wa Mutharika, Joyce Banda, Arthur Peter Mutharika and Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera. This section shows how the printed edition of The Daily Times newspaper has evolved over the years as a sphere of communication.

1.2.2 From the Central African Planter to the Central African Times

The Central African Planter is considered as the forerunner of The Daily Times newspaper. It was first published as a commercial newspaper during the colonial era in September 1895

(Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011). Its founders were Robert Spence Hynde and Ross Stark. These two started the Central African Planter as an agro-based newspaper (Mwiyeriwa, 1978, p.44). This means that this newspaper was focused on farming activities. The Central African Planter served colonial planters, specifically settlers and estate owners “who were settling on the country’s rich soil in large numbers” (Mwiyeriwa, 1978, p.44).

In September, 1896/1897, the Central African Planter changed its name to Central African Times (Mwiyeriwa, 1978, p.44; Manda, 2018, p.37) while remaining under the ownership of Hynde and Stark. Despite changing its name, this newspaper continued with the task of disseminating information on Agriculture as was the case under the title Central African Planter. However, its publishing work suffered a brief closure in 1907 (Mwiyeriwa, 1978, p.44). But a year later, its publishing work resumed under the name Nyasaland Times (Mwiyeriwa, 1978, p.44). Mwiyeriwa (1978, p.44) notes, “The Central African Times began again as Nyasaland Times thus fulfilling a need for some vehicle for the expression of public opinion on questions that affect the welfare of the country”.

1.2.3 The Nyasaland Times

In 1908, the Central African Times changed its name to Nyasaland Times. This idea is supported by Barton (1979, p.154) who has noted, “When the country was formerly renamed Nyasaland, the Central African Times became the Nyasaland Times”. Under this name, this newspaper continued to serve the interests of white colonialists (Gunde, 2015, p.20). Additionally, Lwanda (2002, p.5) has noted,

After self-government in 1963, the Nyasaland Times soon found itself in the role of a white owned minority newspaper generally critical of nationalists and specifically moves towards independence.

The newspaper was thus used to oppose nationalist movements in what was known by then as Nyasaland.

As Nyasaland Times, this newspaper was owned by Roy Thomson for a period of ten years (Kakhobwe, 2009). It was later sold to Hastings Kamuzu Banda in 1972 (Barton, 1979, p.155). The section below considers Hastings Kamuzu Banda's rebranding of this newspaper under The Daily Times.

1.2.4 The Daily Times Newspaper

The Daily Times became the new name of the Nyasaland Times as stated above. Mapulanga (2008, p.2) has described The Daily Times as having started circulating as a small tabloid size newspaper in 1974. He also notes, "News carried was largely foreign and contained scattered articles on Malawi. Regular features were film schedules, radio programmes and a crossword puzzle" (p.2). This highlights the point that it had interests in covering foreign affairs. But whose interests did The Daily Times newspaper begin to serve?

The Daily Times also started as a newspaper serving the interests of Europeans and Asian community members in Malawi. This is noted by Lwanda (2002, p.8) who claims, "Although black-owned its advertisements, features and notices were largely aimed at the European and Asian audience". Apart from this observation, it is worth stating that, The Daily Times also had a weekend edition called Malawi News which was originally the Malawi Congress Party's (MCP) newspaper (Van Donge, 2002, p.656). Both of these editions were "very much targeted at the reading and educated urban elite" (Lwanda, 2002, p.8).

The Daily Times newspaper has been part of Press Corporation or Press Holding which was founded in 1961 (Cammack & Kelsall, 2010) by Hastings Kamuzu Banda. As a company, Press Holding was privately owned and it generated profits (Cammack & Kelsall, 2010). Apart from Press Corporation, The Daily Times newspaper also had links with Kamuzu Banda's family. But currently, The Daily Times and Malawi News are owned by Blantyre Printing Packaging (Kondowe, 2008).

1.3 Rationale of the Study

Overall, research on the media in general is important because the media are an important organ of the public sphere of democracy. This implies that the media are

expected to serve the public interest among other roles. This particular study contributes to existing literature on the relationship between the media and democracy. There is a dearth of such literature in Malawi and yet, as one considers processes such as the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections after every five years that were ushered in Malawi since the advent of democracy, one cannot ignore the role played by newspapers in general, and The Daily Times in particular. Researching on the ways in which The Daily Times has attempted to balance commercial and public interest thus serves to highlight the importance of media in democracy, as well as the challenges faced by the newspaper industry.

1.4 Provisional Literature Review

This section presents a provisional review of literature. A detailed literature review will be done in chapter two. The current review is meant to give a summary of some of the gaps that existing literature has left unattended which the current research study seeks to fill. It begins by considering how the commercial side of newspapers helps to keep them afloat in the media industry.

Existing literature shows that lack of economic literacy has contributed to the demise of some newspapers in Malawi. It has been argued that the demise of some smaller newspapers in the 1990s in Malawi can be attributed to financial constraints or more broadly to a “lack of financial and human resource management skills” (Manda, 2018, p.36). This demise of some newspapers has led to the domination of two companies namely, Blantyre Newspapers Limited (BNL) and Nation Publications Limited (NPL). The reasons for the survival of the aforementioned companies is contentious. Kainja (2022, p.283) has argued that these two newspapers have survived and “remain in circulation today partly because the owners had political connections”. The claim by Kainja (2022) was a departure from Manda (2006, p.7) who had argued that political affiliation may not be a contributing factor to the success of these newspapers since other politicians started their own newspapers but failed to succeed. There is a great need for conducting a study in order to establish valid reasons for the survival of the remaining newspapers. This study will therefore contribute to the literature on news media in Malawi by finding out strategies which The Daily Times is using to remain afloat in newspaper business.

Media markets in Malawi are generally unstable and volatile. This view is reflected in the research by Kanyang'wa and Mkwaila (2011, p.163) who have used economic theories to explain “the economic characteristics of news and structure of media markets in Malawi”. They argue that print media content is treated as a commodity and sold to consumers in Malawi. However, the two authors also stress the difference between print media content and other goods that can be bought and sold on a free market in order to highlight the revenue collection challenge which newspapers face. Their claim is that sometimes when a single copy of a newspaper is bought by an individual, this copy can benefit several people in the community thereby limiting the purchasing of many copies of newspapers. In the final analysis, Kanyang'wa and Mkwaila assert, “This has negative implications on revenue realized from sale of print media content to the public” (2011, p.68). Therefore, it can be claimed that print media organisations have no control over those who are to “consume” their products because even a non-purchaser can access a printed copy of a newspaper. Using the language of Kanyang'wa and Mkwaila, one can assert that consumers of news from print media can be people who have not paid for such products. The aforementioned views by Kanyang'wa and Mkwaila (2011) focus on the commercial side of newspapers which suggest that a newspaper may fail to serve as a mass medium. This makes it imperative to consider how commercial and public interest are negotiated in the operations of a newspaper while taking The Daily Times as a case study.

Other studies done in Malawi have shown that the commercial forces tend to affect the contents of broadcast media. An example of such studies is that of Chikunkhuzeni (1999). This study was done to examine the extent to which programming at the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation was affected by commercialisation from 1995 to 1999. Chikunkhuzeni (1999, p.ii) investigated the “presence and effects of commercial-logic in a state-owned broadcaster”. The study established that commercial-logic indicators were present at MBC. The study also found out that this commercial logic was “not driven by competition, but a commitment to provide a public service under deteriorating financial conditions” (Chikunkhuzeni, 1999, p.ii). Some of the results showed that commercialisation had adverse effects on media output. Some of the results, according to Chikunkhuzeni include the following:

heavy-sponsor influence on programme content, self-censorship among programme producers who avoid injuring sponsors and

producers paying more attention to sponsored programmes at the expense of the quality of some non-sponsored public programmes.
(p.ii)

Despite the contributions of the study conducted by Chikunkhuzeni (1999), it can be stated that it was limited to broadcast media hence the need to consider a case of print media especially a newspaper.

Another study done in Malawi has shown that commercial aspects can easily influence how the news media portrays certain countries in its published stories. Nyirongo (2020) has examined the shifts in journalistic representations of China in the Malawi media especially The Daily Times newspaper. Nyirongo contends that,

From content analysis, it appears that from 2001-2007, Malawian media, especially The Daily Times, was very negative about China, uncritically reproducing Western representations of China. This changed after January 2008 when the press leaned towards an acknowledgement of Chinese activities. (2020, p.27)

According to Nyirongo (2020, p.27) this study revealed that, “the Chinese government offers certain opportunities such as exchange visits to journalists, making it difficult for them to bite the hand that feeds them”. The study conducted by Nyirongo (2020) did not go further to show how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates commercial versus public interest. However, what can be established from Nyirongo (2020) is that in some cases the pursuit of commercial by the news media can affect its performance as a public sphere which ought to be at the service of public interest.

1.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is informed by Public Sphere theory which was first articulated by Habermas (1989). But the overarching idea of the Public Sphere is that deliberations of ordinary people organised as a body contribute to public opinion formation. Since the idea of public opinion is also present in Jeremy Bentham, we shall first consider his thoughts in the next section.

The next section will also give a brief account of the public sphere according to Habermas and later consider alternative views about the public sphere.

1.5.1 The Public and Public Opinion Tribunal in Bentham

The Public Opinion Tribunal was a fictitious political device proposed by Bentham in order to regulate the behaviour of political rulers with tyrannical tendencies (Tusseau, 2014, p.5). Bentham thought that the public could function as judges towards the rulers (Mulleri, 2014, p.41). The Public Opinion Tribunal “consisted of all individuals in the state, also those who did not have the right to vote. Foreigners who wanted to take part in debates of a nation were also part of it” (Mulleri, 2014, p.42). Mulleri (2014, p.42) has also noted that “the tribunal was supposed to give information about how public institutions functioned”. The opinions of this tribunal were published in newspapers and other writings (Mulleri, 2014, p.42). In this milieu, liberty of the press was considered the bedrock of a functional Public Opinion Tribunal.

1.5.2 The Habermasian Conception of the Public Sphere

Habermas (1989) conceives the Public Sphere as a space occupied by private individuals who come together because of common interest. The aim of these private individuals is to interrogate public authority. Habermas (1989) asserts,

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people who come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities, to engage them in a debate.... (p. 27)

There are two critical things worth noting here: first, the absence of regulations from authorities in deliberations and second, the mention of private people as participants. Habermas (1989, p.28) has described these private people further by claiming, “The bourgeoisie were private persons; as they did not rule”. In other words, through the media, the ruled played a monitory role over the rulers. Habermas has also proposed the exercise of reason as a medium for these debates by private individuals. Habermas states, “The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people’s public use of their reason, which is Kantian” (1989, p.27). In his short essay “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (1784), Immanuel Kant distinguishes between private use of reason (private reason) and public use of

reason (public reason) and he advocates for the widespread use of public reason in a society that is undergoing Enlightenment. Public reasoning is addressed to the state authorities that they should not be tyrannical or oppressive for the betterment of the welfare of ordinary citizens.

From the foregoing it can be submitted that the public sphere is a confrontational and conflictual space conceptually located between the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the state. The genesis of this type of public sphere was necessitated by mercantile capitalism (Habermas, 1989, p.27) which promoted rational-critical debate as a means for scrutinising the exercise of state authority as well as curbing the excesses of hegemonic power. The avenues for these deliberations and debates were initially salons, coffee houses and the press (Habermas, 1989, p.28).

1.5.3 Mass Media as an Important Organ of the Public Sphere

Habermas (1989) first supported the idea that the media play a positive role by being the enablers of rational discourses in the public sphere through their publishing role. The media were observed to have the capacity of bringing people who were far from each other close. But with the encroachment of state capitalism into the media spaces, Habermas (1989, p.185) observed that the “press itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialized”. This idea is corroborated by Kenix (2011, p.142) who claims that “modern media have contributed to the demise of a deliberative, vibrant public sphere, which existed during the Enlightenment”. However, it is worth stating that Habermas’s view of the media has been evolving. This is evident in his later works on the public sphere. Bonilla and Montoya (2008, p.78) citing (Habermas, 1994, p.212) argue that the media are “charged with the task of informing the public in a truthful, impartial, and independent manner, in order to furnish citizens with the required information to make informed judgements”. This implies that the media have an ethical role to play in society. The next section shall consider alternative views on the public spheres which have arisen as critiques to the Habermas’s conception of the public sphere.

1.5.4 Nancy Fraser’s Subaltern Counterpublics

Nancy Fraser (1990, p.66) has critiqued Habermas’s conception of one singular public sphere which was not insulated from the “effects of societal inequalities” between

dominant groups and minority groups. While building her case on stratified societies, Fraser (1990, p.66) claims that “full parity of participation in public debate and deliberation is not within the reach of possibility”. In the final analysis, Fraser (1990, p.66) holds that “where societal inequality persists, deliberative processes in public spheres will tend to operate to the advantage of dominant groups and to the disadvantage of subordinates”. Therefore, where single, comprehensive public spheres would exist, “members of subordinated groups would have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies” (Fraser, 1990, p.66). The point is that the interests of these subordinated or minority social groups would suffer in a single great public sphere. The members of these subordinated or minority social groups include: workers, women, peoples of colour and the community of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ+) (Fraser, 1990, p.67).

Fraser has also argued that exclusions from the single great public sphere on the basis of race, colour and gender will give rise to subaltern counterpublics. These subaltern counterpublics will act as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (1990, p.67). In concluding her critique, Fraser has submitted that “an adequate conception of the public sphere requires not merely the bracketing, but rather the elimination, of social inequality”.

The suggestion is that Habermas’s conception must be revised.

1.5.5 Michael Warner’s Publics and Counterpublics

Michael Warner’s arguments are strongly opposed to Habermas’s idea of one mainstream public sphere which is presumed to have the capacity to represent “the [whole] public” meaning everyone within a state (2002, p. 49). Warner contends that there is an infinite number of publics. His understanding of the public is premised on his definition of the public as “a kind of social totality” (p.49). Since the idea of public connotes social totality, Warner claims that there must be “as many publics as polities” (p.49). Warner has also argued that these infinite publics are born due to the production, circulation and consumption of texts. In his view texts are discourses that are either

written or spoken. Warner has also critiqued the assumption that publics result from and organise the free exchange of ideas. He further argues that, “Publics do not exist apart from the discourse that addresses them” (p.54). Thus, in Warner’s view publics are essentially intertextual frameworks for understanding texts which are in circulation. He proposes counterpublics, which are described as “selforganised” thereby universalising participation to include people with different interests and identities who engage with the texts that are always in circulation, in opposition to mainstream publics. In the final analysis, the mass media contribute to the publicity of these texts that are always in circulation.

1.5.6 Zizi Papacharissi’s Virtual Sphere

Zizi Papacharissi (2002, p.3) has gone beyond the public sphere of Habermas (1989) which degenerated after it was “plagued by forces of commercialisation and compromised by corporate conglomerates” thereby becoming “a vehicle for capitalist hegemony and ideological reproduction”. She (2002, p.3) has argued for the reincarnation of the Habermasian public sphere through Internet-enabled discourses. She (2002, p.3) claims,

Naturally, a digital medium like the internet, with an infrastructure that promises unlimited and unregulated discourse that operates beyond geographic boundaries, would suggest a virtual reincarnation of the public sphere. (p.3)

In a nutshell, Papacharissi (2002) posits that the Internet has the capacity to re-establish the public sphere virtually. This is what she construes as the democratic potential of online media. She has argued that online media enables conversations which can shape antiglobalisation social movements which are not built on the Habermasian model. She also argues that online media promote values of self-expression which are good for democracy and that online media promotes direct representation marked by agonistic pluralism. Agonistic pluralism is the idea that conflicting positions should be maintained rather than resolved. This idea was first proposed by Mouffe (2000, p.103) who has argued for an “agonistic public” sphere which relies on passion rather than consensus as its driving force. Mouffe has argued that “the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic

designs” (p.103). Agonistic pluralism is the opposite of Habermas’s idea that deliberation leads to a shared understanding and consensus. In proceeding, we have to develop these ideas in order to appreciate the argument about the democratic potential of online media.

First, online media have the potential of shaping antiglobalisation social movements. According to Papacharissi (2002, p.17) digital media have the capacity to “connect and sustain subversive movements” through antiglobalisation websites. Second, as regards the promotion of self-expression values by online media, Papacharissi claims that citizens can use the internet to complement or substitute traditional communication (p.18). She also claims that the use of online media may have a democratising effect despite not bearing a direct resemblance to the public sphere. Papacharissi is also of the view that online media enables a democratic culture to prevail by promoting direct representation of individuals without necessarily resembling the public sphere of Habermas. Papacharissi (2002, p.19), while citing Coleman (2005) argues that online media has the advantage of offering the same benefits as direct democracy and is not associated with a lot of burdens. Some of the benefits that she notes include mutuality, coherence and empathy. In this milieu, online media guarantees individuals the opportunity to express dissenting views without necessarily needing public approval or without expecting public accord, which characterises the Habermasian public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002, p.21).

1.6 Problem Statement

The media enjoys a dual status as both an organ of the public sphere and as an industry. As an organ of the public sphere, the media is entrusted with the duty to serve the public interest by among other things contributing to the formation of public opinion whereas as an industry it is expected by owners to generate profits. This duality of purpose raises tensions of whether to prioritise commercial at the expense of public interest or vice versa. Herein lies the challenge of how to negotiate commercial versus public interest since both of these phenomena are volatile or unstable and often requiring a delicate ethical balance. It is this challenge that the current study examines through an analysis of The Daily Times.

1.7 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates commercial versus public interest. However, this main objective will be met through the following specific objectives.

- To investigate how The Daily Times newspaper performs as an organ for public opinion formation in the political community of Malawi.
- To investigate management strategies which The Daily Times newspaper uses to remain afloat on the unpredictable market of the print media industry.
- To investigate if The Daily Times newspaper faces both pressure and neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing institutions.
- To investigate if printed (published) copies of The Daily Times newspaper reflect a negotiation between the commercial and the public interest.

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Research Study

The study covers the phenomenon of the commercial versus the public interest in the year 2020. This year is critical to the Malawian democratisation story because there was a re-run of the Presidential Elections which were held on 23 June, 2020 at the direction of the High Court which annulled the results of the Presidential Elections that were held in May 2019. This is also the year when the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in Malawi with its far-reaching implications on the political, social and economic spheres. This study includes a sample of nine key informants (editors, marketing officers and writing journalists) who are interviewed. Secondary data is also incorporated from a purposively selected sample of 120 newspapers. This data is evaluated over a period of six months covering Mondays to Fridays since The Daily Times is published on these days. The data obtained from key informant interviews is going to be treated as primary evidence while the data collected from newspapers is treated as secondary evidence.

The limitations of this study are: firstly, the study does not evaluate internal documents such as marketing and editorial policies from The Daily Times newspaper for confidentiality reasons even though ideally these would have helped to navigate through this conundrum of how commercial versus public interest are negotiated. Secondly, the study excludes media regulatory bodies in its target population. These media regulatory bodies include Media Council of Malawi and MISA Malawi chapter. In principle these bodies are simply there to regulate the media in Malawi without

having to directly interfere with internal affairs that might relate to this study. Therefore, expecting these bodies to comment on how a private newspaper operates maybe tantamount to violating their *modus operandi*. This includes the fact that media houses are expected to be self-regulatory.

The above scope and limitation serve the purpose of defining the boundaries of the current study in order to show its feasibility within a limited time frame.

1.9 Methodology

This study utilises a qualitative methodology. A qualitative research methodology helps the researcher to explore the nuances and complexities which may arise in negotiating commercial versus public interest in the daily work of journalists working as editors and marketing officers in the news media, specifically at the Times Group that produces The Daily Times newspaper.

1.10 Research Design

The current study utilises a case study design. It takes up The Daily Times newspaper as a case study for investigating how the commercial versus the public interest is negotiated. Through the use of qualitative methods in data collection such as key informant interviews, the study achieves its set objectives.

The study has purposively selected five current employees and four former employees of The Daily Times newspaper, making a sample of nine key informants. In this sample, there are current and former editors, former news article writing journalists and one current marketing officer and one former marketing officer as described in the section of scope and limitation of this study. Data collection here involves visiting the offices of current employees and former employees. Phone calls and electronic emails have been used where it proves challenging to meet the key informants face to face. This study also evaluates a sample of 120 newspapers published for a period of six months from June to November in the year 2020. This data will be obtained from The Daily Times newspaper archives.

This design is adequate to meet the set objectives for this study. Purposive sampling is useful to this study because it helps to identify key informants who have experience in working as editors in a news media organisation. Through purposive sampling, this

study also utilises the experiences of key informants who have worked and continue to work as marketing officers in a news media organisation.

1.11 Structure of the rest of the study

In Chapter 2, this thesis examines relevant literature on the mass media and their roles. This review of relevant literature begins from mass media in Malawi, North America, Latin America and ends on mass media in South Africa. The aim of this review is to identify some challenges mass media face in performing their roles.

In order to understand the media in Malawi, Chapter 2 gives a context within which the media operate and perform their roles. This has been tackled under a section on a brief history of the mass media in Malawi. This historical context is categorised into three epochs: British epoch, dictatorial epoch and democratic epoch. The chapter also gives an account of the media reforms which took place in the democratic dispensation in order to establish whether such reforms are enabling the flourishing of the media in Malawi. Apart from these elements, Chapter 2 also looks at media regulatory institutions and their roles. The chapter exposes some challenges faced by media regulatory institutions in the country. This is followed by an examination of literature on the media landscape in democratic Malawi. This section shows how the media landscape in Malawi has expanded into various forms of mass media, such as electronic and print media. The last but one element to be presented is on the roles of the media in Malawi. This section establishes some challenges the media face in performing their roles as an organ of the public sphere in Malawi democracy. The last section on the media in Malawi exposes some operational challenges which the media face in Malawi. In Chapter 3, this thesis presents the methods and research methodology which the research has deployed. In general, this chapter shows that this study utilises a qualitative research methodology and it is a case study by design. In particular, this chapter portrays a picture that this study utilises both primary and secondary data. Primary data shall be collected through key informant interviews. These key informants include two groups of people: current employees and former employees of The Daily Times newspaper. These two groups form a sample of nine key informants. This chapter also shows how the research study has collected secondary data from the Archives of The Daily Times newspaper. A sample of 120 newspapers which cover June to November of 2020 has been used as secondary evidence. Primary and secondary data is adequate

in the achievement of the set objectives of this study. This is ascertained by the findings of this study.

In Chapter 4, this thesis presents the key findings of the study. One of the key findings is that The Daily Times newspaper is challenged in negotiating the commercial versus the public interest. This newspaper prioritizes the commercial at the expense of the public interest. This chapter also gives a recapitulation of the research problem under investigation and the research objectives in order to show how the findings respond to them. The chapter utilises thematic content analysis to categorise the findings into main themes and subthemes. These themes come from both primary and secondary data. These themes reflect on the original contribution which this study makes to the body of knowledge.

Chapter 5 deploys the theory of the public sphere as a theoretical lens for discussing the research findings which have been presented in Chapter 4. Before deploying this theory, this chapter identifies the key elements which sustain the theory of the public sphere. The elements which constitute the public sphere theory are: universal accessibility to the discursive arena; free exercise of rational-critical power; formation of public opinion; autonomous nature of the communication arena; consensus in rational deliberations and commitment to the public interest. It is these elements which are treated as pivotal in testing the applicability of the public sphere theory to commercial versus public interest problem. The deployment of the public sphere theory helps the researcher to expose some normative ideals which are lacking in the operation of The Daily Times newspaper, leading to a tradeoff between commercial and public interest. Chapter 6 concludes the study. The chapter summarises the emerging ethical issues from both primary and secondary data. Additionally, it also offers suggestions on areas for further research together with the limitations of this study.

1.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter is introductory in nature because it covers the critical elements which were in the study proposal in order to help the reader to appreciate the depth of the issues covered. In this regard, the chapter has given a background into the problem under study. It has given a brief history of The Daily Times, highlighted challenges faced by the print media and given a provisional literature review. The researcher has called it

provisional literature because a robust review of literature is presented in chapter two. This chapter has also presented the main and specific objectives of the study. It has also outlined the main argument of the study, which is that one of the key challenges faced by The Daily Times is how to balance commercial and public interest.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a review of literature on the mass media in Malawi and the roles which they play within a viable democracy. The chapter reviews literature on the history of mass media in Malawi in order to locate the study within a corpus of media literature. This review establishes that mass media in Malawi are challenged in the role of serving the public interest due to factors ranging from political and commercial interests of the elite. It is noted that mass media tend to serve the government of the day in Malawi. This study also reviews the role of the mass media in other democracies such as; North America, Latin America and South Africa. The reason for including North America, Latin America and South Africa is twofold; firstly, it is done with the purpose of tracing media polarisation in other democracies other than the Malawian context, secondly, it is done with the purpose of showing the failure of the media to serve the public sphere in a democratic state as expected in ethics of communication. The review of literature in the aforementioned democracies establishes that the public sphere and democracy are often compromised by factors ranging from commercial interests and political influences emanating from the elite. This chapter also establishes research gaps which act as the novelty of this study.

2.2 A Brief History of the Mass Media in Malawi

This section looks at the history of the media in brief. It adopts a tripartite view of the history of the media, i.e. the colonial era, dictatorship era and democratic era. This approach is supported by many scholars (Chitsulo & Mang'anda, 2011; Manda, 2018; UNESCO, 2022 and Kainja, 2022). For example, Kainja (2022, p.280) has argued that “the history of Malawian media cannot be separated from the country’s political history”. The political history which is referred to here also follows the same pattern. Chitsulo and Mang'anda (2011) have also discussed the history of Malawian media in

three eras: colonial era (1895-1950s), dictatorship era (1960s – early 1990s) and the current democratic era which started from the early 1990s.

Mass media in Malawi have been at the service of various interests. This observation has also been made by Lwanda (2002). He (2002) asserts that, “The history of written and electronic media in Malawi has been biased in favour of powerful interest groups” (p.4). Lwanda has given some examples of these media which served only the interests of powerful interest groups. He notes,

From the beginning publications like Aurora (1884), Central African Planter (1895), Life and Work, the Likoma Diocesan Quarterly paper (1893), British Central African Gazette (1894) and others were there to serve the interests of the missionaries or the colonial planters (settlers and estate owners). (p.4)

In essence, the media perpetuated the divisions that were already there in Malawian society. These were divisions of people in Malawi into classes, namely, the middle-class, rural and elite (Lwanda, 2002). What follows is a detailed picture of this history of mass media in Malawi.

2.2.1 Media in the Colonial era

The colonial era began with the establishment of Malawi as a British protectorate in 1891 (Manda, 2018, p.37). This era ended with Malawi gaining her independence in July 1964. A few years prior to the onset of the colonial era one notices the presence of David Livingstone, who came to Malawi as a Scottish missionary and as a forerunner of the British administration and business enterprises (Moyo, 2010). According to Moyo (2010, p.137), Livingstone convinced compatriots and investors and at Cambridge University to make the journey to southern Africa. Moyo also states that Livingstone advocated colonisation of countries such as Malawi “through the ‘Three Cs’: Commerce, Christianity and Civilisation”. The media can be understood in this political context in which colonising Africa in general and Malawi in particular was the agenda of the day.

The genesis of the media in this era has been traced to the print media which first emerged and took the centre stage followed by broadcast media. The history of the print

media in this era can be seen through the spectrum of three players who participated in the print media playfield. First, there were the Scottish missionaries who introduced the press in Malawi in 1884 (then Nyasaland). Second, there was a group of educated Africans who participated in the print media by giving a counter discourse which represented the interests of the indigenous people. Lastly, there were the British colonialists who established print media as part of British imperialism (UNESCO, 2022) while serving the interests of European settlers.

The introduction of the press in Malawi and the print media in particular during this period is attributed to the Scottish missionaries (UNESCO, 2022; Chagoma, 2001). These missionaries established the first printing house at Blantyre Mission in 1884 (Moyo, 2010). This printing house was called Hetherwick Press (Moyo, 2010). The Scottish missionaries introduced what has been dubbed community print media (UNESCO, 2022). The communities which the newly introduced print media targeted were religious and academic in nature (UNESCO, 2022). UNESCO (2022, p.23) notes, “Missionaries circulated ethnographic journals on Nyasaland among European audiences, and evangelical as well as literacy print materials among the indigenous people”. There were two major journals which were owned by the early missionaries-cum-government (Manda, 2018). Manda (2018, p.37) asserts that the two major journals were *Life and Work in British Central Africa* and *The Central African Planter*. The missionaries also made other occasional publications on public and current affairs, for instance *Aurora* (UNESCO, 2022).

The *Central African Planter* is said to have been established as a commercial newspaper (UNESCO, 2022). UNESCO reports that the *Central African Planter* “targeted European settlers who established tea, cotton, coffee and tobacco estates in the southern highlands of the territory” (2022, p.23). As stated earlier, the name of the *Central African Planter* medium has undergone changes from *Central African Times*, and then *Nyasaland Times* to *The Daily Times* in 1972 when it was bought by Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda (UNESCO, 2022).

Educated Africans also set up media outlets as a way of countering British domination. These alternative newspapers, however, tended to be short-lived (UNESCO 2022). Reasons for the lack of sustainability are discussed in the following paragraphs. There

were four popular newspapers which represented nationalistic interests and propaganda amongst the African people: Makani (news) published in Tumbuka, Zoona (Truth), Zatsopano (the Current or New) and Mbadwa (Citizen) (UNESCO, 2022; Manda, 2018). According to UNESCO (2022, p.23) Makani (news), “was founded in 1906 by the Overton Institute of the Free Church of Scotland” while Zoona was established in 1936.

The contents of most of the above-mentioned newspapers lacked a journalistic style (Manda, 2018) but also faced the problem of low readership leading to their disappearance from the print media industry (UNESCO, 2022). The founding of a weekly paper called Malawi News in 1959 (Manda, 2018) appears to have created a media space for protest voices in the face of the demise of newsletters associated with Churches which promoted the official view (Lwanda, 2002). This newspaper was founded and edited by Aleke Banda, who was a member of the Malawi Congress Party during this period (Manda, 2018). Manda has described the Malawi News as “an aggressive, widely circulated, pro-nationalist and proindependence biweekly...” (p.38). The paper participated in the movements calling for the independence of Malawi. Lwanda (2002, p.5) has also noted that the Malawi News became a model for future journalists in its initial years. The Malawi News thus contributed to the discourse about independence in Malawi.

The British colonialists also had their own newspaper, the British Central Africa Gazette. This paper promoted the official view of the British government (Manda, 2018, p.38). In Post-independent Malawi, the British Central Africa Gazette changed its name to (Malawi) Government Gazette (Manda, 2018).

The history of the broadcast media in this era is very short (Manda, 2018). Manjawira (2009, p.9) has noted that there was one radio station. This was run by the Central African Broadcasting Services (CABS) in Lusaka, Zambia. This radio station (CABS) also served its own interests. According to UNESCO (2022) the radio broadcasts from Zambia, then known as Northern Rhodesia, catered for the interests of British miners (p.23). Print and broadcast media in the colonial era thus reflected the agenda of the time, which was mainly a perpetuation of imperialist discourse.

2.2.2 Media in the Early Postcolonial Era

Malawi became independent from the British on 6 July 1964 (Mhagama, 2015). In the whole period before independence from Britain, Malawi was known as Nyasaland. But the euphoria for independence did not last long because of the political turmoil which ensued. Tenthani and Chinsinga observe that the country became a one-party regime soon after independence, and that multiparty politics was not allowed until over thirty years (2016, p.35). They further, “However, the country slid into a one-party dictatorship immediately after independence, and multiparty politics was barred for over three decades” (2016, p.35). Hastings Kamuzu Banda became the first president of the Republic of Malawi and ruled Malawi for 31 years with his political party called Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (Manyozo, 2004).

This era has been dubbed Early Postcolonial era because it came immediately after the colonialists and was characterised by human rights violations and lack of civil liberties (Kainja, 2022). In this era, journalists were ill-treated by President Banda. Manda (2018, p.38) notes, “Malawi’s first president, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda is on the record as having described journalists as liars and that he hated them”. Kamuzu Banda also abolished private media which was common in the colonial times and promoted state media as a propaganda machine (Sharra 2020). In terms of the broadcast media, there was only one state-controlled radio station (Mhagama, 2015; Chapambali, 2021, p. 15). This was the case from 1964 to 1994. In addition, there was no radio station (Manyozo, 2004, p.75). The existence of one radio station, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) during this period was justified by a statutory provision in the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Act (1964). This provision vested all the broadcasting powers in only one station, namely MBC (Mhagama, 2015). This provision also suggested that no other broadcasting media would be established in Malawi (Manjawira & Mitunda, 2011). Therefore, the MBC was under firm control by the State.

Kapiri argues, “For the next thirty years, the MCP used the MBC as a propaganda tool to support Banda’s autocratic rule” (2017, p.31). The suggestion is that the media was monopolised by Banda’s government. In other words, it served only the interests of the government and Banda’s political party (MCP).

In terms of print media, Malawi had one newspaper. This was The Daily Times, whereas the Malawi News was the weekend edition (Manyozo 2004, p.75). Apart from this newspaper, Manyozo (2004) notes,

The Department of Information published Boma Lathu (Our Government) in indigenous chiChewa, through which the state kept rural people in touch with political developments, focusing on the achievements of President Hastings Kamuzu Banda and the ruling Malawi Congress Party. (p.75)

This was also tantamount to using the media to control people's minds, as it meant that the information that was accessible to Malawians was mainly that which focused on the one party government's success story. The Daily Times and Malawi News were merged into one newspaper. This view is supported by Manda (2018, p.39) who notes that "after independence, Kamuzu Banda bought the Malawi News and The Daily Times, consolidated them into the Blantyre Newspapers Ltd (BNL), and controlled them". The consolidation of these two newspapers into BNL reduced them into mouthpieces of the government and the Malawi Congress Party (Manda, 2018). In this Early Post-Colonial era, the Catholic Church was also active in media. In circulation, it had one newspaper; Odini and a monthly magazine called Moni (Manyozo, 2004). These media carried messages on development and religious activities and they were published by the Montfort Press (Manyozo, 2004).

The political environment in which media persons worked in this era was not very conducive as it has been noted above. Banda controlled the journalists who worked at BNL. He also used both radio (MBC) and newspaper (The Daily Times) to control people's access to information. This is supported by Manyozo (2004, p.75) who argues, "In dictatorial Malawi, there was therefore no alternative media. Since MCP officials censored print and radio news, Malawi subscribed to the Soviet and authoritarian press paradigms". This view is also shared by Mphande (1996, p.85) who observes that Banda's ownership of the print media meant that his government controlled people's access to knowledge and information.

2.2.3 Media in the Democratic Era

The democratic era dawned in Malawi in 1994. It was in this year when Kamuzu Banda lost the elections that were held soon after the referendum of 1993. The winning candidate of this election was Bakili Muluzi with his United Democratic Party (UDF) (Manyozo, 2004). Elections were not the only factor that pushed Banda out of office. Kainja (2022) has noted that Banda had been through pressure both from within and outside Malawi in the early 1990s. The experience of pressure from within the country refers to pressure which came from local political groups and churches whereas pressure from outside the country refers to pressure from the donor community (Kapiri, 2017). Internal and external pressure culminated into a call for a referendum in 1993. Kainja (2022, p.279) observes that in this referendum, “Malawians were to choose between the one-party dictatorship and multi-party democracy, Malawians chose the latter”. Therefore, multiparty democracy was ushered in.

The democratic era has had other presidents apart from Bakili Muluzi who ruled Malawi for two consecutive terms of 1994 and 1999. Muluzi was succeeded by Bingu wa Mutharika. This observation is supported by Mchakulu (2018, p.3) who notes that although Bingu wa Mutharika had been elected president on a UDF ticket in 2004, it was not long before he left the party to form the Democratic People’s (Progressive) Party (DPP). He contested the 2009 election using the DPP. In this election Mutharika emerged victorious together with his vice president, Joyce Banda. Mchakulu (2018, p.3) further observes, “Mutharika died in 2013 and was succeeded by his deputy, Joyce Banda, who had earlier been expelled from the party”. After being expelled from the DPP, Banda formed her People’s Party (PP) which she popularised when she succeeded Mutharika in 2013 (Mchakulu, 2018). The DPP returned to power when its candidate, Peter Mutharika won the 2014 tripartite elections (Mchakulu, 2018).

One important aspect of the democratic era in Malawi was the way in which a number of broadcast media were established due to the liberalisation of the media airwaves. This observation is made by Sharra (2020, p.7) who notes that the multiparty era saw the liberalisation of the airwaves and the installation of Frequency Modulation (FM). This state of affairs led to the launching of state-owned broadcast media: MBC Radio 2 FM on 17 July 1997 by Bakili Muluzi (Sharra, 2020). Privately-owned radio stations were also born in this era due to the broadcasting licenses that were issued in

1998 by a media regulatory body called Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA). The first licence to be granted by MACRA was the one given to the African Bible College radio in Lilongwe (Banda, 2007, p.82). Other new stations included those that were launched in 1998, including Dzimwe Community Radio Station for local women in Mangochi, and FM Power 101 and Capital FM Radio which predominantly targeted an urban audience. The point is that the establishment of the aforementioned privately-owned radio stations set a precedent for more privately-owned radio stations to be established in Malawi.

In addition, the year 2000 witnessed, for the first time in Malawian history, the setting up of Television Malawi (TVM), which was also the only public free-to-air television service (Banda, 2007, p.82). Banda (2007, p.82) further claims, “Prior to TVM, Malawians accessed subscription digital satellite television services offered by the multinational M-Net in such urban centres as Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba”. In the democratic era, media space was therefore liberalised leading to the growth and expansion of the broadcast media.

In this democratic era, the print media expanded; new newspapers and magazines were established (Chitsulo & Mang’anda, 2011). Some examples include, the Democrat, the Michiru Sun, and the Nation, which started publishing in 1993 (Manda, 2018). There were three newspapers which were published daily in Malawi by 1994. These were The Monitor, The Nation and The Daily Times. The country also had twelve regular weeklies (Manda 2018, p.40). Some of the weeklies which were well-known, as noted by Manda (2018) included the Malawi News, the Inquirer, the UDF News, the Democrat, the Herald, the Mirror, the Independent, Michiru Sun, the New Express, the New Voice, the Chronicle, the National Agenda, and the Statesman (p.18). However, by the year 1999, the following newspapers exited the print media industry, “the Michiru Sun, the New Express, the New Voice, the Democrat, the Mirror and the Independent” (Manda, 2004, p.164). Manda (2004, p.164) has given the following reasons which led to the premature exit of the pioneering newspapers: some newspapers exited because of litigation (for example, The Chronicle); the publishers joining politics or employed by politicians and others due to unfavourable economic and political conditions. Manda (2004) submits that some newspapers, especially those owned by journalists, made enemies with the people in power because of their “continued

neutrality and critical analysis of issues” (p.164). This made those in power deny them advertisement and sponsorship.

The circulation of the Nation Publications newspapers and the Times Groups newspapers in the democratic era has remained in the urban areas of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba (Kapiri, 2017 and Manjawira, 2009). Mchakulu (2018) has observed that currently, there are two main publishing companies: Blantyre Newspapers Limited (Times Group) and Nation Publications Limited. The survival of these two newspaper publishing companies has been attributed to political connections. Proponents of this school of thought include Kainja (2022) and Gunde (2015). Their argument is based on the fact that Times Group is owned by Hastings Kamuzu Banda’s family while Nation Publications Limited is owned by the family of a former politician, Aleke Banda (Gunde, 2015). The idea that political affiliations have contributed to the survival of the two surviving newspapers has been rebutted by Manda (2006, p.7). Manda (2006, p.7) has argued that political affiliation may not be a contributing factor to the success of these newspapers since other politicians started their own newspapers but failed to succeed. This debate has led to uncertainty in knowledge about the actual reasons behind the success of the surviving newspapers. This is a knowledge gap which, as mentioned earlier in the introductory chapter, the current research seeks to find out the actual reasons behind the survival and success of The Daily Times newspaper.

The beginning of this section presented the presidents that have ruled Malawi since the dawn of the multiparty democracy. The current section also briefly considers how Bingu wa Mutharika and Joyce Banda interacted with the media while in power. The focus on these two presidents is justified by the view that the attitude of these leaders towards the media was different if the laws enacted by these leaders is used as a yardstick. Joyce Banda appears to have been a bit sympathetic towards the media while Bingu wa Mutharika very controlling.

Mutharika was first elected president in 2004 under the UDF ticket (Dionne & Dulani, 2012). He was also re-elected in 2009 under the DPP which he had formed in 2005 (Dionne & Dulani, 2012). Mutharika’s party won 113 of the 192 contested parliamentary seats (Chinsinga, 2010). This translated into 59% of the parliamentary seats. Dionne and Dulani note that Mutharika’s government took advantage of the fact

that they had the majority of seats by passing laws curtailing rights and freedoms (2012, p.14). An example of such laws included the way in which, through Section 46 of the Penal Code, the Information Minister had the power to ban publications “deemed not to be in line with public interest” (Dionne & Dulani, 2012, p.114). The challenge here was how public interest was defined and what qualified something to be of public interest. The idea that Mutharika’s government was intolerant of dissenting voices is also shared by the African Media Barometer Malawi report (2012). Access to broadcasting licences was also monitored heavily. African Media Barometer Malawi (2012) reports,

broadcast licence applicants were seen as a threat to government and most licences were awarded to religious and/ community stations, which were seen as less of a threat to the state than news broadcasters. (p.9)

The observation above suggests that Mutharika’s tenure in office was characterised by a heavy control on the media.

The tenure of Joyce Banda after the sudden death of Mutharika in 2013 was characterised by reversals in laws and policies enacted by Mutharika. African Media Barometer Malawi (2012) has claimed that Joyce Banda reversed all the controversial policies which Mutharika had adopted. These included the amendment to Section 46 of the Penal Code and the powers that it gave to the Minister of Information.

However, during Banda’s administration, she also abused the state broadcaster, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) by using it as a propaganda machine. This is noted by Gunde (2015, p.8) who has cited Patel (2013, p.4) as having argued that, “The Joyce Banda administration was not tolerant towards dissenting views and used the MBC for her People’s Party (PP) propaganda”. Gunde (2015) has also cited Patel (2013, p.4) as having argued that fundraising events of the PP enjoyed full coverage on the MBC television.

What remains under-researched here are the political influences which affect the private media. Research done so far has shown that public media in Malawi (MBC TV and

Radio) have been mouthpieces of the government of the day thereby failing to serve the public interest.

2.3 Media Reforms in the Democratic Era in Malawi

This section considers the reforms that took place with the adoption of multiparty democracy which in essence changed the regulatory framework of the media in Malawi. Reforms in the media have been seen in the light of the multiparty democracy which Malawi adopted in 1993 (Manyozo, 2004). This is the case because the democratic system of government enabled the adoption of certain policies, legal provisions and the establishment of institutions which promote Human Rights (Kondowe, 2008). Media reforms in Malawi have also been seen as emanating from the work of civil society organisations, as noted by UNESCO (2022, p.41). This has been achieved through the various advocacy strategies which civil society organisations have used. Such strategies include holding vigils, taking part in demonstrations, lobbying Members of Parliament to recognise and change laws that violate human rights and the naming and shaming of those taking part in corrupt practices. Other strategies include donation of free airtime and sponsorship of meetings to civil society organisations.

In terms of legal provisions Kondowe (2008) has noted that Malawi adopted a Republican Constitution in 1995 in which freedom of expression of every human being is upheld. In addition to this, UNESCO (2022, p.35) has notes that, “Unlike other Constitutions, the Constitution of Malawi specifically provides for press freedom”. UNESCO has cited section 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi which protects media freedom. This section states, “The press shall have the right to report and publish freely, within Malawi and abroad, and be accorded the fullest possible facilities for access to public information” (Malawi Constitution 1994, revised 2017). In proceeding, this chapter has to consider institutions which were established to promote human rights.

As regards the establishment of institutions which promote and protect human rights, Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) and Law Commission have been cited as examples by Kondowe (2008). Kondowe regards Law Commission as a body which provides the media with the chance to scrutinise laws that obstruct media freedom, and to repeal or amend those laws (p.5).

Freedom of expression is ideally protected by MHRC thereby supporting people who use mass media in Malawi. The emphasis, however, is on the ideal, because, as the study demonstrates, there are quite often challenges in implementing the laws, as ensuing chapters illustrate.

2.4 Media Regulatory Bodies in Malawi

Media regulation here refers to restrictions imposed by the government or outside authorities through the use of established rules, procedures and standards aimed at guiding and controlling the activities of the media in a democratic society (Mirza, 2021, p.1). In practice, regulation can take two forms; internal or self-regulation and external regulation. Internal or self-regulation “occurs when standards and controls are applied within the media sector itself. According to Mirza (2021, p.1) “External regulation occurs when governments or other outside authorities apply rules to media outlets and journalists”. She has submitted that media regulation aims at protecting “democracy by regulating content that is supposed to be free in a democracy” while self-regulation “focuses on building democratic practices through regulation by the media sector itself” (2021, p.1). This implies that self-regulation is of paramount importance for media organisations to serve democracy and the public interest.

In Malawi, media regulation is in the ambit of the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA). The definition of media regulation above makes one conclude that, MACRA as a regulatory body acts as an external form of regulation. However, there are two other bodies which promote self-regulation of the media which has arguably been seen as key to media independence. These bodies are: Media Council of Malawi (MCM) and Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Malawi chapter.

2.4.1 Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority

The Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) was formed under the Communications Act, which was enacted in 1998 by Malawi’s Parliament (Manyozo 2004). MACRA was empowered to provide broadcasting license. Additionally, this authority was tasked to regulate radio and television broadcasting among others (Chapambali, 2021). MACRA has been credited with the reform of the broadcasting sector; it was after the establishment of this authority that privately-owned radio and television stations had access to broadcasting space through licences (Chapambali,

2021, p.14). In addition, the establishment of MACRA led to an increase in the number of registered radio stations in Malawi, totalling to 56 by 2021 (Chapambali, 2021, p.14). MACRA licenses are in five categories. The following are the categories: public broadcaster, private national broadcaster, private regional broadcaster, geographical community broadcaster, and community of interest broadcaster (Chapambali, 2021). This explains why one broadcast media would be described differently from the other. The role of MACRA in regulating the media in Malawi has been subject to criticism since the authority is run by a presidential appointee. Such an appointment raises concerns of neutrality in matters related to the political sphere since the likelihood of serving the interests of the government of the day by the appointee is very high. MACRA has also been criticised for failing to “police MBC and TVM but it has victimised community and private commercial broadcasters” (Chikunkhuzeni, 2003, p.40). Lwanda and Chanika (2017, p.42) have noted that “a state controlled Malawi Communications and Regulatory Authority (MACRA)” oversees the media in Malawi. They also note that MACRA is sometimes used to muzzle the media, especially when it comes to political contexts. This implies that there are some doubts on the regulatory capacity of MACRA. The general expectation is that MACRA should be neutral in its operation.

2.4.2 Media Council of Malawi

The Media Council of Malawi (MCM) was formed in 1996. Its general aim was two-fold in terms of promoting self-discipline among its members and considering complaints from the public (UNESCO 2020, p.82). The Council was established as a voluntary, independent and non-statutory institution.

The modus operandi of the MCM is well defined by its revised constitution. The aims referred to above cover aspects such as upholding and maintaining “the freedom of the media in Malawi, including the freedom of expression and the public right to freely receive and impart information and opinion, and to defend/protect the media from undue pressure from any source” (UNESCO 2020, p.82).

The MCM has the potential of playing a critical role in promoting self-regulation of the media in Malawi especially by ensuring that each media organisation adheres to its Code of Ethics (UNESCO, 2020, p.82). However, the practical performance of this role

has been doubted given the financial constraints which this authority frequently faces. Sharra (2020, p.8) has argued that the capacity of Media Council of Malawi in promoting professionalism is unstable due to financial problems. UNESCO (2020) has expressed similar sentiments, noting that Media Council of Malawi was dormant until it received donor support from the Media Institute for Southern Africa (Malawi Chapter) in 2019 (p.83). This raises concerns about the financial independence of this body.

The Media Council of Malawi gets its income from membership subscriptions, contributions by media owners, accreditation fees, donations and funds for specific projects (UNESO 2020, p.85). It depends on MISA Malawi for office space. These factors make this organisation vulnerable to commercial forces from the political elite, business owners and media conglomerates. This state of affairs compromises self-regulation, since there is not much that Media Council of Malawi can do without funding.

2.4.3 Media Institute for Southern Africa

The Malawi Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), Malawi chapter, was established in 1996. It was formed as a non-governmental organisation and works to promote and defend media freedom in Malawi (Malawi Media Landscape Guide 2022, p.6). It is regarded by the civil society as an advocate for media freedom. Of the bodies that have been discussed above, Media Council of Malawi and Malawi Regulatory Authority, Media Institute for Southern Africa, Malawi chapter, is the only one whose objectivity has thus far not been questioned.

2.5 Media Landscape in Democratic Malawi

Malawi's media landscape has increased in diversity since the adoption of the 1995 Republican Constitution which includes a Bill of Rights (Kondowe, 2008; Kainja, 2022). This state of affairs has been seen in contrast to the 1966 Republican Constitution which did not guarantee human rights but in essence institutionalised an undemocratic regime (Chirwa, *et al.*, 2000). The Republican Constitution includes aspects that emphasise freedom of expression (Kondowe 2008, p.4). Freedom of expression in Malawi is backed up by a Constitution in the current democratic establishment.

2.5.1 The Electronic Media

The electronic media landscape has undergone changes since the transition from a single-party regime to a multi-party democracy. Mhagama (2015, p.9) has argued that the political changes in this period “brought in a three-tier broadcasting system to which community radio is part”. This three-tier broadcasting system consists of community, regional and national broadcasters.

In relation to the way community radios operate in Malawi, Malawi Media Landscape Guide (MMLG, 2021) states,

Community radio stations, transmit locally and, according to MACRA, are not permitted to broadcast beyond a 50KM radius. However, until recently, they were allowed a 100 KM transmission radius, meaning their broadcasts could be accessed outside the district boundaries. (p.21)

Community radios tend to compete with regional and national broadcasters because they are present in each district in Malawi (MMLG, 2021).

The idea that the electronic media landscape has grown since the transition from dictatorship rule to democratic rule has been covered extensively in literature. Kondowe, for example, notes that there has been “considerable change” in electronic media, and that this change includes the establishment of private and community radio stations and a television (2008, p.7). The establishment of television broadcasters and radios is affirmed by MMLG (2021). MMLG (2021, p.19) has stated that there are 27 Television broadcasters in Malawi. Apart from television broadcasters, Malawi also has radio channels. There are also 57 radio stations, and this includes those that are public, community-owned and private.

Furthermore, the growth of the electronic media in Malawi is also acknowledged in literature. For example, UNESCO (2022, p.28) states how, in the early 1990s, there was only one radio broadcasting station and how, more than two decades later, there are 50 radio stations. In the same vein, Malawi, which had only one television station in 1998 has over a dozen television stations by 2021 (UNESCO 2022, p.28).

The broadcast industry has also changed by migrating from analogue to digital broadcasting. This migration from analogue to digital by the broadcast media was launched in Malawi in 2016 (Chapambali, 2021). Apart from these developments, it is also important to consider reasons behind the growth of broadcast media, especially radio stations.

Radio is one of the most accessible media of communication in Malawi (Chapambali, 2021). Chapambali has argued that the radio is a rapid medium and can be accessed anywhere in Malawi compared to newspapers and television (p.14). In the same line of thought, UNESCO (2022) states that radio listenership is also very high in Malawi. Another idea that is worth considering here is how television broadcasters are accessed by the citizenry in Malawi; not everyone can afford a television. This explains why, even with the advent of television, the radio has not taken a backseat as a source of information.

Television broadcasting in Malawi is accessed in three types of decoders namely; pay TV decoders, Free-to-Air decoders and Kiliye Kiliye decoders (Chapambali, 2021). This means that pay TV decoders require subscription fees for one to access the services while Free-toAir decoders can be watched without paying any subscription fees. Chapambali (2021) has noted that Kiliye Kiliye decoder services are provided by the Malawi Digital Broadcast Network Limited (MDBNL) which was registered by MACRA in 2014.

Most broadcast media in Malawi have both radio and television. For example, Zodiac Broadcasting Station has both radio and television; the Times Group has radio, television and newspapers. According to European Report (2019, p. 20) there is also an emergence of new broadcasting media: Mibawa Television and Rainbow Television. The scope of private news providers has been on the increase. This increase in news providers has diversified the media environment in Malawi (EU report, 2019, p.20).

2.5.2 *Print Media*

Print media has also witnessed gradual growth since the adoption of multiparty democracy in Malawi. This precludes the fact that most print media houses concentrate on urban areas in the circulation of their published newspapers. This is noted by

Chapambali (2021, p.15) who argues, “Newspapers circulate in urban areas while a few trickledown to the rural areas”. This claim is further supported by MMLG (2021, p.22) which states, “The Malawian print media industry is very small and is concentrated in major cities and towns, mostly in Blantyre and Lilongwe”. Apart from circulating in urban areas, newspapers are also affected by illiteracy (Chapambali, 2021, p 15).

The print media in general and newspapers in particular are said to be affected by illiteracy levels in the Malawian population which are very high. This idea is supported by Chapambali (2021, p. 15) who claims that in serving as a mass medium, newspapers are challenged by high illiteracy levels in Malawian society. Not many people in the country can read the English language used in newspapers. Poverty levels are also high making it harder for some members to afford purchasing a copy of a published newspaper (Chapambali, 2021). Based on the foregoing, it appears that the print media do not provide an equitable space for projecting divergent voices and interests. The problem of illiteracy in Malawi affects the readership of newspapers which is low. The majority of people are poor in Malawi; they cannot afford to buy a newspaper. In this milieu, the newspaper media end up targeting the elite as the audience. This elite, made up of those who are educated and employed, has the ability to purchase a newspaper. This begs the question regarding the interests that newspaper media serve, given that these papers are mostly read by the elite, who are mostly in urban areas. A question which can be posed is: whose interests do newspapers serve? Scholarship consulted so far does not appear to be addressing this issue. This is why this study will show how readership that is limited to the elite influences the content of what is published in newspapers specifically The Daily Times.

Malawi has a number of publishing houses and newspapers. The following are some of the examples of publishing houses: Nation Publications Limited; Times Media Limited; Montfort Media Limited; Pride Magazine; the Football Association of Malawi; the Malawi Government Ministry of Information; The Malawi Investment Promotion Agency and others (MMLG, 2021, p.21).

Malawi also has both online publications run by media organisations and stand-alone news sites (e.g. blogs) mostly run by individuals (UNESCO, 2022). This has increased sources of news that are accessible through the internet (Chapambali, 2021).

Some of the online publishers in Malawi include the following: Nyasa Times, Maravi Post, Zodiak online, Malawi News Agency Online, Malawi Nation and The Times Group (Chapambali, 2021). Online publications are challenged by lack of access to the internet. According to Chapambali, as of 2018, only about 7% of the population had access to the internet. This translated into 2.7 million Malawians at the time. He also observes that of the 2.7 million Malawians, 720 000 people were on social media platforms, particularly on Facebook (2021, p.16).

Social media networks, especially Whatsapp and Facebook, have been considered as having a potential to influence democracy by serving the public interest especially when mainstream media is undemocratically controlled by government or by editorial policies (UNESCO, 2022). Such forums have enabled access to information, particularly during the mass demonstrations in 2011 and 2019, and the importance of this access is emphasised when one considers that MACRA banned live broadcasts related to the protests (UNESCO 2022, p.28). This suggests that online media have the potential of bringing about democratic changes in Malawi. Online media can also act as alternative sources of news and can enable democratic participation (UNESCO, 2022). However, the extent to which this democratic participation can be achieved would need to take into consideration the prohibitive prices of data bundles. This is the case because as already noted there is low percentage of online patronage in Malawi, i.e. not everyone has access to social media applications.

2.6 The Role of Mass Media in Malawian Society and in Democracy

Mass media have the potential of playing a pivotal role in society in general and in democracy in particular. Democracy in this case refers to the various forms of participation enabled by the media. The following are some of the roles performed by the media: providing general information; providing news about politics; protecting democracy through investigative journalism; creating a public sphere where divergent voices are heard and forming the public opinion.

2.6.1 Providing general information

Manda (2006) has argued that the media provide information about various subjects ranging from social, political and cultural activities. He notes,

For many people, mass media are also the only means by which they acquire information about educational and employment opportunities; social events; births, marriages and deaths; business; weather; weather; agriculture and numerous other occurrences of social significance. (p12)

This role is provided by all the media in Malawi. Births and deaths are mostly recorded in newspapers, radios broadcast deaths, jobs and consumer adverts appear in newspapers and are broadcast on television, radio and print media (Manda, 2006, p.12). The reliance of advertisements in order to obtain revenue for survival has been seen as a factor which makes the media prone to economic pressures from sponsors (Kanyang'wa & Mkwaila, 2011). But the extent to which commercialisation deprives the media's independence from the pressure of the government and the political elite is yet to be established especially in print media. The current study does, however, agree with the claim which Chisoni (2014, p.62) has made that the media in Malawi "are trapped in the milieu of the power of money and this drives the way they will inform, educate, sensitize, and raise alarm on government issues". This implies that the role of providing general information can be affected by commercial interests.

2.6.2 Providing news about politics

Mass media provide news about politics because not many people can physically attend political events. This is because of factors such as time and financial constraints, but also because of different priorities. As such, people mainly become aware of political events through the mass media. Manda (2006, p.13) has argued that people in the Malawian context rely on the media to cover various political events including discussions in the National Assembly and activities of the president and cabinet ministers. In Malawi, Parliamentary proceedings have largely been covered by the public broadcaster, MBC Television. Newspapers in Malawi such as The Daily Times and The Nation also carry articles describing political events within Malawi but also across the globe (Manda 2006, p.13). However, the media can also misinform the public. Manda claims that some media channels deliberately spread misinformation by "distorting the truth, ignoring some politicians or simply lying about a situation or event" (2006, p.13). This is also something that has been observed by Chisoni, who states that the Malawi media has participated in "drumming up misinformation, in

hiding of information, in disguising real issues from citizens” (2014, p.63). This area of misinformation in media has not been given a lot of scholarly attention in Malawi. However, there are a few studies (Kankuzi, 2013/2014; UNESCO, 2022) which have shown that public media such as MBC television have been used as propaganda machines, thereby serving the interests of the government of the day. This is a critical issue because Chisoni has raised concerns about the independence of the media in Malawi. He asserts,

Just like some institutions, the media have sometimes shown signs of being co-opted into the state machinery so that instead of promoting transparency and accountability they have seemingly promoted a state machinery concocted propaganda.... (p.63)

Private media, especially newspapers in Malawi have received little attention on this subject. Studies that focus on the private media include those focusing on its the role played by the newspapers in politics, as exemplified by Gunde’s study (2015) on the role of the Weekend Nation in the democratisation process from 2002 to 2012. Gunde’s study argues that despite the Weekend Nation paper having being owned by a politician, the democratisation process was not compromised. He also proffers a similar argument in his 2017 study of the Weekend Nation’s agricultural input subsidies, stating that the political ownership had no bearing on the editorial content (p. 19). Sharra (2020) focuses on the role played by private newspapers, observing how they emphasise the watchdog role during question time at press conferences.

Such studies show that private newspapers strive for some independence, even if, as the studies acknowledge, the independence may not be complete. The current study contributes to this field by further examining the extent of such independence and the challenges that are faced by the private newspapers.

2.6.3 Protecting accountability through investigative journalism

Media is an important accountability tool. It ensures that actions by government bodies, nongovernmental organisations and individuals are reported. Manda (2006, p.15) argues, “The media can promote accountability in the same way as do pillars of integrity such as Anticorruption bureau, human rights commissions, ombudsman and civil society”.

Manda (2006) also argues that the media can serve as a deterrent for politicians and those working in government to abuse their power. This is because the media can expose the misuse of office, incompetence and other social ills (Manda 2006, p.15). There are, however, some media which are not under obligation to perform this role of a watchdog. For example, MBC is mandated to perform this role whereas community and private radios do not have a legal obligation to act as watchdogs (Manda, 2006, p.15). Manda, citing section 87 (1) of the Communications Act (Act No 41 of 1998) has argued that MBC as a public service “has specific legal obligations that compel it to promote a democratic political culture and democratic processes” (p.15).

It has been argued that MBC tends to represent the interests of the government of the day. The public interest which shall be the focus of this study is usually undermined, precluding the autonomy of journalists. The promotion of watchdog journalistic roles in Malawi is affected by the commercial forces which limit the “effectiveness and pro-activeness” of the media in Malawi (Chisoni, 2014, p.61). Analogous to the general citizenry, the media in Malawi are “faced with survival, economic and moral challenges” which affect their performance of the watchdog role (Chisoni, 2014, p.61). It can be submitted here that there appear to be cases where there is a trade-off between public interest and the commercial aspect. Such a trade-off has implications on news production, as shall be seen in the analysis of The Daily Times in this study.

2.6.4 Creating a public sphere where societal voices are heard

In democracy, the media creates what Habermas (1989) has dubbed the public sphere. This is a space that is characterised by open discussions that are rational and critical leading to the formation of public opinion. In the context of the current study, the public sphere is considered “as a number of arenas with different attributes and different participants” (Skjerdal, 2001, p.11). The public sphere in this case shall be limited to newspaper columns which in the Malawian case appear to be dominated by people with certain attributes: highly educated, ability to pay money in order to own a column and holders of high-profile positions in society. The nature of argumentation which takes place in newspapers appears to accommodate the views of this group of people. The aforementioned group seems to be the one which mostly contributes to public opinion formation. This seems to exclude those who do not have money or who do not occupy high-profile positions. Literature explored so far has not shown how this imbalance in

the formation of public opinion can be addressed in newspapers. In the current study, ownership of columns in newspapers is seen as an area worth investigating with the assumption that it contributes to exclusions and “colonization of the public sphere by business” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p.203).

This aspect of prioritising business and thinking of commercial gains has consequences. As Chisoni (2014) argues, it means that objectivity is compromised, especially when Malawian media begin to regard news as a commodity. Moreover, the Malawian media may sometimes compromise on their independence by focusing on the commercialisation of news. Chisoni claims that such commercialisation can be so extreme that the media set their own agenda and form “their own worldview to create a smokescreen of real burning issues affecting the media” (Chisoni, 2014, p.63). This would suggest that during commercialisation, the media turn away from reality, even to the extent of inventing a context through which they view events. These assertions by Chisoni (2014) regarding commodification and commercialisation require more evidence in order to be corroborated. Nonetheless, public opinion appears to be influenced by media, even though that influence may vary depending on context. When media begins to promote partisan perspectives, as noted by Chisoni, then there are several implications, including, on the one hand, a mistaken belief in what the media say or, on the other hand, a loss of confidence in the newspaper’s watchdog role. This is why it is important to determine the extent to which The Daily Times as a newspaper contributes to the formation of public opinion.

2.7 Challenges Facing the Media in Malawi

There are three broad challenges which the media in Malawi face, namely, political challenges, socio-economic challenges and new digital technology.

The political challenges emerge from the observation that power is structured around political factions leading to the political polarisation of the media. For example, as observed by UNESCO (2022),

State-owned and funded media, namely MBC and MANA (Malawi News Agency), are controlled by political factions under the central command of the ruling parties, while commercial or community media are prone to align or from time to time, shift editorial policies to any political faction. (p.27)

The above observations make one raise the question about the ability of the mass media to serve the public interest in Malawi. The media seem to serve the interests of the political elite and the literate audience rather than the public interest.

The control which ruling parties have had on state-owned media especially MBC has been well documented. Mhagama (2015) has cited the example of two governments which have used MBC as a propaganda tool in the multiparty era. Mhagama's examples are the United Democratic Front and the Democratic Progressive Party. He argues that they have used MBC to advance their political agendas just as the Malawi Congress Party did under the single party rule (pp.13-14). The idea that state-owned media are controlled by ruling parties has also been suggested by Sharra (2020). He notes,

Contrary to its mandate as stipulated under the Public Service Obligations 109(2) in the Malawi Communications Act 2016, MBC used as a mouthpiece of the government party while politicians in opposition are denied access and have to rely on private media. (p.5).

The above observations imply that the ruling political parties which form governments after elections in Malawi tend to use state-owned media to serve their own interests and their cronies. Manda (2015) also argues that the media in Malawi are characterised by ethnic polarisation. In the Malawian context, it is thus not only a case of political differences but also tribal and regional ones. The ethnic and the political often overlap, especially when one thinks of politicians who come from a designated region, and whose political parties are associated with particular regions. The suggestion is that politicians from the same ethnic group tend to support their cronies.

Apart from using state-owned media to churn out propaganda, ruling political parties also use state machinery to make the media's job difficult or even impossible. An example is the use of the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) to silence media companies that were accused of defaulting on taxes. As State of the Newsroom reports, "In June 2018, the public tax collector, sealed Times Group (registered as Blantyre Newspapers Limited) headquarters at Ginnery Corner in Blantyre over alleged failure by the company to remit taxes" (2021, p.13). The Times Group is not the only company that was once closed by the MRA. Nation Publications Limited was also closed in October 2019 "over K675 million in unpaid taxes" (State of the Newsroom, 2021, p.13).

State of the Newsroom (2021, p.13) reports, “MRA said that the bill was for VAT, corporate tax, fringe benefit tax, and fines for withholding tax and PAYE for the period between 2011 and 2016”.

The above examples illustrate some of the ways in which state machinery has been used to victimise media houses. In order to avoid such victimisation, and also in order to benefit from powerful political factions, some private and community media tend to align themselves with certain political parties.

Private and community media have to choose between supporting the ruling political parties or being against them. The choice between two options creates a dilemma in the media (UNESCO, 2022). This dilemma is between the media that chooses to support the political party in power and the media that chooses to be against the political party in power (UNESCO, 2022). The media which align themselves with ruling political parties do so in view of perceived benefits. The choice that is made has an impact on the media’s editorial policy. The editorial policy may thus be subject to shifts “in support or in opposition to the ruling party factions” (UNESCO, 2022, p.27).

The second challenge is the socio-economic. The socio-economic milieu in which the media in Malawi operates has been the focus of some studies (Chisoni, 2014; UNESCO, 2021) in Malawi. In this effort, media scholars have analysed the Malawian society from a socioeconomic point of view in order to understand the economic hurdles confronting the media.

The economic hurdles are worth considering here because they have a potential of “limiting the effectiveness and pro-activeness of our media” in its watchdog role of promoting accountability and transparency (Chisoni, 2014, p.61).

The print media in Malawi faces a number of economic challenges. These challenges include tax-burdens introduced by the government in 2010. The media are said to be operating under dire conditions from an economic perspective (UNESCO, 2022). These tax-burdens include, “a 16.7 % value added tax on the cover price of print products in addition to a 15% import duty on newsprint and other imported inputs” (UNESCO, 2022, p.28). In order to keep floating in the industry, media companies have to raise the

prices of newspapers in some cases. Raising the prices may lead to poor sales, since some of the consumers may be reluctant to pay over a thousand kwacha for a newspaper when that money could be used for other purchases, such as food.

The other reason why print media are almost shrinking is given by Manda (2007), who attributes the decline to lack of expansion in of the advertising base and the high cost of newsprint as well as lack of foreign exchange. This is critical to note as it has contributed to the exiting of some newspapers from the print media arena.

The third challenge which print media in Malawi are facing is the introduction of alternative digital media as sources of news. These alternative digital media are online platforms such as Whatsapp and Facebook. UNESCO (2022, p.28) observes, “The market is shrinking further as existing customers are switching to online media as a source of ‘free’ news and information”. This remains a big economic challenge to mainstream print media organisations in Malawi. UNESCO (2022) has also stated that even though “mainstream print media organizations run online versions of their print publications, such outlays do not offer much return on investment” (p.28). This suggests that media houses have to look for extra sources of revenue. This extra source of revenue is sometimes advertising. But this also has its challenges. UNESCO (2022, p.21) states that, “Advertising and sponsorship revenue available to the media is limited because Malawi’s labour market structure is dominated by the informal economy where workers have inadequate social and income security”.

In order to survive in business, private media have also applied for reductions on valueadded tax. As stated by the EU report (2019), media houses advocate for tax reductions and exemptions. This has resulted in a culture among journalists of requesting and receiving money, “for instance, for transportation to attend political rallies” (p.20).

The challenges discussed above highlight the need for conducting a study which can find out strategies or measures which enable the existence of the media in Malawi amidst these challenges. Such a study is relevant because the media are expected to defend certain normative values in their work hence their potential to contribute to watchdog reporting.

2.8 The Role of Mass Media in Democracy around the Globe

Democracy in this section simply refers to various forms of participation which can be enabled by mass media. The underlying assumption is that democracy opens up “possibilities for more pluralistic and open communicative practices and a deeper, critical exercise of investigative journalism” to which the media serve as vehicles for a dialogic public sphere (Gramajo, 2014, p.139). Some of the roles which news media perform include the following, firstly, they act as a fourth arm of the government by challenging political leaders to be accountable to those they govern; secondly, news media help in the promotion of freedom of expression by opening up spaces for deliberation; thirdly, news media provide various publics with information for informed decisions to take place.

2.8.1 The Democratic Role of Mass Media in North America

This section considers the democratic role of mass media in North America in particular the United States and Canada. In some cases, this section shall point to the similarities between the aforementioned countries. The main reason for reviewing literature on these two countries is that democracy is considered to be well-established. In this milieu, mass media play an important role in promoting deliberative democratic processes. However, as this review shows, the media face some challenges in performing their roles.

In both of these countries mass media are owned by media conglomerates. The concentration of media ownership has also led to an increase in “fragmentation of media markets and outlets” (Eid & Buchanan, 2005, p.3). Media owners can control what is published, especially since, as noted by Eid and Buchanan, establishing mainstream media requires a considerable amount of capital. The first challenge is that media owners have the ability to set an agenda for the citizens. For example, in the United States, the mainstream media’s democratic role has been criticised, taking into consideration its ability to set the agenda. Josepher (2017) claims that mainstream media can influence news presentation, even shaping which stories are prioritised (p.1). Some examples of mainstream media outlets in the United States include; the New York Times, Fox News and CNN. Chomsky (1997, p.1) has called these media, “the elite media” or agenda setting media because most of their audience are privileged people

and most of them form part of the political elite. Part of this agenda setting includes choosing stories that might be considered sensational. As noted by Bogart (2005),

In newspapers, as in all media, there is a continual conflict between the satisfaction of the producers' professional imperative and the more lucrative satisfaction of the public's appetite for the sensational or the titillating. (p.87)

The implication of the observation above is that media can sometimes bring irrelevant issues in the public domain rather than focusing on substantial issues that can contribute to the public opinion formation.

The democratic role of the media in United States has also been contested based on other premises apart from the aspect of agenda setting. Some authors have considered the fact that newspapers contribute to partisan politics in the United States. Anderson and McLaren (2012, p.832) have cited Goldberg (2001) as being known for “famously argued (arguing) that the major news media in the United States are biased with a liberal political agenda”. However, Anderson and McLaren (2012, p.832) also note that this claim has been rebutted by Alterman (2003) who has counter-argued that the media focus on safe-guarding its owners' corporal interests. In submission, it might be suggested that the democratic role of the media in the United States is contested especially as far as news media are concerned.

The contestation referred to above has also been highlighted because of developments related to digitisation. As noted by Eid and Buchanan (2005),

Digitization has taken hold in the United States and Canada, increasing commodification and cross ownership of all forms of communication, from movies and music to written word, and bringing together once separate domains of print, broadcasting, telecommunications and computer technology. (p.3)

Information and education are services which are important in a democracy. However, even these essential services are commodified in the United States. As argued by Eid and Buchanan (2005),

Media whose primary goals are to inform and educate, such as the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the U.S. and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in Canada, have used the Web to enhance their mandate, with accessible and interactive sites. (p.5)

The creation of such sites enables media companies to market their products, which means that news is not necessarily the only or main priority on the online forums.

Moreover, the Internet has also negatively impacted the media especially the traditional news media in the United States as readers have tended to go for the so-called free news which is sourced through the Internet (Kirchhoff, 2010, p.1). In addition, advertisements are also falling, thereby affecting the revenue base. Kirchhoff (2010, p.1) argues, “Newspapers historically have depended on advertising for about 80% of revenues”. Kirchhoff (2010, p.1) also notes that “print readership is falling, further cutting into subscription and advertising revenues”.

This state of affairs is also prevalent in Canada. According to Fry (2017, p.12), revenue is affected negatively since more readers and advertisers opt for the digital platforms. Print media is thus challenged by digital media, especially since digital media often publishes media for free. Cost and accessibility are therefore among the variables which affect the form of media chosen by owners, and which has led to print media being produced together with digital media.

2.8.2 The Democratic Role of the Mass Media in Latin America

Boas (2012, p.1) has argued that, “In Latin America, the mass media are sometimes referred to as a cuarto poder, or ‘fourth power’ to denote their potentially crucial role in safeguarding and deepening democracy”. Boas (2012, p.1) further claims, “By reporting on wrongdoings and malfeasance as well as achievements and good governance, the media can hold politicians accountable and help citizens make informed decisions about their choice of leaders”. The extent to which the mass media can play these roles without compromise is contentious. In this line of thought, Albuquerque (2019, p.908) has argued that the development of “a truly democratic media” which can perform the fourth estate function in Latin America is hampered by “the economic foundations of the media systems in Latin American societies”.

The media in Latin America are challenged in serving the public interest because of lack of autonomy of journalists and the lack of freedom of the press as a whole (Albuquerque, 2019, p. 908). This challenge is exemplified by “censorship, economic pressures and political and legal harassment of media organizations (Kellam & Stein, 2016), and violence against journalists” (Albuquerque, 2019, p.909). This idea has been corroborated by Hughes and Lawson (2005, p. 10) who have argued that media in Latin America “are hardly free from threats and pressures from political actors of all stripes, including government officials”. Consequently, press freedom is said to be highly eroded.

Freedom of the press in Latin American countries is undermined by state actors. Ramirez and Guerrero (2017, p.44) while citing Freedom House report (Dunham, 2016) note that only Chile and Uruguay can be described as ‘free’ in terms of press freedom, while Honduras, Mexico, Cuba, Ecuador and Venezuela are not categorised as countries that enjoy press freedoms. Other countries in the region, such as Argentina, Brazil and Colombia, are classified by Freedom House as partially free. The point is that freedom for the press is important if the mass media are to serve the public interest, which may include exposing and questioning decisions made by state leaders. Mastrini (2019, p.1) argues that in Latin America the mass media “have followed a commercial logic of operation with strong de facto political leanings”. This idea is also corroborated by Becerra and Wagner, (2018, p.89) who note that “The Latin American media system has been guided by a commercial logic, with private groups prevailing and lukewarm accompaniment by the state media, which also adopted a commercial rationale”.

An example which can be cited here is that of Brazil where “the media system is highly concentrated and deeply marketized. Its core is commercial broadcasting, owned by private corporations controlled by a handful of individuals” (Couldry, *et al.* 2017, p.530). Additionally, there are also media ownership patterns which affect the pluralism of voices and diversity of opinions.

Media ownership structures show that in Latin America most media houses are “controlled by wealthy families or individuals with conservative leanings” (Boas, 2011, p.1). According to Boas, politicians often become media owners and use broadcasting concessions as mouthpieces (2011, p.1). Giving an example of the Brazilian context,

Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, p.179) have argued that in terms of regional media: “regional newspapers and broadcasting companies are typically owned by local oligarchs who use them to solidify their political control”. What is questionable here is how these media negotiate between public interest and the commercial. It appears that the mass media are simply used for solidifying political control rather than serving the public interest in Brazil, an aspect which Hallin and Papathanassopoulos refer to as “instrumentalization” of the media. They claim that,

Instrumentalization of the news media by oligarchs, industrialists, parties or the state obviously implies that journalistic autonomy will be limited. Journalists will at times have to defer to their political masters, to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's”. (p.181)

This state of affairs has led to a scenario where in some cases the media are left unregulated. For instance, Kitzberger (2017) observes,

In Latin America, political elites have tended to leave the media field unregulated in exchange for control over political content. Media businesses have therefore been able to flourish as long as they have accommodated these limits. (p.5)

The ability to generate public opinion by these media is in doubt given that they serve as mouthpieces for the political elite and journalistic autonomy is not respected.

The concentration of ownership patterns has also been noted by Ramirez and Guerrero (2017, p.48) who have argued that historically, most mass media in Latin America have been concentrated in powerful conglomerates. The biggest conglomerates have been “of the Hispanic and Portuguese-speaking worlds” (Ramirez & Guerrero, 2017, p.48). An example of the media in Brazil can also be considered here. In Brazil, the first biggest commercial conglomerate became Associated Dailies and Radio Broadcasters (Ramirez & Guerrero, 2017, p.48). As noted by Albuquerque (2019), when media property is in the hands of a few family-owned organisations, the lack of pluralism affects the quality of journalism. Public service tends to be undermined, as only a few powerful voices have the final say.

2.8.3 The Role of Mass Media in Democracy in South Africa

The role of the South African media in democracy is heavily contested (Wasserman, 2020, p.451). This contestation can also be seen when one examines South African media's capacity to serve the public interest. Wasserman notes,

The media itself bears the characteristics of the continuing severe socio-economic inequalities in the rest of South African society, and especially the print media have been accused of serving mostly the elite. (p.451)

The second premise which Wasserman posits in criticising the South African media is based on the media's tendency to set an agenda. This criticism is premised on "the view that the media largely caters for a societal elite and that media agendas do not resonate with the poor, the youth and the marginalised" (Wasserman, 2020, p. 456) as it would be expected in a mediated public sphere where participation is from all angles.

The role of the media in democratic South Africa leaves a lot to be desired. There are many public interests in South Africa which are not equally represented by the media. For instance, as noted by Wasserman, et al (2018, p.4) the rising cases of protests on poor "service delivery" in South Africa are evidence of marginalised citizens' attempt to make their voices heard. Wasserman, et al (2018) also note,

The fact that communities take to the streets in an attempt to make their voices heard, raises questions about their ability to speak out in other forums, or the failure of other mechanisms—such as the media.... (p.4)

The implication of the above observation is that, demonstrations may be linked to an absence of forums through which the people may express themselves, and these forums include print and online media.

The media in South Africa are also affected in the performance of the democratic role by commercialisation. The motivation to get profit is high in the mainstream media, leading to high commercialisation (Wasserman et al, 2018, p.7). Wasserman et al (2018) also argue that,

In chasing after higher Living Standard Measure (LSM) categories, the mainstream media often have to package their news frames that speak to whims and caprices of wealthy audiences. (p.7)

There are two points which can be made here; first, the observation that the media are dominated by the elite who can easily influence the media agenda to the detriment of the poor masses; second, this tendency to set an agenda by the media raises “the question of whether the media are not negating their traditional roles as the fourth state in pursuit of commercial gain” (Wasserman, *et al.* 2018, p.7). With this context, which emphasises poor representation of the masses’ voice in the media while promoting commercialisation, the news agenda is likely to cater for the interests of those who can afford to pay for advertisements or to consumers who will be attracted to the commercial aspects of the media (Wasserman 2020, p.454). This begs the question of how best the relationship between the commercial and public interest can be negotiated. The failure of the media to contribute to democracy has also been attributed to ownership patterns of the media in South Africa. This is similar to what has been noted above regarding the North and Latin American contexts. The conglomerates in South Africa are controlled by white people leading to a lack of diversity (Govenden, 2019, p.21). Wasserman and De Beer (2005, p.39) argue that the print media’s class base has not changed despite attempts to change racial make-up of owners and editorial staff.

Regarding the media conglomerates, Govenden (2019, p.18) has cited what he calls the Big Four: Independent Media, Tiso Blackstar Group (formerly Times Media); Media24 (Naspers is the parent company), and Caxton. He also notes that the Mail & Guardian is also an important player in media circles. All these companies were started in the apartheid era (Govenden, 2019, p.18).

The media’s role in South Africa faces challenges despite the free environment in which they operate. Wasserman (2020) has rightly argued that although the media in South Africa have become freer to act as a watchdog for political power since the dawn of democracy, the relationship between the government and the media shows signs of strain (p.455). He cites examples of intolerance for media criticism by politicians, and the attempted exploitation of the media agenda for political gain. These are therefore

some of the media challenges in South Africa, and, as noted above, such challenges have a negative impact on news production in the country.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented literature on the role of the media in democracy. These roles include; acting as a fourth arm of government by challenging politicians to be accountable, informing various publics and promoting public opinion. The chapter has established that the media are challenged in performing these normative roles. The key challenge is that there is usually a trade-off between public interest and the commercial imperatives which are considered the bedrock of the mass media. The democratic role which the media play varies from country to country even though the challenges the media face in carrying out such roles are similar in many respects. This review has also established research gaps in the Malawian media industry which shall be filled by the current research study on the commercial versus the public interest: the case of The Daily Times newspaper.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the following elements; research design, data collection procedures, sample size, study population, data analysis techniques and ethical considerations. The section on ethical consideration is pivotal to this entire work. This introductory part also offers definitions of three critical terms; research, research methods and research methodology, respectively. Firstly, Leedy and Ormrod (2015, p.20) have defined research as “a systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting information—data—in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon, which we are interested [in] or concerned [about]”. Apart from understanding a phenomenon, research can also help to arrive at a solution or solutions to a problem by making certain generalisations through the deployment of a theory (Kothari, 2004, p.2). As a systematic process, a study is expected to use research methods and research methodology. In this chapter, the term research methods is understood to mean specific procedures for collecting and analysing data whereas research methodology refers to the overall philosophical-foundational approach to studying a topic or problem (Dawson, 2007, p.15; Kothari, 2004, pp.7-8). These definitions have informed and guided the study’s usage of the above terms.

3.2 Research Design

A research design can be described as “an operating model or blueprint for a research project, which accounts for internal reasoning (causality) and external reasoning (generalizability)” (Griffie, 2012, p.44). In other words, a research design “stipulates the parts of the research project, how they are arranged, and how they function” (Griffie, 2012, p.44). It includes all the aspects regarding what, where, when, how much and by what means a study will be carried out (Kothari, 2004).

The current study has utilised a case study design, thus focusing on The Daily Times newspaper in Malawi. A case study design forms part of qualitative analysis (Kothari, 2004).

It involves “a careful and complete observation of a social unit, be that unit a person, an institution, a cultural group or even the entire community” (Kothari, 2004, p.113). This design is appropriate for this study because of the following reasons: firstly, this study seeks to offer an intensive investigation of two related elements in newspaper media: commercial and public interests, secondly; the scope of this study is limited due to time and financial constraints and lastly, this study utilises key informant interviews in its collection of primary data which focuses on qualitative data.

This study uses key informant interviews in collecting primary data. Primary data is crucial to this study in order to address the research gaps which were identified in chapter two. The study also uses secondary data which includes a sample of 120 newspapers covering a period of six months from June to November of 2020. These newspapers are gathered from the Archives of The Daily Times newspaper therefore the researcher finds them reliable, adequate and appropriate for the study.

3.3 Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the overall philosophical-foundational approach to studying a topic or problem (Dawson, 2007, p.15; Kothari, 2004, pp.7-8). The current study has deployed the qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methodology involves understanding and interpreting the meaning individuals attach to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). In this methodology, the investigator is preoccupied with understanding opinions and experiences of people about the world. The investigator is also interested in answering two related questions that is, ‘what’ people think and ‘why’ they think so.

3.3.1 A Justification of the Type of Research Methodology Used

The current study has deployed the qualitative research methodology. A qualitative method helps in exploring the nuances and complexities which may arise in negotiating the commercial versus the public interest in the daily work of journalists and managers in the news media specifically at the Times Group which publishes The Daily Times

newspaper. The relationship between the commercial and the public interest is assumed to be tensional, therefore requiring a delicate ethical balance. Through qualitative methods such as key informant interviews, this study has engaged editors, marketing officers and news writing journalists of The Daily Times newspaper in order to unravel how they negotiate the commercial versus the public interest. Therefore, the choice of a qualitative research method has largely been influenced by the nature of the problem under investigation but also by the data that is required to address the problem. By nature of the problem we refer to the fact that the problem under investigation requires experiences and opinions of people working in media. In this regard, the study will require non-numerical data in order to address the set objectives.

3.4 Research Approach

In research, there are two broad methods of reasoning: deductive and inductive approaches (Burney & Saleem, 2008). These two methods of reasoning are also considered as research approaches. Yeyaraj (2008, p.6) has observed that research can be classified based on two reasoning processes which are, inductive and deductive. Yeyaraji (2008, p.6) claims that, “The inductive method consists of studying several individual cases and drawing a generalization. Therefore, induction involves two processes—observation and generalization”. The point is that in inductive research approach, conclusions go beyond what is stated in the premises.

Deductive reasoning involves “applying a generally accepted principle to a specific case” (Yeyaraji, 2008, p.7). A deductive approach to research is also called a “top-down” approach (Yeyaraji, 2008, p.7). The current study has used a deductive approach. This choice is justified by the fact that this will enable the investigator to contribute, where necessary, to knowledge about the public sphere since deductive approaches generally contribute to knowledge (Saunders et al, 2007, p.117).

This study is grounded in the ethical theory of public communication, namely, the public sphere theory, which was proposed by Habermas (1989). This study uses public sphere theory to investigate the tensional relationship between commercial and public interest. The study focuses on the following key elements in this theory; representational nature of the public sphere, public opinion formation, participatory parity, equal access, rational-critical discourse.

3.5 Study Site

The site of this study is the Times Group offices which are situated in Blantyre City, geographically positioned behind National Bank of Malawi, Chichiri Service Centre, and in Southern Malawi. The site was chosen because it is the headquarters of the company which runs The Daily Times newspaper in Malawi. The other cities, such as Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Zomba have outlets of the Times Group. This implies that those editors and the marketing officer who form the study population would be found in Blantyre.

3.6 Sample Size

Sample size is an equally important decision in research before data collection. According to Creswell (2013, p.157), “One general guideline for sample size in qualitative research is not only to study a few sites or individuals but also to collect extensive detail about each site or individual studied”.

The sample size of this study has nine key informants. Four key informants are former employees of The Daily Times newspaper. These four former employees are composed of the following: two former journalists, one former marketing officer and one former editor. The other five key informants are current employees of The Daily Times newspaper. In this group, there are four editors representing editorial department and one marketing officer representing the marketing department. These participants have been purposefully sampled because they can provide the information the researcher is looking for in order to adequately respond to the research objectives. The study has used a sample of 120 newspapers. The researcher’s interest is in the quality of data collected and not in how many key informants will provide that data.

3.7 Study Population

Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) define target population as the ideal population or actual population whom the researcher would really like to generalise the results of the study. But since this is often hard to find, Fraenkel and Wallen prefer the term accessible population which represents the realistic choice of the researcher.

This study makes use of the experiences and knowledge of nine purposively selected key informants. This population is composed of editors, marketing officers and article writing journalists of The Daily Times newspaper.

In this target population there was one female person and eight male persons. The target population was limited to one female person because that is what the research managed to access. The age range was from 25 to 50 years. All the key informants in the target population had experience of more than five years of working with mass media.

3.8 Data Collection Technique

Data collection technique refers to procedures followed in the process of gathering different forms of data. Creswell (2007, p.118) claims that data collection involves “a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions”. This process requires the researcher “to find people or places to study and to gain access to and establish rapport with participants so that they will provide good data” (Creswell, 2007, p.118).

The current study has used key informant interviews as a data collection method or technique. Data collection has been done through two ways. Primary data has been collected through Key Informant Interviews (KII). In general, key informants are people who know what is going on in the field the researcher is interested. They may be knowledgeable about the phenomenon the researcher is studying. In this study, data from interviews with the nine informants have been analysed using thematic content analysis. The idea is that after data collection, emerging themes are identified from the data set. This data is treated as primary evidence of the study. Secondary data is also collected from 120 newspapers.

The current study has collected primary data through key informant interviews, which include structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews generally involve the use of questionnaires in collecting data (Gill, et al. 2008, p.291). In these interviews “predetermined questions are asked, with little or no variation and no scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration”. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, do not “reflect any preconceived theories or ideas and are performed with little or no organization” (Gill, et al. 2008, p.291).

Semi-structured interviews have several key questions, but also allow for divergence on the part of the interviewer or interviewee (Gill et al, 2008, p.291). The current study has adopted the semi-structured type of interview because it allows for flexibility during

the course of the research, allowing the researcher to gather as much information as possible.

3.9 Sampling Method

Sampling methods are very critical to a study. This is the case because sampling methods inform the investigator on the need to collect enough data so as to adequately respond to the research objectives. Van Haute (2021, p.216) states, “Research sampling techniques (methods) refer to case selection strategy, i.e. the process and methods used to select a subset of units from a population”. For practical purposes, an investigator has to employ a sampling technique or method in order to arrive at the number of respondents in the study.

This study has employed purposive sampling method. Cohen, et al. (2007, pp.114-115) state that purposive sampling involves handpicking the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of the researcher’s judgement of the particular characteristics that are being sought. This helps the investigator to build a sample that responds to the needs rising from the issue at hand. The sample of the current study has nine key informants, who have been described in the section on the target population.

3.10 Data Analysis

Kawulich (2004, p. 97) while citing LeCompte and Schensul (1999) defines data analysis “as the process a researcher uses to reduce large amounts of collected data to make sense of them”.

The current study has used thematic content analysis as its data analysis method. Thematic content analysis which is generally used in qualitative studies “is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p.3352).

3.11 Observance of Research Ethics

Observation of ethical principles is very critical to any study that deals with human beings. This is usually done in order to protect the dignity, welfare and rights of research participants. Saunders, *et al.* (2007) note that research ethics

...relates to questions about how we formulate and clarify our research topic, design our research and gain access, collect data, process and store our data, analyse data and write up our research findings in a moral and responsible way. (p.178)

The above observation implies that each stage in the research process has its underlying ethical issues. In the current study, the researcher obtained written informed consent from all the nine participants who constitute the key informants of this study. Apart from this informed consent, the current study has also undergone an ethical scrutiny by the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC) and got approved as protocol number (No. P.06/23/266). All these measures highlight the fact that the researcher is committed to carrying the research in an ethical manner by both respecting the key informants and the University of Malawi's ethical guidelines.

3.12 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has discussed a qualitative research design which it deploys. The chapter has also discussed the following elements; data collection and analysis methods, sample size, sampling techniques and study site. Additionally, the chapter also explained why participants in this study are purposefully sampled. The reason is that, the investigator is looking for individuals with expertise on the problem under investigation, that is, the tensional relationship between commercial interests and the public interest in news media. The chapter also provided a justification on the choice of key informant interviews in data collection. The chapter was ended with a brief justification on the need for the ethical approval before conducting a study which deals with human beings. The investigator stated that ethical principles were adhered to in order to ensure that the rights and welfare of the participants were upheld in the whole process of implementing the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from both primary and secondary data. The raw data as collected by the researcher can be found in the appendices section. This chapter also contains the following elements: the commercial versus the public interest problem, restatement of the research objectives, proposed and actual key informants, a thematic presentation of key findings from interviews, reflection of the commercial versus the public interest in newspapers and themes generated from published copies of The Daily Times newspaper.

4.2 The Commercial versus the Public Interest Problem

The research study set out to investigate the problem which news media face in performing two critical roles; being a business which can generate profit and remain afloat while ensuring that they serve in the public interest by, among other issues, contributing to the formation of public opinion. At the beginning of the study, the researcher observed that there was a tension between these two roles and often requiring a delicate ethical balance. Therefore, the researcher took up the case of The Daily Times newspaper in order to investigate how it negotiates commercial versus public interest.

4.3 Restatement of the Objectives of the Research Study

This study was guided by one main objective and four specific objectives. The main objective of this research study was to investigate how The Daily Times newspaper negotiates the commercial versus the public interest. The specific objectives which would have enabled the achievement of this main objective were: (1) To investigate how The Daily Times newspaper performs as an organ of public opinion formation in the political community of Malawi (2) To investigate management strategies which The Daily Times newspaper uses to remain afloat on the unpredictable market of the print news media industry (3) To investigate if The Daily Times newspaper faces both

pressure and neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters. (4) To investigate if printed (published) copies of The Daily Times newspaper reflect a negotiation between the commercial and the public interest.

4.4 A Thematic Presentation of Key Findings from Interviews

This section presents themes which were gathered from interviews with key informants. They have been categorised into three, based on the objectives which the researcher had set before the implementation of the research study.

4.5 The Daily Times newspaper as an arena for public opinion formation

In the first objective the researcher intended to investigate how The Daily Times newspaper performs as an organ for public opinion formation in the political community of Malawi.

The study's findings under this objective can be summarised under the following themes: provision of checks and balances in both private and public sector, provision of accurate information for decision making (for citizens to make informed choices in elections), public debate and deliberation in Malawi's democracy, reporting news in a fair and balanced manner and readership and circulation in urban areas.

4.5.1 Provision of checks and balances in both private and public sector

The researcher found out that at least nine of the key informants who represented both current employees and former employees of The Daily Times newspaper agreed that The Daily Times newspaper provides checks and balances in both private and public sectors in Malawi. The findings show that The Daily Times newspaper plays a watchdog role in many ways. Some of the ways through which The Daily Times performs this role include the following: using an investigative approach to unpack critical issues before publishing a news story; using commentators to offer critical analysis; deliberately targeting policy makers/ duty bearers by providing balanced information so that these stakeholders can take appropriate decisions; raising an alarm (whistle-blowing) to the public by covering critical issues such as corruption, misuse of public funds and abuse of power; reporting on the financial status of both public and private entities to ensure accountability and by questioning the decisions, actions and inactions of both private and public entities. However, there was one informant who

had a different perspective on this aspect. The key informant noted that the newspaper exercises leniency towards its key advertisers, such as commercial banks and mobile companies.

4.5.2 Provision of accurate information for making informed decisions

The nine key informants who were interviewed in this research study share the view that The Daily Times newspaper provides accurate information for citizens to make informed decisions in democratic activities such as elections. Their responses can be summarised in the following themes: providing balanced and researched news articles which have been verified; covering manifestos of all political parties that are participating in an election; providing extensive news coverage on political party campaigns, rallies and candidate profiles; providing voter guides by summarising the candidates' positions on key issues and by publishing opinion pieces and editorials that present different viewpoints on elections.

4.5.3 Public debate and deliberation in Malawi's democracy

The views of the nine key informants who were asked to comment on this theme were varied. However, there was a consensus that The Daily Times fosters public debate and deliberation in Malawi's democracy. The Daily Times performs this role in the following ways: by providing an open arena for members of the general public to express views, such as the column My Point of View; by covering news that is balanced and unbiased; by reporting on news stories which resonate with people's needs; by being selective in the information that is published; by inviting readers to comment, share and respond on issues that are relevant to them and by providing a platform where diverse voices, opinions and perspectives are heard and discussed.

4.5.4 Reporting news in a fair and balanced manner

The nine key informants agreed that The Daily Times newspaper has put in place certain measures to ensure fairness in its reports. Some of these measures are: by promoting strict adherence to a Code of Conduct which has ethical values and principles; by enforcing strict gate-keeping on all materials to be published; by taking disciplinary action on anyone who diverts from the editorial policy; by ensuring that there is more than one voice in a news story; by striving to verify the facts behind a story to avoid spreading misinformation and by above all adhering to principles of journalism ethics.

However, there was one respondent from who said that The Daily Times newspaper is linked to the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and Kamuzu Banda's family "but it has over time tried to be independent and provides equal opportunities to everyone to be heard" (Informant F).

In general, the views of the nine key informants who were interviewed on the issue of fairness in news coverage reflect the existence of two internal documents: Editorial policy and Marketing policy to which the researcher did not have access. The researcher failed to access these documents because the key informants reported that they are internal documents which are not open to the public but also including the fact that these documents are not available for researchers. Failure to access these two documents affected the research because the researcher could not independently verify what the key informants reported against what is actually written in these documents. Thus, it was difficult to conclude with a high degree of certainty what the key informants reported in reference to these documents.

4.5.5 Readership and circulation in urban areas

The opinions of the nine key informants who were interviewed on this theme varied. One key informant did not agree that The Daily Times newspaper is an urban based newspaper and therefore an elite newspaper. However, the other eight key informants agreed that The Daily Times newspaper is primarily circulated at a price in urban and peri-urban areas because its target audiences are: decision makers, policy makers, office workers, middle class individuals, middle earners, job seekers and students: therefore, by design The Daily Times is circulated in urban and peri-urban areas to align with its target readership. Apart from this area of agreement, one key informant added that the traditional edition of The Daily Times newspaper finds its way into rural areas through relatives who might share it among their relatives there. Copies of The Daily Times newspaper are also found in National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) offices in districts "although not as timely as meant" (Informant F).

4.6 Keeping The Daily Times newspaper afloat

The researcher here wanted to investigate management strategies which The Daily Times newspaper uses to remain afloat on the unpredictable market of the print media industry which has led to the demise of other newspapers. The researcher based this

objective on the premise that media markets are unpredictable, unstable and volatile. The responses of the nine key informants have revealed that there are some management strategies which the Times Group has put in place to ensure that The Daily Times newspaper remains afloat amidst volatile markets. The responses of the key informants can be summarised in the following themes: making the traditional printed edition attractive to the consumer; investing in digital platforms to finance the printed edition; treading carefully--protecting the interests of clients in the news media business; transforming itself to fit the current media, social media and economic trends and using economies of scale.

4.6.1 Making the traditional printed edition attractive to the consumer

The key informants for this research study reported that The Daily Times newspaper is attractive to both advertisers and readers. The traditional printed edition uses high quality photos to appeal to the interests of the consumers. The Daily Times newspaper was said to have the ability to read the needs of its consumers. This helps the newspaper to maintain a good rapport with the advertisers who according to one key informant are the only source of income for the paper.

4.6.2 Investing in digital platforms to finance the printed edition

The key informants observed that apart from the traditional printed edition, there is also an electronic edition of The Daily Times newspaper. The e-edition is subscribed to by people even outside Malawi. This helps Times Group to generate revenue that is used to finance the traditional printed edition. Apart from the e-edition, there is also Times 360 Malawi which is used for breaking news that ends up in traditional printed edition in the following morning. The key informants further observed that online platforms enjoy more followership from readers and advertisers. This in the final analysis pays economic dividends.

4.6.3 Treading carefully—by protecting interests of clients in the news media business

The key informants consulted in this study revealed that The Daily Times newspaper owes its allegiance to the people it serves other than politicians or the government of the day. The newspaper is guided by its editorial policy and marketing policy in its operations. This is coupled with enforcing strict adherence to these policy documents.

However, one informant stated that the paper is kept independent from all influences whereas the second stated that the newspaper has a strong grounding in business.

4.6.4 Transforming itself to fit the current media, social media and economic trends

One key informant observed that The Daily Times has survived because of its innovative approach. The paper has undergone transformations just to fit the current media needs.

Another key informant added that “The Daily Times has survived and remained (remains) relevant due to innovation and a willingness to embrace change as a factor for growth” (Informant E).

4.6.5 Using economies of scale

One key informant stated that “The Daily Times survives because of the economies of scale where the same resources (for instance, financial and human) are used across all other channels such as Times Radio, Times TV, Times Online, The Sunday Times and Malawi News” (Informant E). The idea is that the Times Group uses the same employees in delivering services in all its media arenas. In this sense, it manages to increase production while lowering costs. In addition to this, another key informant observed that “the coming of sister media houses of Radio and Television also helps The Daily Times newspaper to have a back-up source of income when its revenue base shakes” (Informant F).

4.7 Experience of pressure and neglect from advertisers or sponsors

The key informants were asked if The Daily Times newspaper faces pressure from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters. Out of the nine key informants, eight key informants think that The Daily Times newspaper faces pressure from sponsors and advertisers who come from both the private and public sectors. There was only one key informant who expressed the view that the newspaper does not experience such pressure.

The key informants reported that pressure from advertisers and sponsors who come from both the private and public sectors is caused by the following: fear of negative news on products and the desire to have news without value published.

According to the key informants whom the researcher interviewed, fear of negative news on products is a big concern for most advertisers and sponsors because they are afraid of losing their consumers. Advertisers and sponsors achieve this by threatening to withhold advertising. According to one key informant, pressure from sponsors and advertisers culminates in internal pressure; the tension between the editorial department and the marketing department. The marketing department approaches the editorial department so that a certain news story which may harm the interests of their client should not be published, thereby protecting the client.

The key informants also noted that some advertisers and sponsors exert pressure on The Daily Times newspaper to publish news that has no news value or is not newsworthy. According to one key informant, advertisers and sponsors “exert this influence by having stories favourable to them published regardless of their news value or insisting that stories unfavourable to them be pulled off the page or force a retraction following a publication” (Informant E). According to another key informant the newspaper succumbs to this pressure for fear of losing clients. It eventually publishes news stories that are not newsworthy. The researcher also found out that this problem is exacerbated by the experience that The Daily Times depends on other institutions for its survival therefore “there are times when the customer’s interest is prioritised over the interest of the newspaper” (Informant D).

The researcher also found two different responses on this issue of whether The Daily Times experiences pressure from advertisers or other financing quarters. The key informant who said that The Daily Times does not experience such pressure also stated that there is a clear separation between the editorial department and the marketing department. According to this key informant, the editorial department is guided by the editorial policy whereas the marketing department is guided by the marketing policy. The second response which differed from the majority was that four key informants said that The Daily Times newspaper maintains its integrity as it serves the public and therefore it thrives by presenting “what is and not what people want” (Informant A).

The key informants were asked if The Daily Times experiences neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of advertising spend. In response to this question, two key informants out of a total of nine key informants were of the view that The Daily Times newspaper does not experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors. The remaining seven key informants agreed that the newspaper indeed experiences neglect from advertisers and sponsors. The responses of these key informants can be summarised in the following themes: politicians who lead the government may disagree with the newspaper's views; advertisers can migrate to new media where most audiences are other than traditional media and when the quality of print is bad.

Politicians who lead the government of the day can withdraw advertisements if the newspaper is not taking their direction or are very critical towards them. According to the key informants The Daily Times as a paper has experienced this state of affairs. According to one key informant, when this happens, the revenue targets are negatively affected since the government contributes to a huge percentage of revenue targets.

Advertisers and sponsors can also neglect the traditional edition of The Daily Times newspaper by opting for new media where most audiences are. According to one key informant, this is being addressed by adopting digital media platforms which help to compensate for revenue losses from the traditional edition.

Advertisers and sponsors can also neglect a newspaper when the print quality is very low. According to one key informant, in order to remedy this challenge, The Daily Times has improved the quality of its pictures and the quality of the newspaper itself in general. This makes the paper more attractive to advertisers and readers.

Apart from these findings, the researcher also found out two responses that differed from the ones discussed above. One key informant said that companies do not advertise in The Daily Times newspaper out of sympathy but rather based on their needs and wants, therefore the onus is always upon the newspaper to make itself available to such corporate needs.

According to this informant "it is the duty of the paper's marketing team to ensure that whenever those needs arise among the advertisers, The Daily Times is among the first

to be considered” (Informant F). The second different response was that newspapers in general are experiencing a decline in advertising adspend due to the number of free advertising forums on the internet as well as economic challenges.

4.8 Reflection on the Commercial versus the Public Interest in The Daily Times newspaper

This section presents what the researcher found out from the printed edition of the newspaper itself. The main focus here is on the coverage of the newspaper.

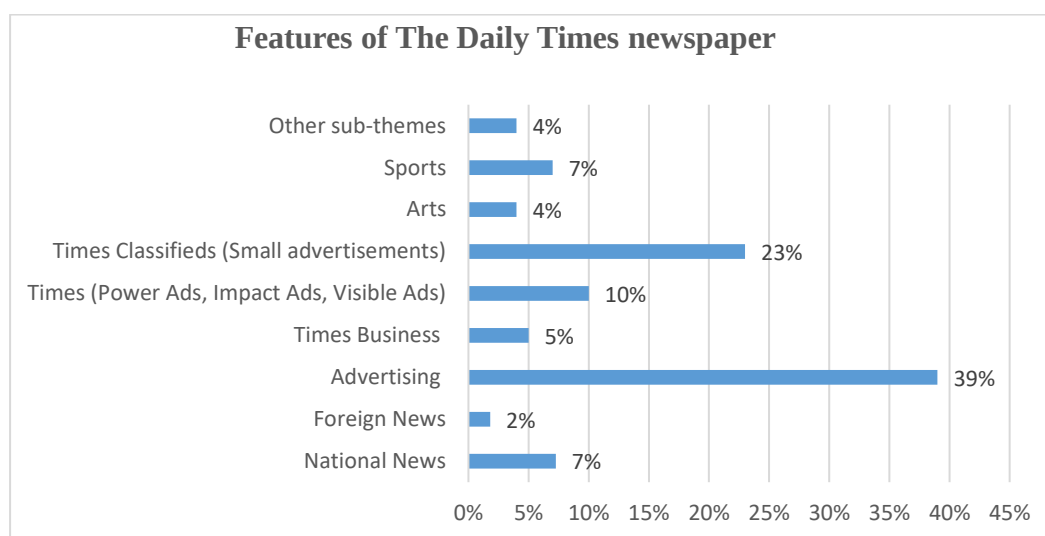


Figure 1: Features of Daily Times News Paper

Figure 1 shows that there are more advertisements in The Daily Times newspaper in comparison with political or public interest issues. Other sub themes that made up 4% are: Horoscope, Quick crossword, Cryptic crossword, Leisure, Cartoon, Notable quotes, Opinion (My Point of View), Opinion (We were there). The commercial side of the newspaper can be seen through Times Classifieds and Advertising.

4.9 Themes identified from copies of The Daily Times newspaper

The researcher identified themes and subthemes from a sample of 120 newspapers taken from the Archives of The Daily Times. The main focus was to establish themes that are prominent and can reflect the public interest. In other words, the researcher was answering the following question: how does The Daily Times newspaper reflect the public interest in its daily coverage of news stories? The researcher found out that The

Daily Times has a lot of themes which reflect the public interest. However, these themes appear to be overshadowed by themes from commerce which are covered on a daily basis, and which take most of the space in the newspaper.

In sum, the general observation was that themes from commerce tend to be featured on a daily basis but also form a substantial part of what the paper publishes, whereas those reflecting the public interest tend to be left out on some days in the course of The Daily Times' publication. The themes which reflect the public interest were arrived at based on the phenomenon being studied whereas the study used induction to analyse the subthemes, drawing from the news articles which were featured under National News. The researcher identified sixteen themes which reflected the public interest. The following are the themes: Health, Diseases, Safety, Education, Gender, Civil liberties, Law, Commerce, Environment, Agriculture, Democracy, Mortality, Public service provision, Corruption, Accountability and Religion. The section that follows presents these themes with different figures.

4.9.1 Coverage of the theme of Health

The theme of health was covered in The Daily Times newspaper with its subthemes. There were forty-three subthemes under the main theme of health in a period of six months. Out of this number, there were six recurrent themes: health challenges at a public hospital, health donations, Covid-19 response, Abortion bill, teenage pregnancies and family planning as figure 2 shows.

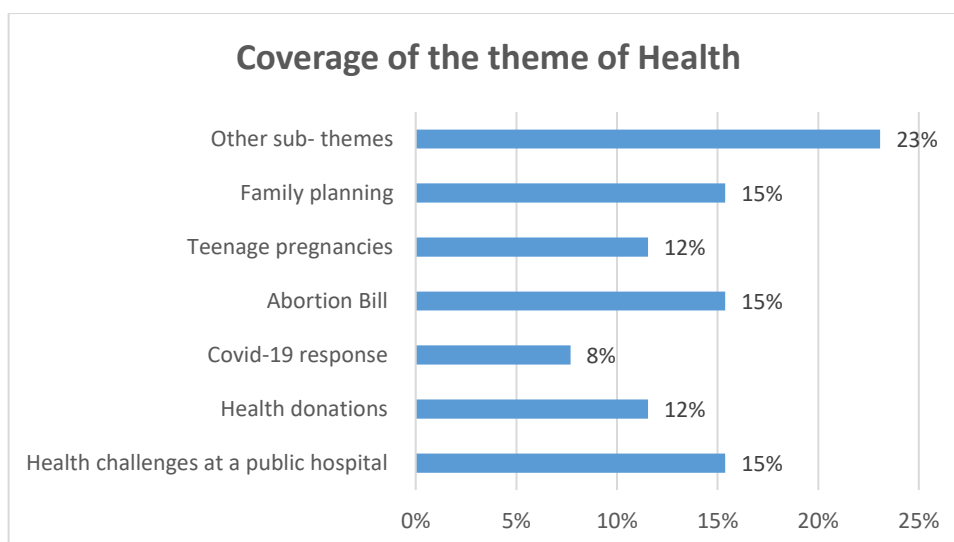


Figure 2: Coverage of the Theme of Health

Family planning, abortion bill and health challenges in public institutions are the themes that were covered more, representing 15% each. These were followed by teen age pregnancies and health donations with 12% representing each. Furthermore, a total of 23% was recorded representing the following sub-themes: Safe motherhood (maternal care), Cancer prevention awareness, HIV infections control, Cervical Cancer awareness, Calls for family planning, Diabetes day (ECOBANK). This is displayed in the Figure 2.

4.9.2 Coverage of the theme of Diseases

The Daily Times from June to November 2020 showed a consistency regarding the frequency of coverage as far as disease was covered. During this period, Covid-19 was covered as the main disease that Malawians were grappling with. Covid-19 was therefore a recurrent theme. Figure below shows how this theme was covered for a period of six months.

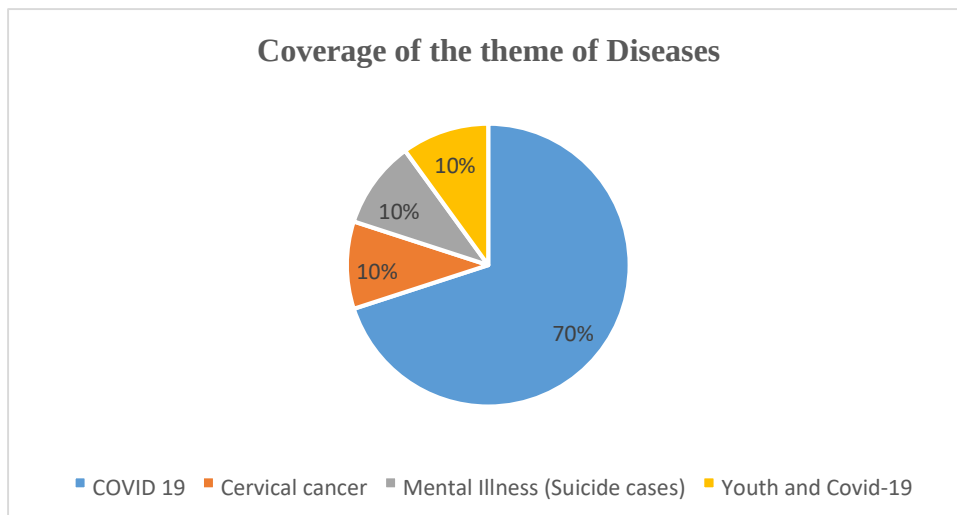


Figure 3: Coverage of Theme of Diseases

The Daily Times from June to November 2020 showed a consistency regarding the frequency of coverage as far as disease was covered. During this period, Covid-19 was covered as the main disease that Malawians were grappling with, representing 70% of the total coverage.

4.9.3 Coverage of the theme of Safety

The six-month period also showed a prevalence of the theme of safety in The Daily Times newspaper. The researcher observed that this theme appeared under fifty-six subthemes. Out of this number there were six recurrent themes: defilement of girls, rape of women, police arrests, crime issues, witchcraft and trafficking of persons. The figure below presents the coverage of this theme in a summary of a period of six months.

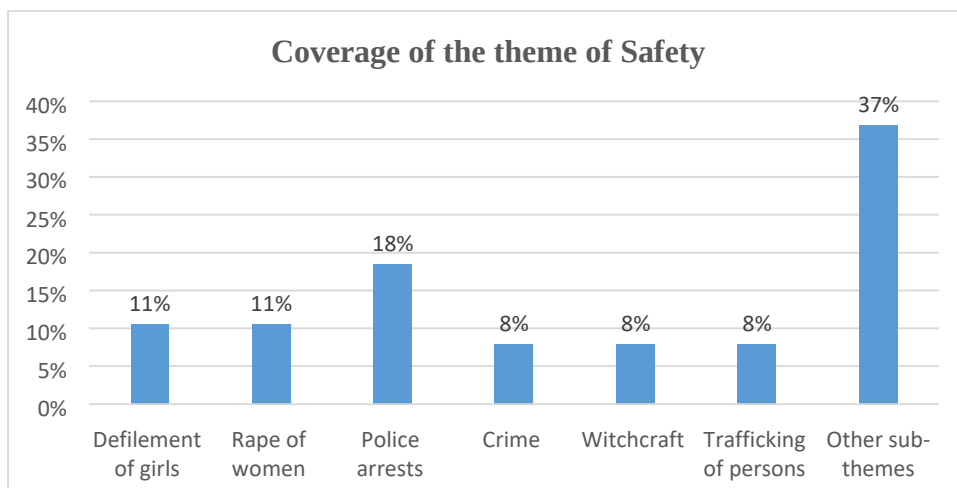


Figure 4: Coverage of the Theme of Safety

The research revealed a number of sub-themes under coverage of theme by safety in The Daily Times newspaper. Police arrests appeared more representing 18% of the total appearances as shown in Figure 4 above. Quite a number of sub-themes totalled up to 37%. These sub-themes are listed below:

Protecting adolescent girls, Sexual harassment of women, Ivory possession crimes, Fire accidents, Demands on protecting widows, Human trafficking fight, Child marriages concerns, Manhunt for girl defilement, Unplanned pregnancies for girls, Early marriages blame game, Lack of public trust in Police concerns, Punishment for rapists, The fight against child abuse fight, Elderly women protection.

4.9.4 Coverage of the theme of Education

News coverage of The Daily Times shows that education was a main theme during the six month period covered in the research. The researcher found twenty-six sub-themes that were covered under the theme of education. Out of this number, there were two recurrent themes: Malawi School Certificate of Examinations (MSCE) issues and Reopening of schools. The figure below shows the coverage of this theme in a summary.

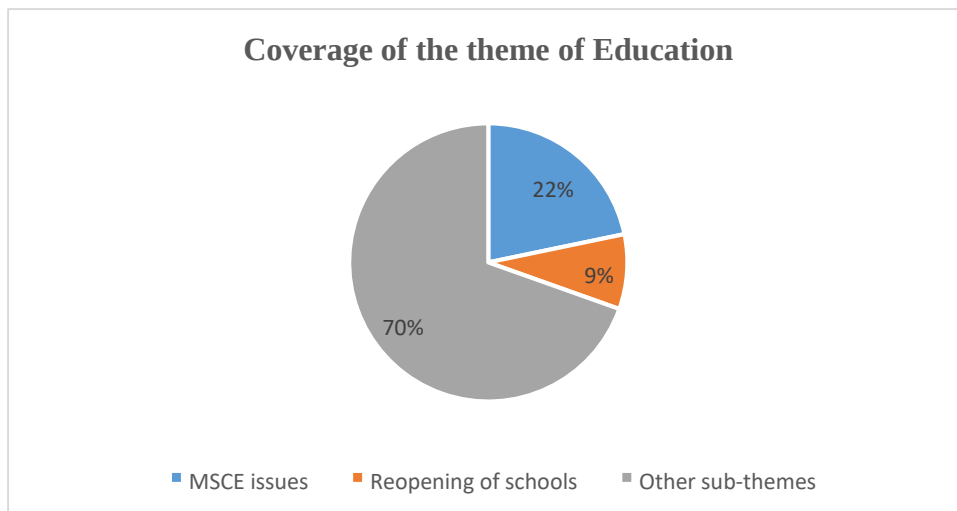


Figure 5: Coverage of the Theme of Education

Figure 5 above shows two recurrent issues with MSCE issues covering 22% of the total appearances followed by Reopening of schools (9%). Other sub-themes that totalled up to 70% are: Freedom to keep dreadlocks in schools, Educating the deaf, Students demand graduation, Sanitation challenges in schools, Technical education Private schools issues, Life Skills Curriculum review, Public universities, E-learning for technical colleges, Infrastructural challenges in schools, School funding projects, Resource challenges, The impact of Covid-19 on Education, Standard 8 Examinations, College of Health Science students with no upkeep allowances, Examination retake budget .

4.9.5 Coverage of the theme of Gender

Another theme that regularity appeared during the six-month period was that of gender. This theme was covered under some sub-themes which the researcher has identified. The researcher identified nineteen sub-themes. Out of this number there was only one recurrent theme: girl-child education. The figure below presents a summary of the coverage of this theme for a period of six months.

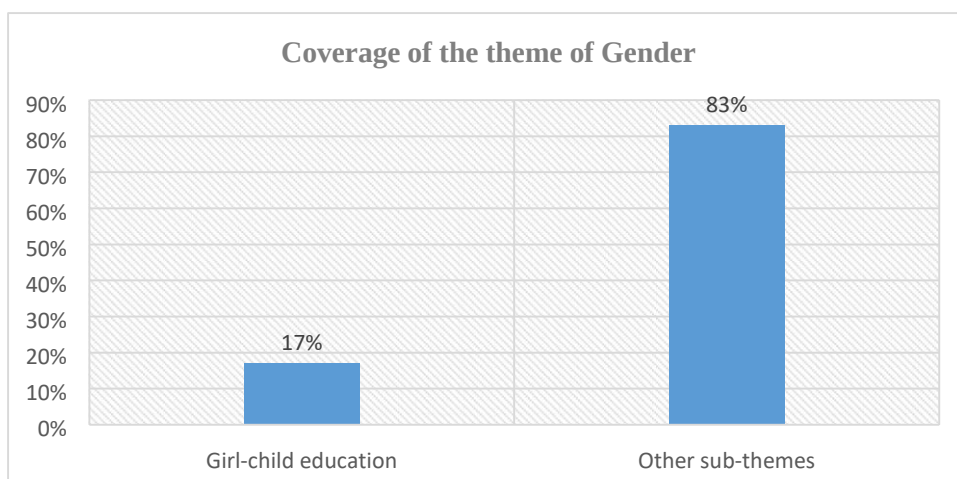


Figure 6: Coverage of the Theme of Gender

Results show that there was only one recurrent theme: girl-child education (17%). There was 83% of coverage that consisted of a various number of sub-themes with equal appearances as listed below: Early marriages for girls, Girl-child empowerment, Gender advocacy campaigns, Calls for women participation in governance, Women's health, Motivating the girl child, Low women's appointments on boards, Gender-balance in appointments, Girlchild rights, Concerns on protecting the girl child, Women in land issues, Girl-child defilement, Women empowerment, Gender-based violence, Girl-child pregnancies and Rising inequality.

4.9.6 Coverage of the theme of Civil Liberties

The Daily Times newspaper covered the theme of civil liberties for a period of six months. The theme appeared under a total number of thirty-three subthemes. Out of this number, there were two recurrent themes: demonstrations and rights. The figure below summarises the presentation of this theme.

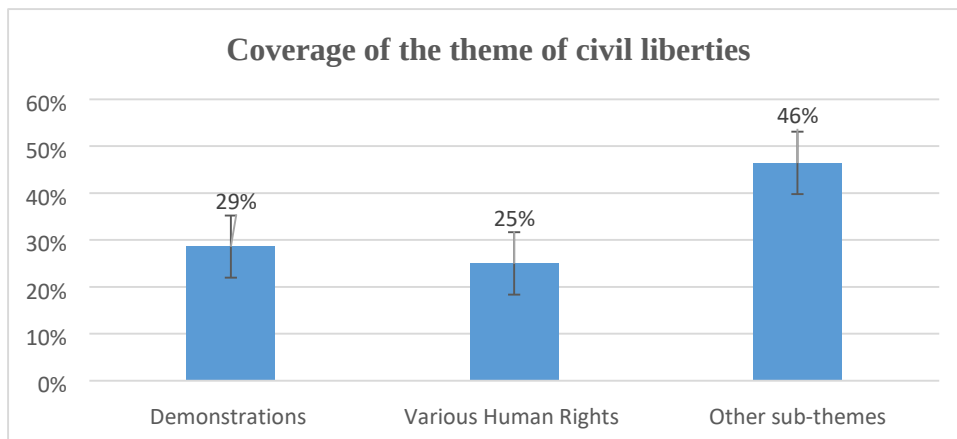


Figure 7: Coverage of the Theme of Liberties

The Daily Times newspaper covered the theme of civil liberties for a period of six months. The theme appeared under a total number of thirty-three subthemes. Out of this number, there were two recurrent themes: demonstrations (29%) and various human rights (25%) as shown in the above graph. Defilement march, Elderly women issues, Vendors concerns, Youth budget campaign, Youth concerns on one million jobs, Economic challenges facing the media, Prison in-mates empowerment, Refugees' issues, Motorcycle owners' protests, Independence Day celebrations, Discrimination against people with albinism, Criticisms on presidential appointments, and underprivileged persons were the sub-themes that equally contributed to the 46% shown in Figure 7.

4.9.7 Coverage of the theme of Law

The coverage of news by The Daily Times newspaper reflects the presence of the theme of law. The researcher identified forty-two sub-themes which fall under this main theme. The recurrent themes were: court cases, court rulings and death penalty. The figure below presents this theme in a summary.

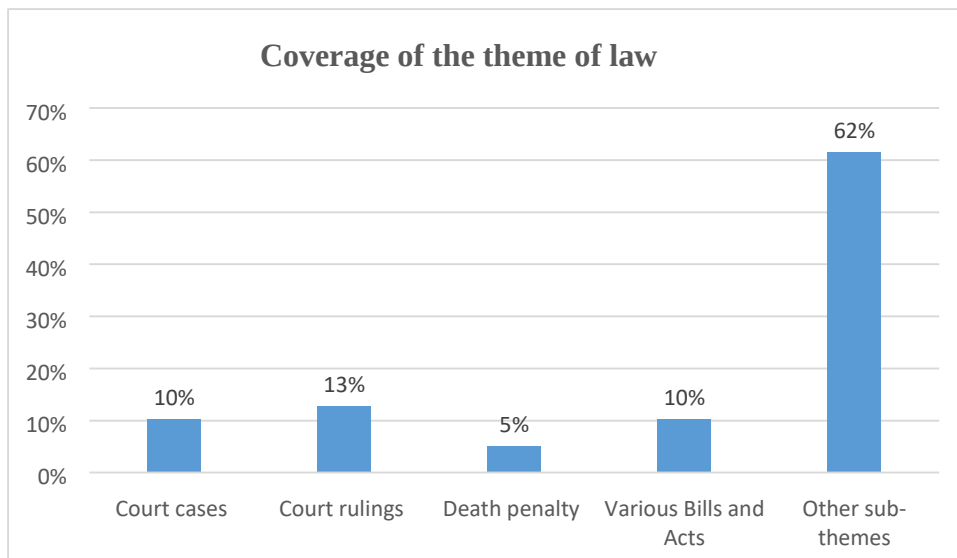


Figure 8: Coverage of the Theme of Law

The researcher identified forty-two sub-themes which fall under this main theme. The recurrent themes were: court cases, court rulings, Various Bills & Acts, and death penalty. Other sub-themes that dominated the coverage each representing an equal appearance are: Constitutional amendment, Judicial independence, Legal issues, Corruption allegations, Sexual abuse investigations, Public resources plundering investigations, Cement saga probe, Justice for prisoner's death, Prohibition of vending in restricted places, Sexual assault (Msundwe), Illegal mining cases, Chibuku beer smuggling, Parliament investigations, Marriage of minors (girls), Teenage pregnancies, Defilement of children, Lawlessness, Global prize for Constitutional Court judges, Public land protection, Lawlessness condemned, Condemning mob justice, Justice for landmine victims, War on child marriages, Wildlife crimes.

4.9.8 Coverage of the theme of Commerce

The theme of commerce is covered on a daily basis in The Daily Times newspaper. The recurrent themes for this main theme are four: Times Classifieds, Sponsored columns, advertising and Times Power advertisements. The figure below presents a picture of how these sub-themes appear in The Daily Times newspaper.

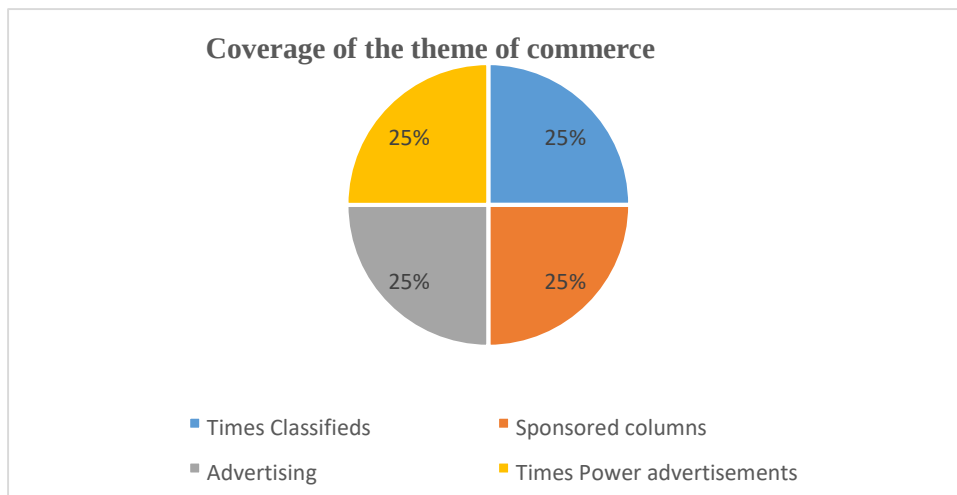


Figure 9: Coverage of the Theme of Commerce

The theme of commerce is covered on a daily basis in The Daily Times newspaper. The recurrent themes for this main theme are four: Times Classifieds, Sponsored columns, advertising and Times Power advertisements each representing 25% of the total outcomes.

4.9.9 Coverage of the theme of Environment

The theme of environment has also been identified in The Daily Times newspaper. This theme appeared under eighteen sub-themes. Out of this number there was one recurrent theme dealing with mining issues. The figure below summarises how this theme has been presented.

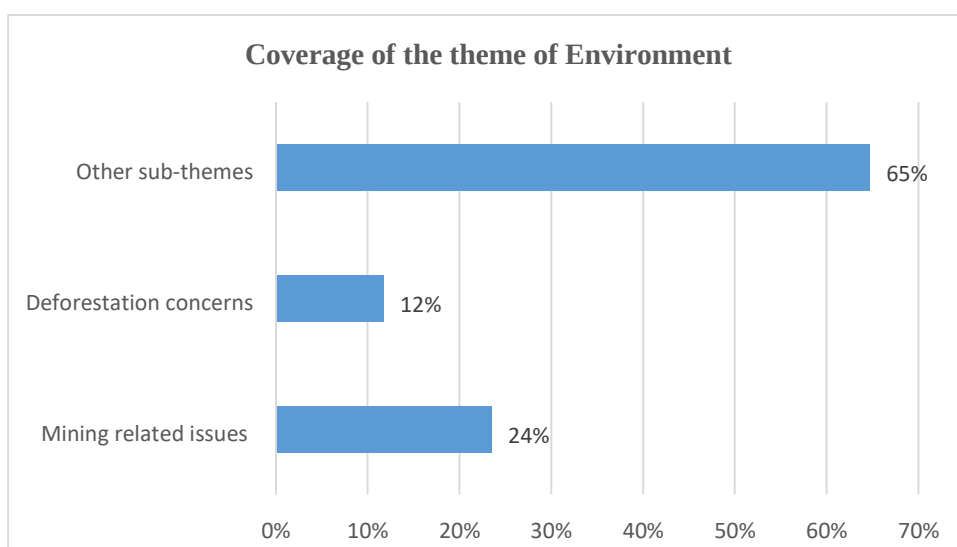


Figure 10: Coverage of the Theme of Environment

Results show that majority of reports representing 65% of the following reports of series of various sub-themes which had an equal occurrence: Waste management, Victims of heavy winds, Protection of forests, ESCOM felling trees (accountability calls), Environmental conservation, Accountability on land issues, Environmental concerns on coal power, Clean energy, Climate change concerns, Beautifying Malawi (Clean-up campaign) and Wildlife crimes. These were followed by mining related issues and deforestation concerns that reported 12% and 24% respectively.

4.9.10 Coverage of the theme of Agriculture

The theme of Agriculture was another theme which was covered regularly in The Daily Times newspaper. The researcher identified eighteen sub-themes which fall under this main theme. Out of this number, there were two recurrent themes: Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) and farming. The figure below presents this theme in a summary.

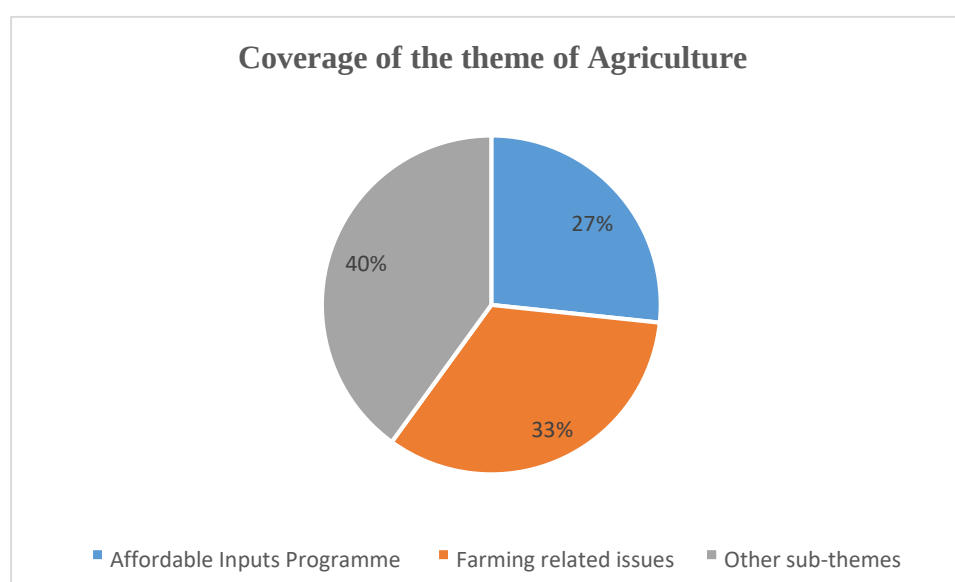


Figure 11: Coverage of the Theme of Agriculture

The theme of Agriculture was another theme which was covered regularly in The Daily Times newspaper. The researcher identified eighteen sub-themes which fall under this main theme. Out of this number, there were two recurrent themes: Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) and farming. Other sub-themes that equally comprise a total of 40% as shown in Figure 11 above are listed below: Pesticides, Food donations, Armyworm outbreak, The rise of food prices, Agro-ecology approaches, Agriculture (grain storage collapsing)

4.9.11 Coverage of the theme of Democracy

The theme of democracy has been identified in The Daily Times newspaper. This theme appeared under twenty-seven sub-themes. Out of this number there were four recurrent themes, thus, elections, political violence, political party politics and parliamentary budget meeting. The figure below summarises how this theme was covered for a period of six months.

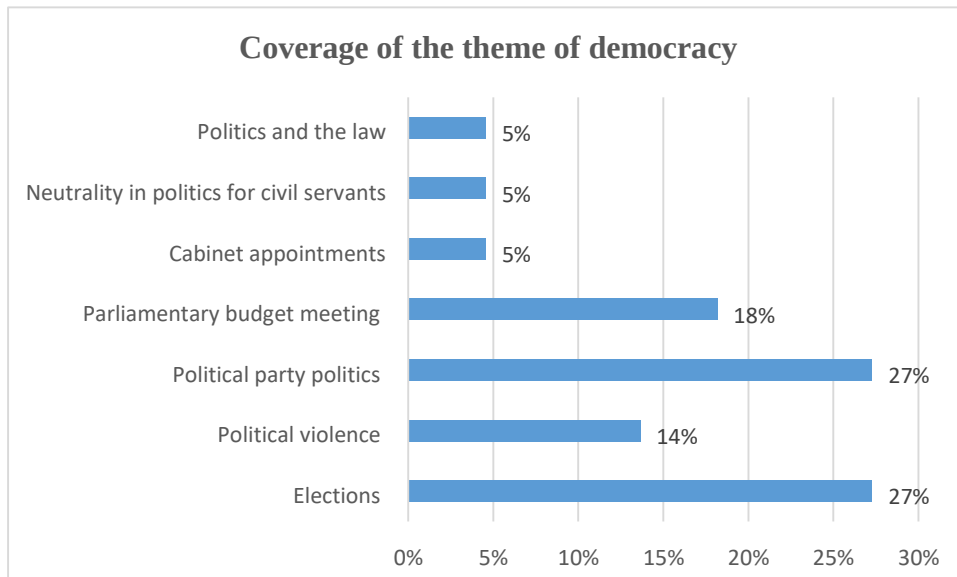


Figure 12: Coverage of the Theme of Democracy

The theme of democracy has been identified in The Daily Times newspaper. This theme appeared under twenty-seven sub-themes. Out of this number there were four recurrent themes, thus, elections (27%), political violence (14%), political party politics (27%), parliamentary budget meeting (18%). Politics and the law, cabinet appointments and neutrality in politics for civil servants each represented 5% coverage.

4.9.12 Coverage of the theme of Mortality

The coverage of news by The Daily Times newspaper reflects the presence of the theme of mortality. The researcher identified twelve sub-themes which fall under this main theme. There was one recurrent theme: deaths in road accidents. The figure below presents this theme in a summary.

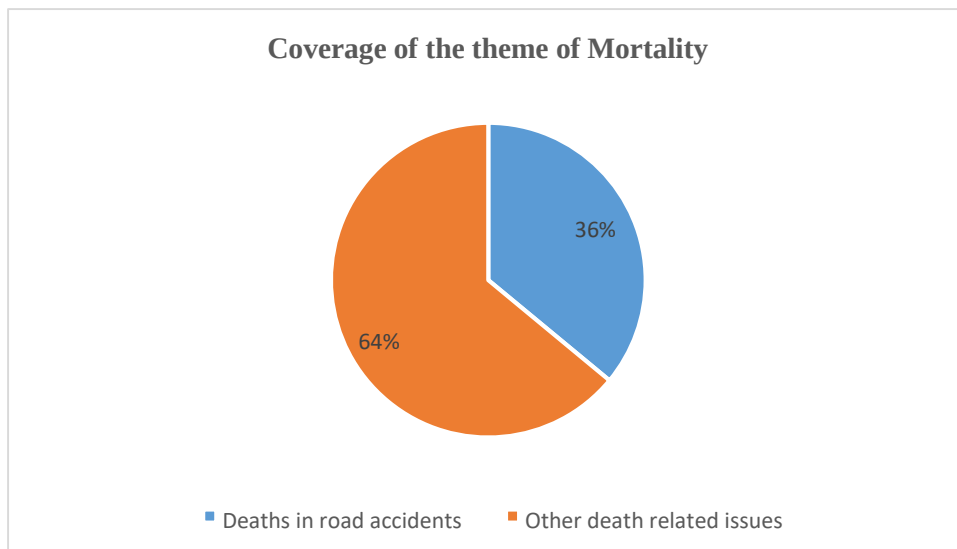


Figure 13: Coverage of the Theme of Mortality

The coverage of news by The Daily Times newspaper reflects the presence of the theme of mortality. The researcher identified twelve sub-themes which fall under this main theme. There was one recurrent theme: deaths in road accidents, representing a majority of 64%. Human deaths caused by animals, Malaria related deaths, Death due to poisoning, Deaths based on colour (Albino victims, body parts found), Suicide deaths, Deaths by murder and Natural Deaths are other sub-themes that equally made up the remaining 36%.

4.9.13 Coverage of the theme of Public Service Provision

The theme of public service provision was covered in The Daily Times newspaper of the year 2020. This main theme was covered under sixty-one subthemes. Out of this number there were ten recurrent themes namely, unemployment, bilateral relations, development projects, suspension of officials, youth concerns, issues of vendors, firing of workers, sector reforms, national budget issues and appointments. The figure below shows how the theme of public service provision was covered for a period of six months.

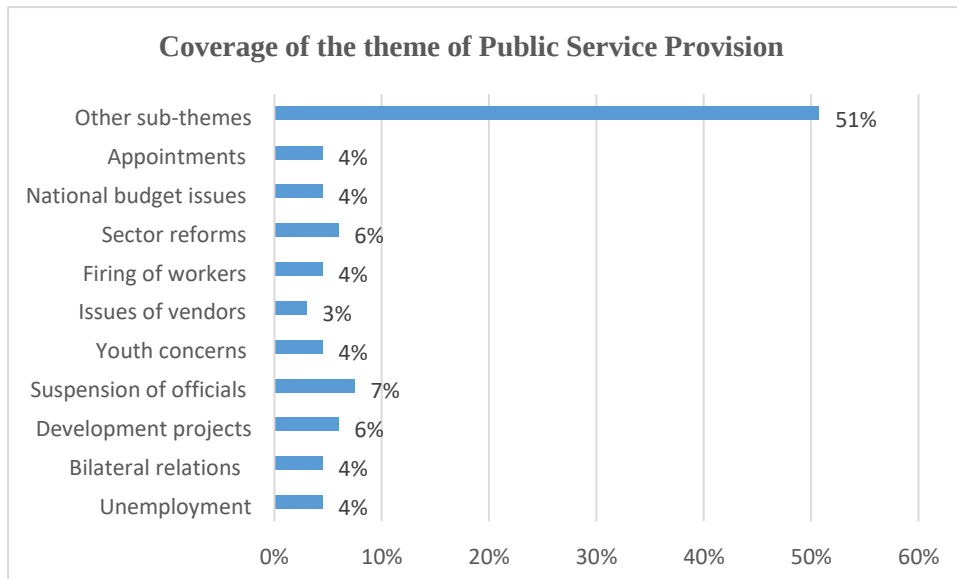


Figure 14: Coverage of the Theme of Public Service Provision

Figure 14 shows percentages of the theme of public service provision was covered in The Daily Times newspaper of the year 2020. This main theme was covered under sixty-one subthemes with equal contribution of 51% from the following themes: One million jobs agenda, Local governance, Youth plea for financial support, Presidential powers reduction agenda, Government expenditure down, Access to Information (ATI) implementation, Inauguration of president , Taxation issues, Restructuring at MBC, Dissolution of Boards, Youth empowerment, Forex shortage, Lake Malawi disputes, Donations (Malawi police), Calls for National debt cancellation, Police transfers , Youth welfare Governance, Homelessness, Poor road network, Honouring War Veterans, Condemning sexual abuse of the elderly, Warning to Minibus Operators, Re-instatement of former MDF chief, President in parliament, Government decisions , Water supply challenges , Poor performance of Admarc, Presidential report on 100 days in office, Civil servants' salaries increment, Parliamentary issues, Governance, Homelessness, Poor road network, Elevation of chiefs, Honouring War Veterans, Condemning sexual abuse of the elderly, Warning to Minibus Operators

4.9.14 Coverage of the theme of Corruption

The theme of corruption appeared in The Daily Times newspaper of the year 2020. This main theme was covered under fifteen subthemes. Out of this number there was one recurrent theme, and that was corruption issues in various government sectors. The figure below shows how this theme was covered for a period of six months.

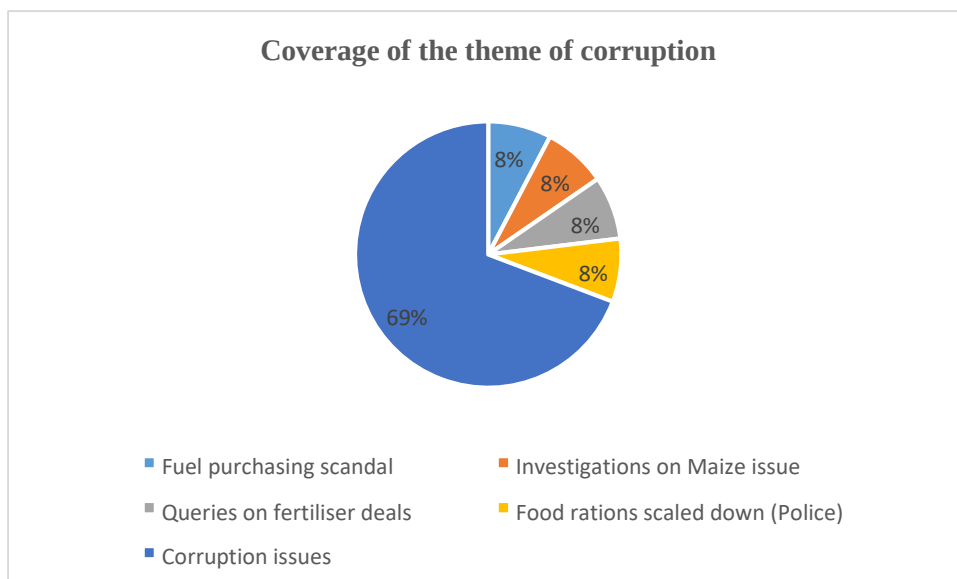


Figure 15: Coverage of the Theme of Corruption

There was one recurrent theme of corruption issues in various government sectors that appeared in The Daily Times newspaper of the year 2020, representing a majority of 69%. Fuel purchasing scandal, investigations on maize issue, queries on fertiliser deals and police food rations scaled down each had an 8% coverage as shown in Figure 15 above.

4.9.15 Coverage of the theme of Accountability

The theme of accountability has also been identified in The Daily Times newspaper. This theme appeared under twenty-four sub-themes. Out of this number there were three recurrent themes; underfunding concerns, accountability and auditing. The figure below summarises the coverage of this theme for a period of six months.

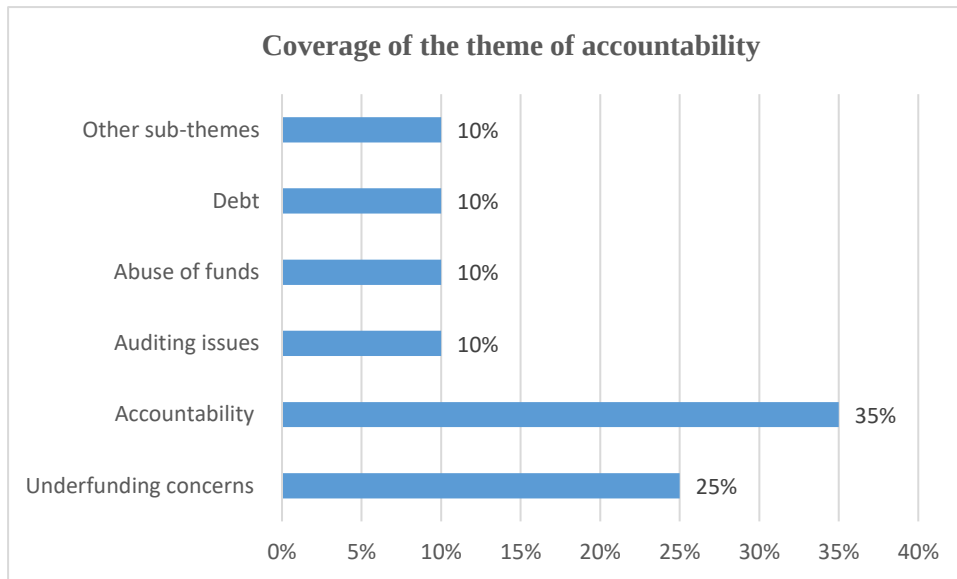


Figure 16: Coverage of Theme of Accountability

The theme of accountability appeared under twenty-four sub-themes. Figure 16 above shows that accountability appeared more in The Daily Times, followed by underfunding concerns representing 35% and 25% respectively. Debt, abuse of funds, auditing issues and other sub-themes (Transparency on revenue collection in councils, Revenue collection issues, Transparency (Government owes Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority: Teveta)), Scrutiny of hiring procedures for public officials, Maladministration at Central Medical Stores Trust, Financial mismanagement investigations) also had 10% coverage.

4.9.16 Coverage of the theme of Religion

The theme of religion has been identified to have been covered in The Daily Times newspaper. However, it was not covered much in comparison with other themes. This theme appeared under seven sub-themes as the figure below shows.

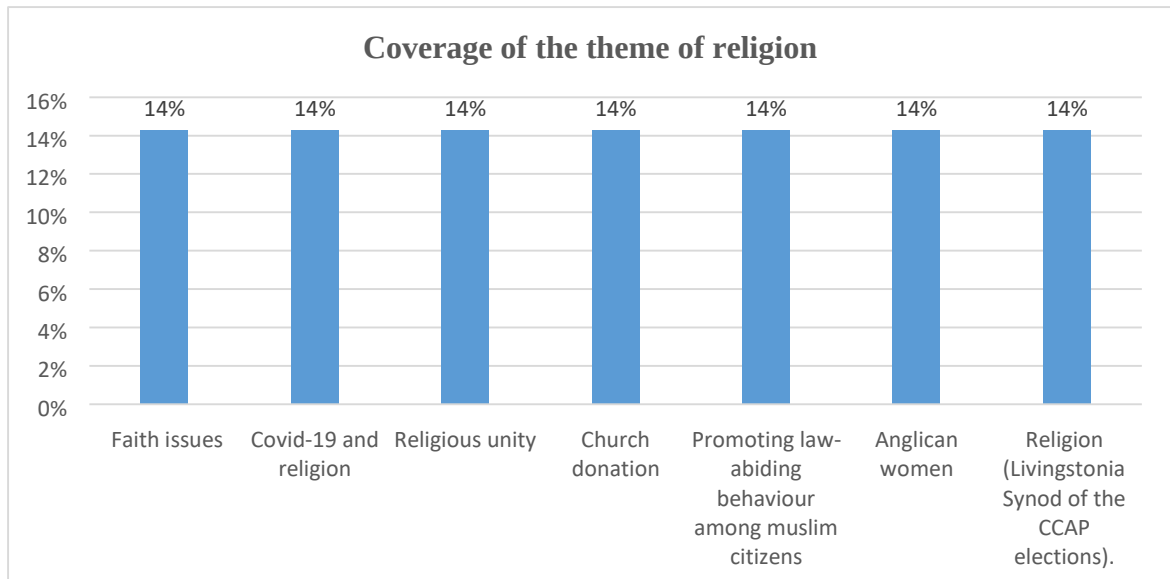


Figure 17: Coverage of the Theme of Religion

The theme of religion has been identified to have been covered in The Daily Times newspaper. However, it was not covered much in comparison with other themes. This theme appeared under seven sub-themes namely Anglican women, faith issues, Covid-19 and religion, religious unity, church donation, promoting law-abiding behaviour among muslim citizens, religion (Livingstonia Synod of the CCAP elections). There were no recurrent issues covered under religion.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented key findings for this research study. The researcher among other things finds that there are trade-offs between the commercial and the public interest in the daily operations of The Daily Times newspaper. The commercial appears to be the bedrock for the survival of The Daily Times in the news media industry. There also appears to be a clear commitment on the part of The Daily Times newspaper to serve in line with the interests of the advertisers and sponsors at the expense of the public interest. This was confirmed in the presentation of both primary and secondary data.

Some key informants observed that The Daily Times sometimes publishes articles that are not newsworthy, but also that sometimes advertisers put pressure on the marketing department in order for the newspaper not to cover news articles that are deemed as 'negative news' which has the potential of driving away potential customers the

advertisers. The Daily Times newspaper is trapped in the web of ‘pro-client economics’; the exchange of goods and services for economic support.

In secondary data, it was observed that coverage of news articles had predominantly more themes of commercial value which are covered on a daily basis as compared to public interest themes which are published only occasionally. It was also established that since commerce themes dominate over those of the public interest, commerce themes tend to overshadow those of public interest.

In the next chapter, the study discusses these key findings and the implications that they have on The Daily Times newspaper as a medium which ought to be an organ of the public sphere and contribute the formation of public opinion.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5. 1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter aims at analysing the research findings that were presented in the previous chapter. It uses the theory of the Public Sphere as a theoretical lens for analysing the key findings of the study. The theory of the Public Sphere is re-casted in order to identify only those elements that are critical to the analysis. This is justifiable because the Public Sphere theory has been subjected to critique as it was discussed in chapter one. This chapter is important because it establishes a relationship between the theory and the problem which the researcher was investigating. It contains the following elements: re-casting Habermas's public sphere and its critics, tensional relation of the commercial versus the public interest in news media, analysis of themes from key informant interviews and analysis of themes from coverage of news.

5.2 Recasting Habermas's public sphere and its critics

This section utilises the public sphere as a theoretical lens for analysing the research findings. In recasting the public sphere theory, the researcher identifies core elements holding up the theory together in view of testing its applicability to the problem of the tradeoff between the commercial and the public interest as manifested in The Daily Times newspaper.

The public sphere theory is made up of the following core elements: political community; mediating medium between the state and society and normative conditions for the functionality of the public arena. The normative conditions of the functionality of the public arena can be categorised as follows: universal accessibility to the discursive arena, free exercise of rational-critical power, formation of public opinion, autonomous nature of the communication arena, consensus in deliberation and commitment to public interest.

5.2.1 Political Community

The public sphere theory is premised on the idea that there is an ideal political community that is operating democratically. Additionally, this political community is assumed to be involved in political communication which is governed by certain normative ideals. This political community is ideally an institution which operationalises the public sphere, the *raison d'être* being to demonstrate the operations of the public sphere as an arena of community communication. Additionally, Habermas (1989) used the bourgeois public sphere as a frame of reference. By using the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas (1989) was able to demonstrate at least rationally; the formation, transformation and degeneration of the bourgeois public sphere. The next section will show how mass media are a mediator between the state and society.

5.2.2 Mediating Medium between the State and Society

The mediating medium between the state and society was first the press and later the mass media in Habermas's view (1989, p.20). This conception of the public sphere as a mediator between the state and society implies that the public sphere itself is different from the official economy and the state. The assumption here is that since the public sphere is a distinct arena, it can be used as a medium for critiquing political authority. The bourgeois public sphere was formed under the influence of print culture in the periodical press which enabled public discourses (Habermas, 1989, p.20). This print culture was manifested by the explosion of newspapers, novels, political journalism and literary criticism. By and large, the press was seen as the enabler of rational-critical deliberations and by extension the public sphere itself. But Habermas (1989) was later very pessimistic about the role of mass media in enabling rational-critical debates which characterise the public sphere. While departing from the degeneration of the public sphere, Habermas saw mass media as a vehicle of capitalist agenda. Habermas has argued that the "press itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialised" (1989, p.185). Mass media which were once an agora of ideas became an agora for selling goods through advertising. However, the mass media have been associated with the public sphere because of their traditional roles of, among other things being the fourth estate. In a nutshell, this is the relationship between the media and the public sphere.

5.2.3 Normative Conditions for the Functionality of the Public Arena

A functional public sphere is characterised by the following normative critical ideals: universal accessibility to the discursive arena, free exercise of rational-critical power, formation of public opinion, autonomous nature of the communication arena, consensus in rational deliberations and commitment to the general interest or the public interest. The section below sheds light on these conditions for a functional public arena.

5.2.3.1 Universal accessibility to the discursive arena

The bourgeois public sphere was characterised by the normative ideal of universal accessibility to the discursive arena. In other words, it had an emancipatory potential for grounding universal participation characteristic of *demokratos*. Habermas (1989, p.54) notes, “The bourgeois public’s critical public debate took place in principle without regard to all pre-existing social and political rank and in accord with universal laws”. Ideally, Habermas postulated a public sphere that was accessible to all private members of the political community. Equal access and inclusion were the normative principles which governed the bourgeois public sphere.

The practical side of this normative ideal has been critiqued by Fraser (1990, p.66) on the basis of gender, race and colour. Fraser has noted that the public sphere as articulated by Habermas excluded minority groups: women, workers, peoples of colour, gays and lesbians (LGBTQ+). This exclusion is detrimental to the homogenous conception of the public sphere. Therefore, an explosion of subaltern counterpublics is inevitable.

The issue of access and representation in the public sphere has also been taken up by Papacharissi (2002) who has suggested that a virtual sphere enabled by the internet has the potential of bringing democratic norms of direct representation, monitorial powers over state activities and self-expression values.

5.2.3.2 Free exercise of rational-critical power

The bourgeois public sphere was characterised by the normative ideal of a free exercise of rational-critical power since it was a reasoning public sphere with a political function. Thus, the deliberations therein were unconstrained by state authorities in all the socialising avenues: coffee houses, salons and clubs (Habermas, 1989). The

bourgeoisie were able to critique state authorities, thereby holding them accountable to the citizenry. Habermas (1989) has noted that the public sphere of private people making use of their reason publicly “was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority” (p.51).

The free exercise of rational-critical power was enabled by the publication of newspapers and political journals coupled with the enlightenment spirit of freedom of expression and assembly in public spaces such as coffee houses and salons. Habermas (1989) has noted that individuals who came together for the purpose of forming a public shared ideas on what they had read, and this led to the promotion of the process of enlightenment (p.51). Warner (2002) has weighed in claiming that a circulation of published texts and discourses will inevitably lead to a proliferation of multiple publics. Warner’s view is grounded on issues of readership and listenership which characterise mass media in the modern world. Essentially, underpinning the idea that circulation of discourses and texts has the potential of creating multiple publics which would present the totality of society.

5.2.3.3 Formation of Public Opinion

The bourgeois public sphere was characterised by the normative ideal of the formation of public opinion on matters of public interest. Rational deliberations of private individuals in the public sphere gave birth to public opinion through a give and take process. Habermas has argued that in critical debates, private individuals were expected to present their claims in a manner which reflected reasoning, and that “intrinsic to the idea of public opinion (was) borne the power of the better argument” (1989, p.54). In this milieu, public opinion was seen as something that was “just and right”.

The idea of public opinion is also found in Mill (2001) who has argued that the exercise of political freedom should not be limited to political institutions of representative democracy. This claim is premised on Mill’s view that “governments cannot be constructed by a premeditated design” but should rather be seen as institutions that are “not made, but grow” (2001, p.6). In congruent with this idea, private persons can use other channels of communication in order to discuss and express their political will. This independent channel of communication is what Habermas (1989) has dubbed the public sphere.

5.2.3.4 Autonomous nature of the communication arena

The political communication in the public sphere of the bourgeois category was earmarked by its autonomous nature. Rationality was exercised by private people in the public sphere “against reliance of princely authority on secrets of state” (Habermas, 1989). This state of affairs was enabled by human beings’ self-consciousness thanks to the enlightenment movement. The public sphere was therefore kept autonomous from the state powers.

This idea was first articulated by Kant (1992) who argued that enlightened persons are independent in their exercise of public reason. He stated that this independence was demonstrated through independent thinking and free expression themselves in public arenas. By extension, this idea applies to the communication arena which Habermas (1989) dubbed the public sphere. Therefore, conceptually, the public sphere is an arena distinct from the official economy and the state. This arena enables the public use of reason. Its *modus operandi* is characterised by autonomy (author of law) in its etymological sense since it is a channel of public opinion.

5.2.3.5 Consensus in rational-critical deliberations

The public sphere of the bourgeois category which had a political function was governed by the norm of consensus in rational-critical deliberations on public affairs. The private persons who gathered in salons and other places were able to deliberate and arrive at a consensus about the common good while respecting each other’s inner subjectivity because of their shared interests. These shared interests were grounded in the need to challenge political domination by state actors in their exercise of political authority. This essentially promoted democracy which was governed by consensus politics coupled with a give--take spirit for the sake of public interest.

5.2.3.6 Commitment to public interest

The public sphere of the bourgeoisie was guided by the norm of commitment to the public interest. Habermas has stated that private persons had to put their shared humanity first in their rational-critical deliberations. In other words, private persons had to communicate in their capacity as human beings disregarding their status and property possessions in order to influence public power. This made the public sphere as a political realm so effective in its goal of critiquing public authority. Ideally, it can be

claimed that the interlocutors in the public sphere were able to pursue the public interest by putting aside self-interest. This was ideally a deliberate resolution to act in the capacity of common humanity on matters of mutual concern.

5.3 Tensional Relation of the Commercial versus the Public interest in News Media

In Chapter One, the researcher stated the tensional relation of the commercial versus the public interest in news media. In that chapter, it was stated that the media enjoy a dual acknowledgement as both an industry with the expectation to make profit but also as an organ of the public sphere with the traditional expectation of serving as an independent fourth arm of the government—the Fourth Estate.

The researcher also asserted that the tensional relation of the commercial versus the public interest requires a delicate ethical balance in the daily operations of news media since there is a high risk of prioritising one at the expense of another. This state of affairs awakened the researcher from a dogmatic slumber of looking at the media as simply an agora of ideas precluding the idea that the media are an agora of goods and services.

In order to provide a scientific solution to the above ethical conundrum, the researcher pursued the case of The Daily Times newspaper by investigating the negotiation of the commercial versus the public interest. From that investigation, the researcher found out that there are trade-offs between the commercial and the public interest. This state of affairs has given birth to ethical concerns which the current analysis of research findings will reveal.

5.4 Analysing themes from Key Informant Interviews

This section analyses themes from key informant interviews. These themes have been categorised following the specific objectives which guided the research. These broad categories are: The Daily Times newspaper as an arena for public opinion formation; keeping The Daily Times newspaper afloat, experience of both pressure and neglect from advertisers and sponsors.

The analysis of themes in this section is premised on the belief that Malawi is a political community in which public communication takes place. In this milieu, The Daily Times

newspaper is seen as a medium which ought to be a medium between the state and the Malawian political community. This analysis leads to the theorisation that The Daily Times newspaper can be an important organ of a functioning public sphere if it is guided by democratic normative ideals which have the potential of enabling it to ethically balance the commercial versus the public interest.

5.4.1 Analysing themes on the contribution to public opinion formation

The contribution of The Daily Times newspaper to the formation of public opinion gave rise to the following subthemes: provision of checks and balances in both private and public sector, provision of accurate information for decision making (for citizens to make informed choices in elections), public debate and deliberation in Malawi's democracy, reporting news in a fair and balanced manner and readership and circulation in urban areas.

The provision of checks and balances in both private and public sectors was found to be part of the journalistic practices of The Daily Times newspaper. Some of the methods through which this role is fulfilled were: the use of an investigative approach in the news gathering process and the use of a whistle-blowing approach in uncovering seemingly corrupt practices in both private and public sectors. The researcher however noted one particular response which indicated that The Daily Times newspaper exercises leniency towards its key advertisers which among others include banks and mobile operating companies.

The above observations reveal that The Daily Times is challenged in its performance of the watchdog role. The performance of the watchdog role raises an ethical concern of applying selective scrutiny, thereby denying the public relevant information which might help the citizenry to make informed choices on banks and mobile operating companies. This also reveals that there is no ethical balance between the commercial and the public interest. The public interest is sacrificed in exchange for advertising.

In the provision of accurate information for decision making especially on issues such as elections, The Daily Times appears to be performing well. The researcher found out that news stories are verified before they are published. It was noted that The Daily Times provides the citizenry with manifestos of different political parties participating

in an election. This idea implies that The Daily Times has an influence in the decisions of voters, thereby helping them to make decisions in democratic activities such as elections. However, the performance of this political function is not without challenges. The researcher found out that the circulation of The Daily Times newspaper is generally limited to the urban population. The Daily Times is to a large extent an elite newspaper by design. The ethical concerns this raises are: firstly, The Daily Times newspaper appears to be contributing to the exclusion of the marginalised groups in the Malawian political community. These marginalised groups include the poor and the illiterate. These groups would be affected in making political decisions since most of these decisions would be made out of ignorance. Secondly, lack of access to accurate information through a newspaper also implies that such citizenry is not empowered to contribute to the formation of public opinion in the Malawian political community.

The contribution of The Daily Times newspaper towards public debate and deliberation in Malawi's democracy appears to be wanting. The key informants stated that The Daily Times has a special column that is at the disposal of all the citizenry who want to express their views. This view was verified by the researcher as being part of the elements of the traditional printed edition of The Daily Times. But what is worth observing is that there is only a single column that is open to all the citizenry to contribute towards democratic deliberations. Most of the columns in the printed edition of The Daily Times are paid for and are therefore owned by private persons and the elite. Additionally, the key informants also stated that this role is performed by publishing stories which resonate with people's needs.

This issue of resonating with people's needs begs the question of whose needs and interests the paper serves when one considers the fact that the paper is only accessible to the urban elite who can afford to buy it but also are literate to read in English, which is the language used in the columns. It can be argued here that The Daily Times serves the interests of the elite at the expense of the non-elite.

In as far as "reporting news in a fair and balanced manner" is concerned The Daily Times newspaper is on record to be involved in practising strict gate-keeping. Before a story is published it has to be scrutinised by members of the editorial department. The Daily Times newspaper appears to be guided by an institutional norm which fosters the

filtering of information before it is published. This idea appears to be a contradiction of the spirit of the public sphere which promotes unconstrained expression of thoughts in deliberation. Furthermore, it was noted that The Daily Times ensures that there is more than one voice in the story. This idea is in line with our claim that The Daily Times newspaper has the potential of contributing to the consolidation of democracy by reporting in a balanced manner.

5.4.2 Analysing themes on Keeping The Daily Times newspaper afloat

The key strategies which The Daily Times newspaper uses to remain afloat on the market were considered under the following themes: making the traditional printed edition attractive to the consumer; investing in digital platforms to finance the printed edition; treading carefully—protecting the interests of clients in the news media business; transforming itself to fit the current media, social media and economic trends and using economies of scale.

The survival of The Daily Times newspaper in the media industry can largely be attributed to a business model which is grounded in ensuring that circulation and advertising are promoted. The Daily Times newspaper is reported to be using a strategy of appealing to the emotions of the reader and advertiser by “making the traditional printed edition attractive to the consumer,” as noted by one informant. The dominant emotion in the above sentiment is excitement. This idea is akin to sensationalism where stories are framed to excite the greatest number of people with an intention of earning more money. The key informants reported that The Daily Times uses high quality pictures to accompany stories and advertisements. The ethical challenge which this idea raises is that facts can easily be manipulated in an attempt to appeal to emotions of readers and advertisers.

The Daily Times newspaper is reported to be investing in digital platforms to finance the traditional printed edition. This idea cements the point we made earlier on about the business model of expanding revenue streams. The key informants reported that the e-edition of The Daily Times newspaper enjoys followership by both advertisers and readers. Advertisers are reported to be advertising their products on digital platforms run by The Times Group. By bringing advertisers and readers together The Daily Times is able to generate more revenue from subscriptions. The concern here is that two

different publics with different interests are brought together just to generate profit; the public of the advertisers and the public of the readers. This idea is akin to the commodification of news where advertisers are seen as the main financing forces of news fora. In this milieu, The Daily Times becomes a forum that is kept in being by advertisers.

The Daily Times newspaper is reported to be “treading carefully in the news media business”. The key informants reported that The Daily Times enforces its policy documents, that is, the marketing policy and editorial policy, in its operations. This observation appears to be too idealistic. But its practical side will be contradicted by the evidence that we shall submit later under the theme of “pressure from advertisers”. Times Group company, which owns and runs The Daily Times newspaper, is reported to be using “economies of scale” in order to reduce the cost of production. In this regard, it uses the same employees to produce news content in all its media. The downside with this strategy is that it denies employment opportunities to other journalists.

5.4.3 Analysing themes on experience of both pressure and neglect from advertisers and sponsors

This section is divided into two categories thus, firstly, experience of pressure and secondly, experience of neglect. The analysis of the research findings will therefore be presented in the aforementioned categories.

It is reported that The Daily Times “experiences pressure” from sponsors and advertisers. This pressure emanates from two angles: firstly, the fear of negative news about products and secondly, the pressure to have stories that are not newsworthy published. These two forms of pressure are achieved through a threat to withdraw advertising.

Pressure from advertisers and sponsors generates an internal pressure inside The Daily Times between the editorial department and the marketing department. The marketing department would usually intervene where the interests of an advertiser can be harmed. This intervention involves asking the editorial department not to cover an article which would violate the interests of their client. This practice contradicts the earlier claim that The Daily Times enforces its marketing and editorial policies. It would appear that The

Daily Times is challenged in terms of adhering to its own policy documents. It is clear that the journalistic wall between the editorial department and the marketing department is usually breached by a sheer failure to uphold the value of integrity. The ethical implication here is that the veracity of some news stories can easily be compromised. This has a potential of affecting the provision of accurate information in news coverage by The Daily Times newspaper. Protectionism of client interests also reflects a clear trade-off between the commercial and the public interest in the operations of The Daily Times newspaper.

The Daily Times newspaper is reported to experience neglect from advertisers and sponsors, including politicians. Politicians who are elected by the citizenry and are entrusted with political authority can withdraw advertisements if the newspaper is too critical towards the government. This implies that politicians expect newspapers to tone-down their coverage of 'negative news'. The researcher found out that The Daily Times usually succumbs to pressure from advertisers for fear of neglect. Research findings from key informant interviews revealed that there are times when the customer's interest is prioritised at the expense of the newspaper's interest. The Daily Times newspaper thus compromises its position for fear of neglect from its clients. The ethical challenge this raises boils down to a failure to balance the commercial and the public interest. The Daily Times has therefore experienced moments when it ceased to be the promoter of critical-rational debate by toning down on criticism of its clients since they are the contributors of revenue which keeps it afloat. Research findings also showed that the government contributes to a huge share of the revenue targets in The Daily Times newspaper. This high dependence on revenue generation can indeed imply doing anything to be in line with the government of the day which would involve a compromise of normative ideals which ought to govern a functional public sphere.

It was also reported that other advertisers have neglected The Daily Times newspaper by fleeing to online media which enjoy a lot of followership from readers. This challenge is being addressed by the Times Group by making up revenue shortages through expanding to online platforms which include Times 360 Malawi. Online media can enable free discourses that are less regulated by state authorities. According to Papacharissi (2002) online media enabled by the internet can inculcate a culture of democracy which is evidenced by some normative ideals of participation such as:

monitorial powers of citizens towards state authorities, direct participation and self-expression values. But the current research finds that the only reason for opening up online spaces by The Daily Times newspaper is driven by commercial impulses. Online media are opened up in order to expand revenue collecting nets for the survival of the traditional printed edition of The Daily Times newspaper. Thus, online media are for the promotion of The Daily Times newspaper's self-interest and not for public interest. This self-interest is the de facto force for the self-preservation of this newspaper in volatile, unpredictable and unstable media industry. It can be submitted that The Daily Times newspaper is challenged in its commitment towards the promotion of the public interest.

5.5 Analysing Themes from coverage of news in The Daily Times Newspaper

The researcher used secondary data in order to identify themes found in news coverage by The Daily Times newspaper for a period of six months. But before these themes are analysed here, this section begins with an analysis of the features of The Daily Times newspaper.

5.5.1 Analysis of the Features of The Daily Times Newspaper

The features of The Daily Times newspaper were tabulated in the presentation of research findings. The key findings on this aspect showed that three main features dominate The Daily Times newspaper on a daily basis. The following are the features: Advertising, Times classifieds (small advertisements) and Times (Power ads, Impact ads and Visible ads). The other observation was that there were other features in The Daily Times newspaper which were small in number and hence less dominant. These features among others include: local news and international news.

The features which dominate in quantity over others fall under the commercial arena while those that are less in quantity fall under the news articles arena. The imbalance between the commercial and the news articles arena reflects a failure to negotiate the commercial versus the public interest. The commercial appears to be prioritised over news articles that would be in the public's interest.

5.5.2 Analysis of Themes Reflecting the Commercial

Data collection from a total number of 120 copies of the printed edition of The Daily Times newspaper from June to November of the year 2020 reflects both the commercial and the public interest. A huge difference in the coverage of these broad spheres being that themes from the commercial side tend to be featured daily whereas those which are a caricature of the public interest are featured occasionally. In analysing themes from these two spheres we shall start with the commercial and then proceed to the public interest.

5.5.2.1 Analysis of the Theme of Commerce

The commercial side of The Daily Times newspaper covered the following theme and its subthemes daily for a period of six months: commerce; advertising, sponsored columns, Times Classifieds and Times power ads. These sub-themes were observed to be recurrent. The daily publication of these themes reflects The Daily Times leanings towards commercial aspects such as advertising. . This is probably the case because it must survive as a newspaper on what is seen as a volatile, unstable and unpredictable media market.

The Daily Times newspaper is predominantly an agora of goods and services for consumers as evidenced in the large number of advertisements which take up a lot of space in the paper as well as by the commerce themes which are covered on a daily basis. By being a vehicle of goods and services of advertisers and sponsors, The Daily Times newspaper has made itself vulnerable to manipulation. This vulnerability to manipulative power was reflected in the fact that the newspaper's interests suffer a compromise through pressure from advertisers but also including the observation that the newspaper itself exercises leniency in its performance of the watchdog role towards its key clients, such as banks and mobile operating companies.

The ethical implication here is that The Daily Times newspaper cannot challenge any form of abuse of power by mobile operating companies and banks. In this milieu, The Daily Times newspaper appears to lack the normative ideals for a functional public sphere which contributes to the consolidation of democracy in the Malawian political community. By and large The Daily Times newspaper appears to be challenged in its

commitment towards serving the public interest. In proceeding, we shall analyse themes which reflect occasional coverage of public interest.

5.5.3 Analysis of Themes Reflecting the Public Interest

The Daily Times newspaper covered the following themes which reflect the public interest: Health, Diseases, Safety, Education, Gender, Civil liberties, Law, Environment, Agriculture, Democracy, Mortality, Public service provision, Corruption, Accountability and Religion.

5.5.3.1 Analysis of the theme of Health

The theme of health was covered through the news articles which were featured in The Daily Times newspaper in a period of six months. The research findings showed that there were forty-three sub-themes and from this number there were six recurrent themes: health challenges at a public hospital, health donations, Covid-19 response, Abortion bill, teenage pregnancies and family planning. The coverage of this theme reflects a number of potentialities: first, that The Daily Times newspaper has the potential to serve the public interest, second, it has the potential to create a public and set issues which that public can deliberate upon and lastly that it can help in facilitating the publicity of critical issues in the political community of Malawi. This is in line with Warner's (2002) idea that publics do not exist independent of the discourses that are addressing them. But the limitation which The Daily Times newspaper suffers in this endeavour is that it is by design an elite newspaper which implies that the vast majority who have access to these discourses on health are the elite. This implies that the marginalised members, such as the illiterate and the poverty-stricken members of the Malawi political community might not contribute to these discourses. Hence, there is an apparent democratic deficit here of active engagement in discourses in order to contribute to public opinion formation.

5.5.3.2 Analysis of the Theme of Diseases

The theme of diseases was also covered in the news articles of The Daily Times newspaper. The study discovered that Covid-19 was a recurrent sub-theme which The Daily Times newspaper covered widely in a period of six months. The domination of Covid-19 as a sub-theme reflects a lack of variety on the diseases that affect members of the Malawi political community. An ideal public sphere is expected to bring issues

which reflect a variety of interests of the private members of the political community without assuming that there is one public sphere which deliberates only on Covid-19 issues. Ideally, as a mediator between the state and society, a public sphere ought to unearth all the diseases affecting the members of the political community so that state authorities and policy makers can make informed decisions. The domination of Covid-19 suggests the non-existence of other life-threatening diseases in the Malawi political community. In the final analysis, political communication which is governed by normative ideals of the public sphere must reflect all the critical diseases affecting the political community.

5.5.3.3 Analysis of the Theme of Safety

The other theme which was also covered in The Daily Times newspaper for a period of six months was safety. The theme of safety reflects threats which members of the Malawi political community experience in the private sphere of family but also in public life. The research found six recurrent sub-themes, defilement of girls, rape of women, police arrests, crime issues, witchcraft and trafficking of persons. The coverage of these themes reflects the potential of The Daily Times to serve as a public sphere which can inform state authorities about security threats faced by members of the Malawi political community. However, the downside of these subthemes is that they reflect a deliberate bent towards an exclusive coverage of issues in the public sphere. Problems women face appear to dominate the discourses in The Daily Times newspaper at the expense of problems men face. This implies an exclusion of other members from the public sphere on the basis of gender. The ethical implication here is that The Daily Times newspaper as a medium which ought to reflect the unity of members in society can be said to be contributing to the bifurcation of the Malawi political community on the basis of gender. This has the potential of leading to an exodus of subaltern counterpublics.

5.5.3.4 Analysis of the Theme of Education

The Daily Times newspaper also covered the theme of education in a period of six months which this research sampled. Research findings on this theme revealed that there were two recurrent themes: Malawi School Certificate of Examinations (MSCE) issues and reopening of schools. The coverage of this theme reflects the potential of The Daily Times newspaper to cover issues in the public interest. This is the case

because education is key to the realisation of the democratic values of critical-rational debates in the discursive arena. Education is also embedded in the spirit of enlightenment which leads to rational maturity. The coverage of the theme of education also reflects an investigative approach which should characterise the public sphere. This investigative approach is reflected in the following subthemes which have been covered by the newspaper, no upkeep for college students, scrutiny over the handling of high stakes examinations, right to hairdressing styles and reportage on infrastructural challenges in public schools.

5.5.3.5 Analysis of the Theme of Gender

The Daily Times newspaper also covered the theme of gender. In a period of six months a recurrent sub-theme was girl child education. Coverage of gender issues in The Daily Times newspaper reflects the dominance of one gender at the expense of another gender in this newspaper. One can argue that there is no balance in the representation of gender issues. This is the case because there is too much focus on education discourses related to the girl-child while turning a blind eye towards the need for rational-critical discourses on the boy-child's education. The boy child appears to be an outcast in the Malawi political community. The absence of boy-child education discourses raises questions about the representative nature of The Daily Times newspaper as an arena for political communication. The ethical implication here is that The Daily Times newspaper can be said to be perpetrating tensions on the basis of the category of gender. It appears The Daily Times newspaper itself is not being guided by the normative ideals of enabling the circulation of common interest discourses that affect the whole Malawi political community.

5.5.3.6 Analysis of the Theme of Civil Liberties

The Daily Times newspaper also covered the theme of civil liberties in an effort to promote freedom. The recurrent sub-themes under this theme were; demonstrations and rights. The representation of issues here were based on the following categories, women, and prisoners, persons with albinism, employees, girls and vendors. But Issues about LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer/ Questioning and more) groups were not covered for a period of six months. The presentation of the theme of civil liberties reflects the potential of The Daily Times newspaper to cover issues in line with the public interest by questioning the infringement of rights. The coverage of this

theme also reflects values of free expression and the performance of the monitorial role by the citizenry in challenging political institutions and state authority. However, issues of rights of minority groups such as LGBTQ+ ought to be covered to reflect an inclusive public sphere.

5.5.3.7 Analysis of the Theme of Law

The Daily Times newspaper covered the theme of law for a period of six months. The research findings revealed that this theme gave rise to the following sub-themes, court cases, court rulings and death penalty. Prima facie, the coverage of discourses on the theme of law reflects the potential of The Daily Times newspaper to present public interest issues. However, ipso facto the coverage of the theme of law leaves a lot to be desired because most court cases that are featured in the paper do not have a follow-up. A reader is often left in suspense. This is not in tandem with Warner's view (2002) that circulating discourses and texts have the ability to create a deliberating public and that such a public is maintained by on-going conversations. The Daily Times newspaper appears to be involved in a habit of failing to consistently inform a public which it creates by starting a discourse on matters that are in court. Most of its coverage on legal discourses especially court cases end abruptly. By doing this, the public might feel betrayed with the manner in which political communication is practised. This raises questions on whether The Daily Times newspaper is guided by the normative ideals of a functional public sphere in its political communication.

5.5.3.8 Analysis of the Theme of Environment

The coverage of the theme of environment by The Daily Times newspaper is shown through the following recurrent sub-theme, mining issues. Mining issues are of concern in the Malawi political community because they reflect a power parity between two categories of people, powerful groups and the poor. In the light of the public sphere, the interlocutors were ideally considered to have a common humanity and this made them deliberate freely on critical issues affecting their lives in the political community. In the Malawi political community, the poor who participate in mining activities are usually disenfranchised hence the need to make public their voices in discourses. Therefore, by featuring mining concerns in The Daily Times newspaper, one notices the potential of this newspaper to represent the public interest through publicity of mining issues.

5.5.3.9 Analysis of the Theme of Democracy

Coverage of the theme of democracy reflects the following sub-themes, elections, political violence, political party politics and parliamentary budget meeting. The year 2020 was notable for the re-run of the presidential elections. The Daily Times newspaper covered the sub-theme of elections as part of its role to inform voters so that they could make informed decisions. This year was also coupled with political violence caused by party loyalists in what was then the incumbent political party and up-coming political parties. Additionally, political parties were portrayed as going through decisive moments coupled with internal political matters such as nominating candidates for parliamentary elections. Vacant parliamentary seats were to be refilled by conducting bi-elections.

The dominating party covered in The Daily Times newspaper's headlines and in the news article stories under the sub-theme of political party politics was the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The DPP which was the incumbent party was rather covered in a negative way. First, it was portrayed as a party undergoing political turmoil; second, it was also portrayed as a party which had been very corrupt while in power. One can claim that the DPP was demonised while the main political parties in the Tonse Alliance (MCP and UTM) were sanitised since they were portrayed as promising in developmental terms. The Tonse Alliance parties were to a large extent being marketed by The Daily Times newspaper. This observation attracts questions about the objectivity of The Daily Times newspaper as medium for political communication. This observation appears to contradict what some key informants reported about the newspaper's independence from political influences and its loyalty to the public it serves. This state of affairs raises ethical concerns on the power of The Daily Times newspaper to sway public opinion in a predetermined direction without necessarily using critical-rational debates as a normative means of generating public opinion.

5.5.3.10 Analysis of the Theme of Mortality

The Daily Times newspaper also covered the theme of mortality in a period of six months which represented the sample of this study. The sub-theme which was recurrent was deaths in road accidents. This suggests that members of the Malawi political community are vulnerable to many things including death in road accidents. The coverage of this theme raises an alarm on the need for taking precautionary measures

on public roads. The reportage of this theme also suggests the fragility of the public sphere which would become defunct once private individuals who compose it die. The coverage of such a theme would easily anchor rational-critical debates on whether or not the citizenry is adhering to road safety measures. Such discourses can also inform political authorities on the need to enforce road safety regulations.

5.5.3.11 Analysis of the Theme of Public Service Provision

Another theme which The Daily Times newspaper covered was the theme of public service provision. The sub-themes for this major theme were: unemployment, bilateral relations, development projects, suspension of officials, youth concerns, issues of vendors, firing of workers, sector reforms, national budget issues and appointments. In an attempt to fulfil its role of communicating to the public as a social totality, The Daily Times newspaper made public the concerns that surround the provision of public services in the Malawi political community. The presentation of these sub-themes suggests the potentiality of The Daily Times newspaper to make public issues of common interest. The aforementioned sub-themes reflect experiences of social groups, such as youths, workers, vendors and officials who would be part of numerous publics within the Malawi political community. It can be claimed that The Daily Times newspaper has the potential of being a mediator between the state and society since it covered public service provision issues.

5.5.3.12 Analysis of the Theme of Corruption

The theme of corruption also appeared in The Daily Times newspaper in the six-month period under study. The research findings showed that the main focus of this theme was on corruption issues in various government sectors, although the newspaper also covered stories of corruption in the private sector. In an attempt to fulfil its watchdog role, The Daily Times newspaper published news articles on alleged corruption practices in the Malawi political community in both the private and the public sectors. The Daily Times newspaper proffer discourses on corruption, emphasising how corruption is a serious vice in the Malawi political community hence the need to feature it in public communication. However, the downside in the coverage of theme was a lack of consistency and determination to cover such stories to the end. In most cases, the coverage of corruption stories ended abruptly without showing whether something

tangible had come out of that case. Such discourses would be said to create suspense and mystery around corruption issues without necessarily helping to deter its practice.

5.5.3.13 Analysis of the Theme of Accountability

The last but one theme which The Daily Times newspaper covered was the theme of accountability. Research findings showed that this theme had two recurrent sub-themes: underfunding concerns, accountability and auditing. Reportage on underfunding concerns reflected the potential of The Daily Times newspaper to represent the interests of people in critical government ministries which require funding. It also showed the potential of The Daily Times newspaper to emancipate such individuals by channelling their grievances in political communication, thus becoming a critical mediator between the state and society.

5.5.3.14 Analysis of the Theme of Religion

The theme of religion was not given wide coverage in the months under study. Little coverage on news articles which portrays the theme of religion reflects the little attention which this newspaper gives to religious affairs. It appears that this newspaper is bent on covering economic issues which would contribute to revenue generation for its survival. Thus, The Daily Times newspaper is a forum which must be maintained by the economically powerful and not the religiously pious persons. This precludes the fact that members of the Malawi political community would be people from various religious groups. From the public sphere view, little coverage on this theme implies both missing discourses on religious issues and a failure to express the interests of religious groups which would give rise to the creation of subaltern counter-publics. The ideal public sphere was a sphere for expressing common interests which would include religious issues.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed the research findings which were presented in Chapter Four. The analysis was on the one hand based on themes from key informant interviews which represented primary evidence and on the other hand, themes on news coverage from copies of the printed edition of The Daily Times newspaper. The key observation is that there is a conflict between commercial and public interest in the operations of The Daily Times newspaper at least in the six months period which this study sampled.

The clash between commercial and public interest reflects a conflict of interests. The Daily Times newspaper appears to be a news medium which predominantly operates as a business with a self-interest impetus. This state of affairs goes against the normative principles for a democratically functioning public sphere.

The analysis of the themes reflecting the public interest from secondary data such as newspapers makes one conclude that The Daily Times newspaper has the potential to contribute to the formation of public opinion. However, this analysis revealed that The Daily Times newspaper fails to reflect a negotiation between commercial and public interest. It was observed that commerce themes dominate over public interest themes. Additionally, commerce themes were also observed to enjoy a daily coverage in each publication of The Daily Times newspaper. This confirms the assertion that commercial is prioritised over public interest. This is a problem because this newspaper neglects its critical role of serving the public interest.

Analysis of data on key informant interviews agreed with the secondary sources. In the key informant interviews it was confirmed that The Daily Times newspaper succumbs to pressure from advertisers by prioritising their interests against its own interests as a newspaper. The Daily Times newspaper appears to be heavily dependent on revenue from advertising for its sustainability. This heavy reliance on advertising as a source of revenue also contributes to the trade-off between commercial and public interest.

In chapter six, the study reflects on how The Daily Times newspaper has the potential to become a public sphere which can contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the Malawi political community. However, the actualisation of this potential is hampered by commercial interests which dominate over the pursuit of public interest.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter concludes the study. It is a critical chapter because it brings out the argument of the entire study. The chapter argues that The Daily Times newspaper is challenged in negotiating the commercial versus the public interest. It concludes that The Daily Times newspaper prioritises the commercial over the public interest in its operations. This chapter has the following elements: overview of the research problem, conclusions related to key informant interview questions and secondary data, limitations of the study and suggestions and implications for further research.

6.2 Overview of the research problem

This study investigated a problem in ethics of communication, specifically, the tension between commercial versus public interest. This was with the intention of examining two demands that are imposed on the news media in particular and mass media in general. The first demand comes from the commercial side; the expectation that news media are supposed to make profits in the media industry if they are to remain afloat, thus implying that news media are a business.

The second demand based on the expectation that, traditionally, the news media are the Fourth Estate, and that their duties include challenging political authorities to be accountable to the public. The commercial and the public interest demands require a delicate ethical balance since they are both critical in the operations of the news media. Therefore, the researcher took up the case of The Daily Times newspaper in order to investigate how the commercial and the public interest are negotiated while assuming that these two demands imply a terrain which requires a delicate ethical balance. The public sphere theory was adopted as a theoretical lens for scientifically grappling with this ethical conundrum.

6.3 Conclusions related to key informant interview questions and secondary data

This study set eight key informant questions which were used as a data collection instrument. The first research questions to be asked were under the first objective for this study.

The goal of this specific objective was to find out how The Daily Times newspaper performs as an organ for public opinion formation in the political community of Malawi. The following questions were set in order to respond to this objective:

- i. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?
- ii. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?
- iii. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy?
- iv. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?
- v. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?

In its key findings, the study summed up the issue of provision of checks and balances as follows: the way in which The Daily Times performed a watchdog role through news coverage, utilising whistle-blowing techniques and challenging both the private and public sectors to be accountable to the public on finances. It was also established that this role faced one huge challenge; it was not applied universally. Critical clients who contribute to the survival of The Daily Times newspaper, such as mobile companies and banks, were reported to be enjoying leniency. They were also reported to be flexing their economic muscles by asking for the inclusion of articles which were not newsworthy in the publication of The Daily Times newspaper. An example would be publishing a story of a bank giving a cheque to a football team simply because that bank happens to be the paper's client.

The second question on helping the citizenry make informed decisions had the following key findings: providing extensive news coverage on all political parties

involved in an election and publishing manifestos for all political parties for the citizenry to make informed decisions. Apart from these findings, the researcher evaluated secondary data from copies of published newspapers of The Daily Times for the year 2020. These secondary sources revealed that main political parties enjoyed frequent coverage in The Daily Times newspaper. In other words, The Tonse Alliance main political parties (UTM and MCP) and their arch-rival the DPP enjoyed news coverage.

The third question which this research posed was on the performance of The Daily Times newspaper as a medium for public debate and deliberation in Malawi democracy. The key finding for this question was that The Daily Times newspaper has one column which is open to members of the general public to express their opinions. This column is called My Point of View. The researcher confirmed the existence of this forum when secondary sources were evaluated. However, from published copies of The Daily Times newspaper, the researcher observed that there were other columns which are owned by private individuals. The columns were paid for by the individuals.

The fourth question dealt with the issue of readership and circulation of The Daily Times newspaper. The key finding here was that The Daily Times newspaper is primarily circulated in urban and peri-urban areas. This finding was cemented by the idea that the targeted audiences of The Daily Times newspaper are mostly policy makers, office workers, job seekers and so forth. The Daily Times newspaper thus caters for a particular market, leaving out the poor and illiterate.

The last question sought to investigate how The Daily Times newspaper ensures fair and balanced reporting in its news coverage. The key findings on this question were two: first, it was reported that The Daily Times newspaper enforces strict gate-keeping and secondly, it also enforces adherence to its Code of Conduct. Therefore, all the workers of this newspaper are expected to adhere to these internal self-regulatory measures.

In its second objective, the study investigated management strategies which The Daily Times newspaper uses to remain afloat on the unpredictable market of the print media industry. This specific objective was guided by one key question, namely: how does

Times Group ensure that The Daily Times newspaper stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

The responses of the key informants revealed that The Daily Times newspaper uses the following strategies in order to remain afloat on the media market: making the traditional printed edition attractive to the consumer; investing in digital platforms to finance the printed edition; protecting the interests of clients in news media business; transforming itself to fit the current media, social media and economic trends and using economies of scale. Therefore, it can be submitted that it is these strategies which help in keeping The Daily Times newspaper afloat.

The third specific objective of this study was about investigating if The Daily Times newspaper faces both pressure and neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing institutions. This objective was achieved through two separate questions. One question addressed the experience of pressure while the second question addressed the aspect of neglect. The key informants were asked the following question regarding the experience of pressure:

- Does The Daily Times newspaper experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing institutions?
- Does The Daily Times newspaper experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of advertising spend?

The question on pressure from advertisers or sponsors or other financing institutions revealed that The Daily Times newspaper faces this pressure on a daily basis. The key informants highlighted the fact that this pressure comes from both the private and the public sectors. This pressure is twofold: first, it manifests itself as fear of negative news coverage and secondly, it manifests itself in the desire to push for the publication of articles that are not newsworthy. The general observation was that sometimes The Daily Times newspaper succumbs to this pressure. It sometimes compromises its interests as a paper just to serve the interests of its clients.

The experience of neglect by The Daily Times newspaper was also confirmed by the key informants. This neglect was said to manifest in the withdrawal of advertising from

The Daily Times newspaper by advertisers but also by the tendency of advertisers to opt for digital media platforms other than traditional media. The withdrawal of advertising was reported to be perpetuated by politicians who head governments of the day while opting for digital media platforms. Such actions stem from the desire by advertisers to reach more customers.

The fourth specific objective of this study focused on investigating if printed copies of The Daily Times newspaper reflect a negotiation between the commercial and the public interest. In order to achieve this objective the researcher studied secondary data from copies of the newspaper itself. A thematic content analysis of the news articles published under the feature, 'Local News' showed that The Daily Times newspaper covers public interest themes. However, this coverage of public interest in news articles was found to be done occasionally. This was in comparison with commercial themes which were published on a daily basis. Hence, the researcher submitted that themes from the commercial dominate over themes from the public interest. Public interest themes were overshadowed by themes from the commercial. Therefore, the study noted that The Daily Times newspaper had challenges in terms of negotiating the commercial versus the public interest.

6.4 General Conclusion

In general, this thesis has argued that The Daily Times newspaper has the potential to contribute to the consolidation of democracy in the Malawi political community, although this potential is hampered by the failure to ethically negotiate the commercial versus the public interest. This argument is premised on the trade-off between commercial and the public interest which was established by both primary and secondary data. In that trade-off, it became apparent that the commercial is prioritised at the expense of the public interest. In particular, this dissertation argues that the failure to ethically balance the commercial versus the public interest emanates from the general lack of normative ideals which ought to guide the functionality of a democratic public sphere. Some of the normative ideals which are arguably lacking in the operation of The Daily Times newspaper were established to be the following: lack of universal accessibility to the discursive arena, absence of free exercise of rational-critical power, lack of autonomy of the communication arena and absence of deliberate commitment to public interest. Therefore, The Daily Times newspaper is not a functional public

sphere which serves the public interest. The Daily Times newspaper appears to be simply a vehicle for transporting commercial interests of advertisers and sponsors who control its *modus operandi* as a forum and are behind its sustainability as a forum.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited in many ways. First, the sample size for both secondary and primary data was small. This study had a sample of 120 newspapers published in the year 2020 for a period of six months and another sample of nine key informants who were purposively selected and interviewed. The samples for both sources of data were small because of time constraints which would have affected the feasibility of the research study. Another limitation was that this research study did not evaluate internal documents in order to verify the findings with what is officially documented. Therefore, the researcher was limited in comparing the ideal and the practice of The Daily Times newspaper. The researcher relied on logical tools in establishing contradictory statements from primary data. Such contradictions were easily established after evaluating secondary data from the sample of 120 published newspapers. Lastly, this research was limited because it did not include media regulatory bodies –such as the Media Council of Malawi– in its study population. The researcher presumed that such bodies may not be in a position to comment on internal affairs especially on how a newspaper operates on a daily basis. Overall, limitations are characteristic of any scientific study, thus, they are not an isolated occurrence in this research study. Essentially, they are embedded in any human endeavour.

6.6 Suggestions and Implications for further Research

There are some areas which will require further research. First, the researcher suggests that a similar study can be conducted but with a much bigger sample. The study population could incorporate media regulatory bodies who would have ideas on the pressures that media houses go through because of advertisers. The sample of such a research study would also have to include key informants from the board of governance which this study did not have access.

Secondly, the researcher suggests that a study be done on the role of gate-keepers in the newsroom of The Daily Times newspaper. The current study failed to establish the impact of gate-keepers on the quality of news that is published. The researcher assumed

that such gate-keepers are simply there to guard against the publication of information which may lead to an experience of neglect from advertisers.

There is also the possibility of exploring commercial versus public interest in online media in Malawi. This is especially taking into account the way in which print media is losing out on readership and advertising to those with online resources. It would be a worthwhile study to see the extent to which online media balances the two aspects that have been discussed in this study.

Finally, the researcher suggests a comparative study between The Daily Times newspaper and The Nation newspaper on how they both fare in negotiating the commercial versus the public interest. Such a study can either confirm or falsify the claim that the commercial tends to stand in the path of the public interest which the news media ought to promote in their daily operation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THEMES

This section presents raw data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Raw data from secondary sources shows themes identified in the daily publication of The Daily Times newspaper. These themes were identified from the news stories falling under the feature called National News/ Local News for The Daily Times newspaper using thematic content analysis. The newspaper headings for the published copies from which these themes were identified are also given below.

Themes identified in the month of June

1 June 2020 to 5 June 2020 (Table 1)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Covid-19 (Donations)	Court cases- Maizegate	Covid-19 (Prevention measures)	Elections (Byelections)	Covid-19
Attacks on Journalists	Elections (fresh presidential)	Elections (fresh presidential elections funding)	Albino murder cases	Elections (Legal bill)
Party Politics (Tonse Alliance)	Covid-19 (Donations)	Parliament budget meeting	Abuse of women	Girl child education
	Witchcraft accusations	Education (School reopening)	Police arrests (Theft, Crime)	Police arrests (Child abuse)
		Court cases	Health (Shortage of essential drugs)	Constitutional amendment
		Political violence	Presidential Address	Political violence

Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce
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8 June 2020 to 12 June 2020 (Table 2)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Elections (fresh Presidential elections, new appointments)	Elections	Elections (swearing in of new commissioners, election date set by parliament)	Elections (date given to MEC)	Elections (expert opinion on fresh presidential elections)
Court rulings	Deaths from accidents	Unemployment (Stampede injuries)	Deaths from accidents	Witchcraft Allegations (Elderly people)
Demonstrations (HRDC)	Demonstrations (Mzuzu vendors)	Political campaign pledges	Political protests (HRDC)	Budget presentation
Political violence	Police arrests (crime)	Police arrests (crime)	Crime	Court cases (local chiefs case)
Covid-19	Politics and media		Covid-19	Covid-19
Health (Poor service delivery)	Health service challenges (HIV disease fight)		Girl education	
Education				
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

15 June 2020 to 19 June 2020 (Table 3)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Elections	Elections (survey revelations)	Elections	Elections (Political party campaigns)	Elections (Government funding)
Politics and the law	Legal issues (Former president reported to ICC)	Underfunding concerns (National Audit Office)	Lawyers' march	Development projects
Accountability in Parastatals	Farming (Tobacco)	Parastatals (business loss)	Court cases	Judicial independence
Education (ODL programs)	Political party politics (leader endorsement)	Education (Digital literacy)		Political party politics (alliances)
Police arrests (imprisonment)	Education (learning science)	HIV healing claims	Religion (Anglican women)	Farming
Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19 (campaign awareness)	Covid-19	Covid-19 (health workers' concerns)
Youth and Budget		Albino issues		Youth (failure to access treatment for STIs)
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

22 June 2020 to 26 June 2020 (Table 4)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Elections	Elections (voting day in presidential elections)	Elections (peaceful voting done)	Elections (official results trickle in)	Elections (Premature electoral celebrations)
Human Trafficking	Legal issues	Political violence	National Budget meeting	Farming (Cotton farming)
National Budget deliberations	Police arrests (crime)	Political party politics	Education (school reopening uncertain)	
Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19	Health related donations (Beit Cure)	Covid-19
Missing persons	Youth welfare	Farming (Fish consumption)		
	Blood donation (MBTS)			
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

29 June 2020 to 30 June 2020 (Table 5)

Monday	Tuesday
Elections (swearing in ceremony of president and vice-president, religious leaders take on elections)	Elections (comments on peaceful elections)
Education (Reopening schools)	Cabinet appointments
Court rulings (jail sentence)	Underprivileged persons (NGOs)
Development projects	Parliamentary roles
Healing issues	
Covid-19	Covid-19
	Political campaigns (by-elections)
Commerce	Commerce

Themes identified in the month of July.

1 July 2020 to 3 July 2020 (Table 6)

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Provisional Budget presentation	Governance (Dissolution of Boards, HRDC on anti-corruption)	Elections (outpouring on peaceful elections)
Criticisms on presidential appointments	Transparency on revenue collection in councils	Corruption investigations (ACB investigates MRA)
Court cases	Illegal mining cases	Court cases
Covid-19 (quarantine centres, donations in public hospitals)	Covid-19 (cases surge)	Covid-19 (accountability on funds)
Police Arrests		Police Arrests
Abduction of people with Albinism	Discrimination against people living with Albinism	Youth activism in politics
Education (school funding project)	Youth activism	Female workers rights
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

6 July 2020 to 10 July 2020 (Table 7)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Independence Day Celebrations	Political party politics (DPP)	Elections (outpour on peaceful elections)	Cabinet appointments	Cabinet appointments (scrutiny)
Inauguration of president	Inauguration of president (analysts take)	Taxation issues	Political party politics (DPP)	Police arrests
Court cases	Defilement of girl child	Defilement of girl child (police arrests)	Sexual assault of women (Msundwe saga)	Access to Information implementation
Covid-19 (cases surge)	Sector reforms agenda	Sector reforms agenda	Suicide cases (mental health)	Infrastructural challenges in some schools
Food donations		Protests at Admarc and Escom	Deaths in road accidents	Farming
Family planning issues		Religion	Covid-19 (test kits)	Covid-19 (mandatory face mask wearing)
Exposing corrupt practices			Court case (lockdown case)	Court case (lockdown case)
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

13 July 2020 to 17 July 2020 (Table 8)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19 (Religion invoked)	Covid-19 (cases surging)
Court rulings (Defilement cases)	Court cases	Political violence (DPP suspects arrested)	Governance (Restructuring at MBC)	Security concerns (police fire arm verification)
Corruption Allegations	Police probes on cement deals	Court rulings	Accountability for public resources	Accountability
Accountability of GoM	Police arrests (murder charges)	Fuel scandal	Court cases (Fraud and money laundering)	Governance
	Sexual Assault (Msundwe)	Governance (Rehiring of press officer return)		Justice (death in police cell)
	Taxation issues			Youths and Covid-19
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

20 July 2020 to 24 July 2020 (Table 9)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Covid-19 (Health workers testing positive)	Police arrests	Covid-19 (use of masks)	Covid-19 (funds probe, lockdown debate)	Police arrests
Court rulings	Court rulings (bail granted)	Police arrests (crime allegations)	Court rulings (bail)	Court rulings (bail)
Accountability (Covid-19 funds)	Accountability demands (Pressure on MERA)	Accountability in statutory corporations	Governance (firing of NRB employees)	Covid-19 vaccine
Development projects (Road Construction)	One million jobs agenda	Access to Information (ATI) implementation	Maternal health (delivery challenges)	One million jobs agenda
Political party politics (DPP)	Neutrality in politics for civil servants	Defilement cases	Debt in Parastatals	Prohibition of vending in nondesignated places
Deaths	Wildlife crimes	Justice (murder hearing of dead prisoner)	Elections (parliamentary by-elections)	Development projects
	Witchcraft accusations		Governance (GoM expenditure down)	Agriculture (pesticides)
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

27 July 2020 to 31 July 2020 (Table 10)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Covid-19 (lack of transparency about it, disinfection campaigns)	Police Arrests (MERA)	Police officers arrests (murder charges)	Presidential powers reduction agenda	Firing of principal secretaries
Elections (Review of observer roles)	Cement Saga probe	Public resources plundering accusations (DPP)	Police interrogation (former president on Cement Saga)	Youth pleas for financial support
Screening for chronic conditions	Sexual abuse investigations	Inequality rise (due to Covid-19)	Covid-19 (cautions from first lady)	Elections
	Political party politics (UTM)	One million jobs agenda	Education (elearning for technical colleges)	Corruption allegations (MRA on top police officer)
	Girl child pregnancies	Local governance (Rejection of District Commissioner)	Police arrests (money laundering charges)	Development projects
	Farming (fish disease outbreak)	Religion (faith issues)	Court cases (bribery of judges case)	
	Crime			
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

Themes identified in the month of August

3 August 2020 to 7 August 2020 (Table 11)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Governance (relocating vendors)	Corruption investigations (ACB)	Corruption investigations	Governance (moving principal secretaries)	Elections
Funding of Ombudsman	Court rulings	Court rulings	Covid-19 (impact on widows)	Covid-19 (demand to reopen airports)
Disease (HIV/AIDS)	Drug and alcohol abuse	Lake Malawi disputes		Sector reforms
Accountability	Accountability	Accountability	Accountability	Accountability
Elections (Byelections campaign)	Governance (drug control)	Death by murder	Police arrests	Teenage pregnancies
Covid-19	Covid-19	Covid-19 (screening)	Gender based violence	
Rape case (elderly woman raped by a boy)	Death murder by	Cannabis Farming company	Teenage pregnancies	
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

10 August 2020 to 14 August 2020 (Table 12)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Governance (reopen airports)	Court rulings (award of K7bn election bill)	Governance (shakeups in councils)	Court orders	Education (school closure)
Accountability demands (police)	Religious tolerance	Accountability (MEC expenditure in 2019)	Accountability on recruitment procedure (MRA mess)	Court cases (court orders)
Covid-19 (donations of PPEs)	Elections	Elections	Mining reforms	Theft (ESCOM meter bypass)
Human trafficking	Covid-19 (Cash donation)	Covid-19 (preventive measures)	Covid-19	Covid-19
Witchcraft issues			Girl child protection	Child rights
Political party politics (UTM new members)	Political Party politics (MCP defectors)			
Police arrests (crime)		Police arrests (crime)		
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

17 August 2020 to 21 August 2020 (Table 13)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Covid-19	Lawlessness	Accountability	Public accountability	Accountability (pension funds)
Deaths	Protests (Motorcycle protests)	Sector reforms	Court rulings	Court rulings
Education	Covid-19	Education	Corruption	Unemployment
Girl child rights protection	Elections (electoral bills)	Waste management	Covid-19	Challenges in public hospitals
Funding of Councils (World Bank)	Accountability demands	Teenage pregnancies	Security concerns	Marriages of minors (Girls)
Defilement of children	Abortion	Defilement arrests	Road Accidents	Development projects
	Revenue collection	Political party politics (AFORD convention)		
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

24 August 2020 to 28 August 2020 (Table 14)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Political party politics (UTM)	Governance (Cabinet ministers targets)	Accountability in statutory corporations	Accountability (Maize issue)	Disease (malaria vaccine)
Development (coal power plant)	Human Rights issues (HRDC)	Court rulings	Court rulings (bail)	Court rulings
Covid-19	Agriculture (Army worm outbreak)	Covid-19	Unemployment	Covid-19
Unemployment (nurses' concerns)	Covid-19 (mask donations)	Marriages of minors	Suicide deaths	Marriages of minors
Parliament investigations	Forex shortage	Elections (Byelections)	Youth empowerment	Hunger
		Chibuku beer smuggling		Education (school reopening)
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

31 August 2020 to 4 September 2020 (Table 15)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Education	Corruption investigations	Re-instatement of former MDF chief	Court rulings	Court rulings (on Covid-19 lockdown)
Agriculture	Hunger	Covid-19 (infections and deaths)	Covid-19	Covid-19
Work of Statutory Corporations	Political party politics (DPP)	Police arrests	Accountability	Accountability
Child protection	Child trafficking	Elections (electoral reforms)	Family Planning	Development projects
Women empowerment	Education (school reopening)	Education (schooling during Covid-19)	Education (TUM pressures)	
Crime	Low uptake of health services	Youth unemployment	Religion	
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

7 September 2020 to 11 September 2020 (Table 16)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Corruption investigations	Corruption allegations	Court rulings	Affordable Input Programme funds accountability	Parliamentary Proceedings
Covid-19 (PPE donations)	Covid-19	Governance	Governance	Sexual Reproductive Health (Abortion Bill)
Youth welfare	Education	Corruption investigations	Unemployment concerns	Court rulings (summons)
Elections (Political campaigns for parliamentary by-elections)	Refugees issues	Women empowerment	Covid-19	Political party politics (UDF convention)
Health related donations	Agriculture	Childhood cancers	Police Arrests	Police arrests
Education		Police arrests	Education (girl child education)	Education (public universities)
Coal mining		Witchcraft	Water challenges in Water Boards	Clean water challenges
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

14 September 2020 to 18 September 2020 (Table 17)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Elections	Police arrests	MSCE Examination Budget (MANEB)	Police arrests (Msundwe case)	Mining activities of companies
Girl child defilement	Education	Demolition of vendor stalls	Police transfers	Political party politics
Court rulings	Court rulings	Firing of casual workers (Water Board)		Elections (need for civic education in by-elections)
Prison inmates empowerment	Political party politics	National Budget Analysis (Poor funding of audit office)	National Budget Analysis (low funding for MHRC)	District hospitals debt
Fighting Crime	Governance	Abortion Bill debates	Political violence	Court cases
Covid-19 (funds probe)	Access to information law	Women in land issues	Albino challenges	
	Agriculture	Education	Covid-19	
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

21 September 2020 to 25 September 2020 (Table 18)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Accountability (ACB on Jet sell and cement saga)	Agriculture (queries on fertiliser deals)	Governance (Government appointments of advisors)	Governance (new appointments in boards, termination of contracts)	Governance (Calls for National debt cancellation)
Political party politics (DPP)	Health (challenges at a public hospital)	Covid-19	Court cases (corruption issues- ESCOM)	Economic challenges facing media (High taxes and arrears from GoM)
Political violence	Covid-19 (PPEs donation)	Elections (legal battles on elections)	Covid-19 (mask donation)	Unsafe abortion concerns
Police arrests (teacher stealing MANEB fees)	Youth reproductive health	Teenage pregnancies	Women reproductive rights (safe delivery calls)	Elections (byelections deemed free and fair)
Rights of children	Court rulings (bail, court cases)	Abortion bill debates	Police arrests on rape of women	Human trafficking (police arrests)
Education (calls to review Life Skills curriculum)	Development projects	Education (private schools)	Transparency (GoM owes Teveta levies)	Children's rights and care
Parliamentary politics (Leader of Opposition- DPP)	Political party politics	Donations (Malawi Police)	National debt rise	Funding deficit at Judiciary
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

28 September 2020 to 2 October 2020 (Table 19)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Corruption investigations (ACB on MACRA employees)	Corruption allegations (Blue Night Fundraising case (DPP))	Lack of public trust in Police concerns	Political party politics (DPP)	Court cases (lawsuits)
Covid-19 (preventive measures adherence)	2020/21 Budget debates	Court cases (shifts in judgement dates)	Wildlife crimes	Environmental concerns on coal power
Abortion bill	Political party politics (UTM on clean-up campaign)	Covid-19 (Access to information on Covid-19)	Education (Standard 8 Examinations, College of Health Science students with no upkeep allowances)	Parliamentary politics (Leader of Opposition returned-DPP)
Court rulings (forfeiture of bank account)	Court rulings (DPP official to be sentenced)	War on child marriages	Parliamentary politics (Condom donation apology demand)	Justice for landmine victims
Youth budget campaign	Deaths in road accidents	Parliamentary politics	Fostering strong bilateral relations (Zimbabwe)	Widows rights

Access to information Act halted	Agriculture (grain storage collapsing)	Corruption (dubious job offers at MRA)	Religion (Livingstonia synod elections)	Girls and women rights promotion
	The impact of Covid-19 on Education	Politics in Civil Society Organisations		Covid-19
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

5 October 2020 to 9 October 2020 (Table 20)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Political party politics (DPP)	Court cases	Court cases (court appeals, contempt of court charge)	Bilateral relations with neighbours (TZ)	Bilateral relations with neighbours (TZ)
Presidential report on 100 days in office	Abortion bill (religious leaders take)	Agriculture (AIP)	Covid-19 (UK donations)	Death sentence debates
Girls rights (Cyber bullying condemned)	Deaths in road accidents	Funding corruption fight	Corruption concerns (Ministries, Departments and Agencies)	Elections (constituency level)
Youths and Covid-19 fight	Health challenges (in councils)	Improvement on Malawi Human Rights record	Poor performance of Admarc	Agro-ecology approaches
Rise in defilement cases	Development agenda (saving Malawi)	Appeals for national debt cancellation	Court ruling (MEC new voters)	Manhunt for girl defilement case (Police)
Security improvement (police)		Education (Resource challenges)	Tobacco farming (Agriculture)	
		Health challenges (district hospital)		
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

12 October 2020 to 16 October 2020 (Table 21)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Hiring procedure for public officials scrutiny (Water Board CEO)	Elections (50% + 1 guidelines)	Court rulings	National Budget approved	Accountability on bank sale (GoM on loans at Malawi Savings Bank before sale)
Elections (Byelections)	Court rulings (DPP official)	Water supply challenges	Elections (Byelections and 50% + 1 concerns)	Vendors treatment (GoM faulted)
Political party politics (DPP cautioned)	Calls to abolish death penalty	Child marriages	Food rations scaled down (Police)	Deaths in road accidents
Abuse of Constituency Development Fund (Councils)	Covid-19	Covid-19 (teachers praised)	Malaria related deaths	Covid-19 (fund allocation, preventive measures)
Covid-19 (EU donations)	Youth concerns on one million jobs	Human trafficking fight	Covid-19 (tests kits procurement)	Girl child rights
Abortion bill (traditional leaders support)	Financial irregularities in audit report (report for MEC)	Human deaths (animal attacks)	Technical Education	Demands on protecting widows
Education (sanitation challenges in schools)		Vendors concerns	Accountability on land issues (Land issue in Limbe)	
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

19 October 2020 to 23 October 2020 (Table 22)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
The rise of food prices	Accountability on public funds (on State House Hotel bill)	Court cases (adjournment)	Government decisions (principal secretary returned)	Court cases (Sentencing)
Mob justice (lodge torched)	Development projects (police houses construction, rural mortuary built)	Parliamentary and Presidential Elections Act (PPEA amendment bill passed)	Fire accidents	Police arrests
Court rulings (jail sentence)	Environmental conservation	Condemning mob justice	Police arrests	Ivory possession crimes
Elderly women issues	Human rights issues	Health challenges (district hospital)	Abortion bill (Pregnancy termination bill)	Covid-19 (its impact on women reproductive health access)
Elections (Byelections)	Covid-19 (Cartridge shortage delaying results)	Education (students demand for graduation)	Lawlessness condemnation	Lawyers planned march
Youth health services	Deforestation concerns	Family Planning (monitoring funds)	Religion (Church donation)	
Cervical cancer fight		Governance (president in parliament)		
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

26 October 2020 to 30 October 2020 (Table 23)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Land issues (public land protection)	Elections (50% + 1 debate-PAC)	Accountability demands (ESCOM felling trees)	Sexual harassment of women	Promoting lawabiding behaviour among Muslim citizens (Religion)
Women appointments concerns	Gender balance in appointments (appointment of 6 female high court judges)	Protection of forests	Calls or regulation of mining activities	Early marriages blame game
Funding National Statistical Office (NSO)	Covid-19 (adhering to preventive measures)	Court cases (appeals)	Protecting adolescent girls	Civil servants salaries increment
Covid-19 (fears on MSCE exams)	Global Prize for Concourt Judges	Education (MSCE commence)	Low women appointments (in boards)	Unplanned pregnancies for girls
Motivating the Girl child		Women rights (empowerment)	Taxation Amendment Bill	Calls to audit MBC personnel
Heavy wind victims (donations)		Women health	Women demonstrations (exclusion disparity)	Death due to poisoning
		Covid-19 (prevention challenges)	Political interference in councils	Concerns on protecting the girl child
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

2 November 2020 to 6 November 2020 (Table 24)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Corruption allegations (BEAM)	Twelve bills assented	Cervical cancer awareness	Court cases (lawsuits against former president)	Land disputes (land wrangle)
Agriculture (AIP)	Child marriages	Calls to decriminalise same sex relations	Warning to Minibus Operators (loading at filling stations)	Court rulings (court decisions)
Political violence (UTM and MCP)	Teenage pregnancies	Education (MSCE leakage arrests)	Education (Examination retake budget)	Gender advocacy campaigns
Condemning sexual abuse of the elderly	Rights of Albinism persons	Illegal land sales	Elections (MEC funding of By-elections)	Elections (Byelections)
Forest depletion		Demonstrations against rape of women	Health donations (Central Hosp.)	Corruption investigations (ACB on APM)
		Covid-19 (China		
		donations of kits)		
		Donations of Health equipment (US)		
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

9 November 2020 to 13 November 2020 (Table 25)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Agriculture (AIP hiccups)	Justice for Albinism victims (CCJP take)	Elections (Byelections)	Agriculture (AIP challenges)	Agriculture (AIP challenges)
Honouring War Veterans	Elections (Byelections, peaceful power transition)	Governance (Bilateral relations)	Police arrests (AIP related arrests and fraud)	Court cases (bribery case)
Elderly women protection	Police arrests	Corruption (ACB warnings)	Governance (Bilateral relations)	Governance (Bilateral relations)
Child abuse fight	Educating the deaf	Deaths by murder	Beautifying Malawi Cleanup Day	Education (MANEB scrutiny on MSCE leakage)
ACB awareness month	Girl child empowerment	Elevation of chiefs	Elections (MEC	Political violence
	(girls in tailoring)		challenges in By-elections)	
Maladministration at Medical Stores (CMST)	Health donations (district hospital)	Covid-19 response	Covid-19 (donations)	Covid-19 (cash transfers)
		Diabetes day (ECOBANK)	Suspension of officials (Admarc)	Poor road network
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

16 November 2020 to 20 November 2020 (Table 26)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Agriculture (AIP challenges, low maize prices)	Court cases	Immigration issues (passport of religious leader)	Preparations for re- administering MSCE	Freedom to keep dreadlocks in schools
Bilateral relations	Demonstrations at Auction Holdings	Police arrests	AIP related police arrests	Albino victims (body parts found)
Abuse of funds at NEEF) (Audit report)	Defilement march	Deaths in road accidents	Early marriages for girls	Witchcraft Act review
Suspension of officials (MANEB)	Rise of women rape cases	Calls for family planning (fertility rate)	Police arrests (religious leader in custody)	The demerits of corruption
Cervical Cancer awareness	Beautifying Malawi (Cleanup campaign)	Beautifying Malawi (Cleanup campaign)		Court case (Religious leaders' case off indefinitely)
Health Donations (Malawi Red Cross)	Calls for women participation in governance	Religious groups condemnation of rape		
		Older persons bill		
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

23 November 2020 to 27 November 2020 (Table 27)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Agriculture (AIP)	Court cases (Religious leader case)	Corruption investigations (ACB)	Health (HIV infections control)	Police arrests (drug trafficking arrest)
Education (MSCE exam fees from GoM., School vandalism)	Corruption investigations (ACB)	Financial mismanagement investigations (NOCMA)	Court rulings	Abortion bill (Pregnancy termination bill)
Illegal vending places	Political party politics (MCP)	Deaths by murder	Unlicensed mining activities	Child abuse concerns
Immigration issues	Employee dismissals	Covid-19 impact	Rape (gender based violence)	Punishment for rapists
Defilement of girls arrests	Climate change concerns	Homelessness	Environment (Clean energy)	Health (challenges in public hospitals)
Health (Cancer prevention awareness)		Safe motherhood	Defilement of girls cases	Safe motherhood (maternity care)
Girl child education				Governance
Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce	Commerce

APPENDIX B: NEWSPAPER SOURCES

Newspaper Headlines for 1 June to 5 June

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera allays one-term ‘fears’: says no decision made on when he would bow out, (June, 1). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). APM comes out fighting: Accuses judiciary of risking Malawians’ lives, (June, 2). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). New set for MPs meeting: Only 100 to be in chamber, older ones asked to stay away, (June, 3). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). No-show President: APM to address Parliament through audio recording, JSC, parties submit names for MEC Commissioners, (June, 4). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Experts tip MPs on Polls: Avoid amending the Constitution, (June, 5). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper Headlines for 8 June 2020 to 12 June

The Daily Times (2020). Fresh poll fate today, (June, 8). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Priority goes to poll bills: Government bows to opposition demands, (June, 9). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MPs endorse election date, (June, 10). (pp. 1-5)

The Daily Times (2020). Constitution change denied: As Parliament communicates to MEC about June 23 poll date, (June, 11). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Ex-MEC chair speaks on poll: Msosa says election doable on, June 23, (June, 12). (pp. 1-5)

Newspaper headlines for 15 June 2020 to 19 June 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Pressure piles on Mutharika: CJ, other judges going nowhere, (June, 15). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera to win—Survey, (June, 16). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Experts clash on poll survey, (June, 17). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Up in arms: Lawyers march against attack on Judiciary, (June, 18). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Election set: Govt. to release K10 billion today, (June, 19). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines from 22 June 2020 to 26 June 2020

The Daily Times (2020). ‘Nothing but credible poll’, (June, 22). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). D-Day: Malawians vote in fresh presidential election, (June, 23). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Peaceful vote: As results pour in, (June, 24). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera triumphs: MEC to announce official results, (June, 25). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MEC dismisses DPP: As MCP goes into early celebrations, (June, 26). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 29 June 2020 to 30 June 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Bright future is here—Chakwera: Takes oath of office as Malawi’s 6th president, (June, 29). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera for 30 ministers: 40% will be women, (June, 30). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 1 July 2020 to 3 July 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Interim budget at K722 billion: As govt raises Paye tax-free threshold to K100, 000, (July, 1). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Government stops deals, (July, 2). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). COVID-19 funds under probe: Ombudsman wants information by July 17, (July, 3). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 6 July 2020 to 10 July 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Independence Gala cancelled: President reacts to Covid-19 threat--Inauguration shifts to Kamuzu Barracks, (July, 6). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Tone set for new Malawi: Chakwera ‘demystifies’ presidency, speech inspiring—commentators, (July, 7). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Veep tough on reforms, (July, 8). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Full cabinet finally out: Ministers picked from diverse sectors, It is a mixed bag—commentator, (July, 9). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Cabinet under microscope: Malawians speak against some new ministers, President says he will address the nation today, (July, 10). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headings for 13 July 2020 to 17 July 2020

The Daily Times (2020). APM's cement deals hit K5bn, (July, 13). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Police probe cement deals, (July, 14). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chisale spends night in custody, (July, 15). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chisale faces fraud charge—also to answer money laundering allegation, (July, 16). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Audit exposes flaws at MEC, (July, 17). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 20 July 2020 to 24 July 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Covid-19 crisis—223 health workers test positive for Covid-19, (July, 20). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Nights in custody—Chunara arrested in Lilongwe, Chisale remanded at Chichiri prison, (July, 21). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). SKC goes after 'Casual' CEOs, (July, 22). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Experts weigh in on Lockdown, (July, 23). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). ACB pounces on 4 at ESCOM, (July, 24). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 27 July 2020 to 31 July 2020

The Daily Times (2020). 'Mutharika not off the hook', (July, 27). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MERA boss, two others nabbed, (July, 28). (pp. 1-5)

The Daily Times (2020). Police pounce on Mukhito—Chisale rearrested, (July, 29). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Police question APM on K5bn cement saga, (July, 30). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MRA bloats contract, (July, 31). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 3 August 2020 to 7 August 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Ombudsman speaks out, (August, 3). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Muhara hooked in K57bn genset deal, (August, 4). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Sour deals: Escom losing billions in Egenco, Aggreko deals, (August, 5). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Shake-up at capital hill, (August, 6). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). PAC cautions Chakwera, (August, 7). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 10 August 2020 to 14 August 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Government imposes partial ‘lockdown’—ECM disagrees with new measures, (August, 10). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Muhara named in land query, (August, 11). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Pressure on MEC over case costs, (August, 12). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Recruitment mess at MRA—Chakwera hails Mayi Dinala, (August, 13). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Court orders cops’ arrests, (August, 14). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 17 August 2020 to 21 August 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Govt cautioned on school reopening, (August, 17). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Poll bills to be retabled, (August, 18). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MEC protests K7 billion bill, (August, 19). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Rot in police prosecution, (August, 20). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Queries over pension fund, (August, 21). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 24 August 2020 to 28 August 2020

The Daily Times (2020). ACB overwhelmed--leadership queries in DPP, (August, 24). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Committee bars MP over bribery claim, (August, 25). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). No bailout for Escom—To pay Egenco K11.7bn by Dec, (August, 26). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Things fall apart in DPP—SG refuses to step down, Ben Phiri throws in the towel, (August, 27). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Back to school—Schools to reopen on Sept 7, Activists doubt preparedness, (August, 28). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 31 August 2020 to 4 September 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Bagus dumps DPP—MPs care for own wellbeing-Analyst, (August, 31).

The Daily Times (2020). MACRA, MERA top ACB list—ACB acts on HRDC tip-offs, (September, 1). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Unfinished business—Chakwera reinstates MDF chief, I didn’t finish my vision-Nundwe, (September, 2). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Parly u-turns on meeting outside, (September, 3). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). 'Lockdown unlawful', (September, 4). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 7 September 2020 to 11 September 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Min Implicated in K7.2BN Scam, (September, 7). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Nankhumwa Slams SONA, (September, 8). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Mysterious Deaths to be investigated, (September, 9). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Lawyers oppose Muhara's return, (September, 10). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Easy Afternoon: Chakwera demolishes Nankhumwa, (September, 11). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 14 September 2020 to 18 September 2020

The Daily Times (2020). K1.5BN saved in fresh poll, (September, 14). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Mussa, Munthali still in custody; court remands duo for seven months, (September, 15). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chisale in hospital; court document says suspect suffering from panic attacks, (September, 16). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). K13.5BN rentals choke ministry, (September, 17). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). War in DPP; Nankhumwa summoned for disciplinary hearing, (September, 18). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 21 September 2020 to 25 September 2020

The Daily Times (2020). ACB Speaks on presidential jet, (September, 21). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). No Respite for Chisale; court rejects mental health claim, (September, 22). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). 'We need a break'; Chakwera talks Africa-led growth, (September, 23). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Seodi, others sent packing, (September, 24). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera pleads for debt cancellation, (September, 25). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 28 September 2020 to 2 October 2020

The Daily Times (2020). ACB blocks MACRA staff; several employees stopped from working, (September, 28). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Court jails DPP official; Mzomera Ngwira to be sentenced on October 12, (September, 29). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MRA acts on ACB demand; Withdraws 71 ‘dubious’ job offers, (September, 30). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). DPP MPs defy APM, (October, 1). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). DPP MPs pick Nankhumwa, (October, 2). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 5 October 2020 to 9 October 2020

The Daily Times (2020). DPP feud persists, (October, 5). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Malawi was sinking ship—Chakwera, (October, 6). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Govt fights K750M claim, (October, 7). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MPs go after technocrats, (October, 8). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MPs denounce racism reports, (October, 9). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 12 October 2020 to 16 October 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Bank queries Itaye’s hiring, (October, 12). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Audit bares mess at MEC, (October, 13). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Glitch in K17BN water project, (October, 14). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MPs approve K2TN Budget, (October, 15). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Govt coy on toxic loans; not coming out clear on recovering MSB’s K6 billion, (October, 16). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 19 October 2020 to 23 October 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Villagers set lodge on fire, (October, 19). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). State House speaks on K65M hotel bill, (October, 20). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MPs cast off 50%+1 system, (October, 21). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera, MPs face off again; president navigates parliament, (October, 22). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Uladi jailed for five years, (October, 23). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 26 October 2020 to 30 October 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Power abuse fears at BWB, (October, 26). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Gender balance in appointments; Chakwera engages 6 female High Court judges out of 12, (October, 27). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). OPC dared on civil servants; Ombudsman wants guidelines on participation in politics, (October, 28). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Women want speed on abuse reports; as MBC boss is sent on leave over sexual harassment; Poly Dean, lecturer hooked in similar allegations, (October, 29). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Civil servants salaries hiked, (October, 30). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 2 November 2020 to 6 November 2020

The Daily Times (2020). LWB, BCC caught up in funds abuse, (November, 2). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Kunje, Mathanga off MEC 'Payroll', (November, 3). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Students nabbed over exam leaks; we are investigating the matter—Ministry, (November, 4). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Contractor sues APM for K135M, (November, 5). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Presidential Ultimatums; Chakwera takes on boards, controlling officers, (November, 6). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 9 November 2020 to 13 November 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Hiccups hit AIP, (November, 9). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Chakwera maintains stand on Jerusalem, (November, 10). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). MCP triumphs; Commission yet to announce official results, (November, 11). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Farm inputs elude Chakwera village, (November, 12). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Over 600, 000 off farm inputs list, (November, 13). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 16 November 2020 to 20 November 2020

The Daily Times (2020). Audit exposes rot at NEEF, (November, 16). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). No interference; Chakwera sees Bushiri matter as legal; As Pretoria issues warrant of arrest, (November, 17). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). 'Bushiri has one passport', (November, 18). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Bushiris spend night in custody; to apply for bail today, (November, 19). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Bushiris' case off indefinitely, (November, 20). (pp. 1-5).

Newspaper headlines for 23 November 2020 to 27 November 2020

The Daily Times (2020). No fees for MSCE retake; Government to bear exam costs, (November, 23). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). LMC hints at sabotage; blasts civil servants, (November, 24). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). NOCMA acts on Buluma, (November, 25). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). High Court rebuffs Tayub, Transglobe, (November, 26). (pp. 1-5).

The Daily Times (2020). Makileni, Govt talks fail again; PS sticks to K750m pay-out; Negotiations still on—AG, (November, 27). (pp. 1-5).

APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

1. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?
2. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?
3. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy?
4. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?
5. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?
6. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?
7. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?
8. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

APPENDIX D: RESPONSES FROM KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Questions and responses (Key informant A)

1. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?

A: The Daily Times unearths things that people with influence would not want to be exposed through its news stories.

The Daily Times provides analysis by engaging commentators on various issues.

The Daily Times through its investigative approach challenges the private sector to be accountable to the public.

2. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?

A: By covering news stories on all the political parties that are participating in an election so that a citizen can make an informed choice.

By providing balanced news during elections.

By serving the interests of the voter.

3. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy?

A: The Daily Times has a platform called My Point of View which is open to members of the public who can freely express their views by publishing them.

The Times Group also publishes The Sunday Times which has a forum for debate where people can read and respond to each other.

The Daily Times covers news stories which resonate with people's needs.

4. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?

A: Circulation is about the buyer while readership deals with the reader's interests. Circulation is generally affected by politics but also high illiteracy levels among the citizenry.

5. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?

A: By urging its employees to take a detached view, i.e. a view that is free from outside influences and abiding by a Code of Conduct of The Daily Times. In other words, by promoting strict adherence to a Code of Conduct.

By upholding ethical values and principles which enable the paper to hear every side of the story before publishing it. By deliberately hearing even from the aggrieved party.

By enforcing strict gate-keeping which allows editors to scrutinize a story before it gets published. A story is judged and assessed before publishing it.

6. How is The Daily Times faring on the market?

(No answer was given, the researcher was asked to talk to The Daily Times marketing officers)

7. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

A: By treading carefully in order not to lose advertisers in the news stories that are covered. In this endeavour The Daily Times balances between serving the public by speaking for the public and ensuring its own survival as a business. Because the paper as a forum needs advertisers in order to be sustained.

8. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?

A: Yes it does, The Daily Times has been subjected to pressure from the powers that be. Pressure has always come from both the public and private sectors. But the paper thrives by presenting what is and not what people want. The Daily Times maintains its integrity as it serves the public.

9. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

A: Yes it does, there have been times when advertisements from the government have been pulled out or withdrawn from The Daily Times newspaper. At some point the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) withdrew government advertisements.

This section presents the responses from the interview that was done with one of the current marketing officers of The Daily Times newspaper. The interview was held in his office.

Questions and responses (Key informant B)

1. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?

B: Locally there is a printed copy which circulates mainly in urban and semi-urban areas. Not much revenue is generated from the sales of this copy. There is also an edition which transcends borders and pays dividends in terms of revenue through subscription fees.

2. How is The Daily Times faring on the market?

B: In comparison with other newspapers, The Daily Times is doing fairly well on the market. This is largely because it is attractive to both the advertisers and readers. The printed edition has high quality photos. But the market is generally hostile since government advertisements contribute forty percentage of the revenue targets.

3. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

B: The Daily Times reads into the needs of its consumers.

The Daily Times invests in digital platforms which are followed by both advertisers and readers. These platforms generate revenue through advertisements.

The Daily Times does not align with the government of the day, its allegiance is to the people it serves.

The Daily Times uses its online (Times 360 Malawi) presence to break news which gets to be analysed in the published daily copy. The printed edition is simply used for analysis and deliberation. Online platform enjoys followership from readers and advertisers.

The Daily Times complements the work of Times Radio and Television in providing analysis and discussion on news that the aforementioned platforms would have broken.

4. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?

B: Yes it does on a daily basis. Some advertisers do not want negative news to be covered about their products for fear of losing consumers. This makes advertisers exert pressure on the marketing department which in some cases in its interventions puts pressure on the editorial department so that the interests of the advertisers are protected. This eventually generates internal pressure, the editorial department versus the marketing department.

Sometimes The Daily Times covers articles that are not newsworthy simply because it does not want to lose its clients.

5. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

B: Yes it does, the government is the biggest culprit in this. It tends to withdraw its advertisements if it finds news articles very critical towards it.

The next section covers interviews with some former employees of The Daily Times newspaper. It begins with a telephone interview which was done with the former Chief Marketing Officer of The Daily Times. It shall be followed by an interview with the former Chief Editor of The Daily Times. The last two interviews were done with two people who worked as journalists of The Daily Times as reporters.

Questions and responses (Key informant C)

1. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?

C: The Daily Times takes an investigative approach in writing news articles. It unpacks issues which call both the private and public sectors to accountability.

The Daily Times targets policy makers when writing news articles so that it can inform policy change.

2. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?

C: The Daily Times provides facts on what political party candidates or spirants would want to do after being elected.

The Daily Times provides independent analysis of the manifestos of all political parties taking part in an election.

The Daily Times projects all the manifestos for the citizenry to decide.

3. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy?

C: The Daily Times has performed fairly well in this regard by being thorough, fearless and unbiased in its coverage of news.

4. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?

C: Consumption of media products goes through rises and falls. For example, from 2010 to 2013 there was growth in consumption because of the paper's ability to publish articles targeting rural masses. But in 2015 onwards there was a drop in

consumption for both urban and rural areas largely because of the changes in the economy.

A fall in consumption of media products affects the production process. Therefore, the price of a newspaper is sometimes raised to address such challenges. Sometimes the production process is also affected by government policies.

5. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?

C: The Daily Times has an editorial policy which governs its coverage of issues. This editorial policy is sanctioned by the board of The Daily Times. Anybody who diverts from this editorial policy can face disciplinary action. If the worse happens the person involved may lose his/her job.

6. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

C: The Daily Times has a strong business grounding

The Daily Times is able to abide by its editorial policy. The editorial policy is like the soul of The Daily Times.

The Daily Times is prudent in managing its business.

7. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?

C: No. There is a clear separation between the editorial department and marketing department. The editorial department is guided by the editorial policy while the marketing department is guided by the marketing policy.

8. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

C: Yes it does, however, there are various reasons why advertisers can pull out from a newspaper. The following are some of the reasons:

Advertisers can pull out if the print quality is bad.

Advertisers can pull out if service delivery is poor.

Advertisers can pull out if there is a change of direction in terms of their budgeting, i.e. funds might be directed to other important things.

The government can also pull out if the newspaper is not going in its direction.

Responses from an interview with the former Chief Editor of The Daily Times.

Questions and responses (Key informant D)

1. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?

D: The Daily Times as a newspaper provides to people researched and balanced information that would help people, duty bearers and stakeholders make an informed decision that would help those stakeholders to take a decision on matters of national interest in both private and public sectors.

2. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?

D: By providing researched, accurate and balanced information.

3. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy?

D: The Daily Times provides a platform for public debate for the enhancement of democracy. Its performance has been good and that it is a newspaper of choice when it comes to information.

4. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?

D: The Daily Times by design, is a per-urban newspaper targeting the decision makers, mid class individuals, mid earners, job seekers and students. Because of this design The Daily Times is mostly circulated in urban areas to align with its target readership.

5. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?

D: By ensuring that all elements of journalism are applied in the news gathering process. The Daily Times ensures that at least there should be more than one voice in any story. Both sides of the story should be given a chance to heard.

6. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

D: The media industry is volatile. However, The Daily Times has managed to stay afloat because of the innovations and transformation that it goes through to suit the current media, social and economic trends.

7. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?

D: The Daily Times works in an environment where it depends on other institutions for survival on top of the circulation. In this regard there are times when the customer's interest is prioritised over the interest of the newspaper.

8. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

D: NO

This section presents responses from two separately held interviews with two former journalists who worked with The Daily Times as staff reporters.

Questions and responses (Key informant E)

1. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?

E: The Daily Times facilitates checks and balances in the public and private sectors by conducting investigations, promoting transparency, advocating for the public interest, protecting whistle blowers, ensuring financial accountability, and serving as watchdogs by:

Conducting in-depth investigations into various matters such as corruption (Cashgate for instance), misuse of public funds (Covidgate), or corporate wrongdoings (discharge of industrial waste by Central Poultry and Sana). This investigative journalism helps uncover hidden information, holding individuals and organisations accountable for their actions.

Reporting on government actions, policies, and decisions to ensure transparency and promote open governance. This coverage allows the public to stay informed and hold public officials accountable for their behaviour and decisions.

Raising awareness of critical issues, proposing solutions, and seeking justice. The newspaper highlights important social, economic, and environmental concerns, encouraging debates and actions in the public and private sectors. For instance, The Daily Times was in the forefront in promoting around the Third Term campaign.

Reporting on the financial status and activities of both public and private entities. This scrutiny fosters financial accountability and ensures that public funds are spent prudently and businesses operate within legal and ethical boundaries.

Performing a watchdog role by monitoring and analysing policies, regulations, and procedures, newspapers act as a watchdog for both public and private sectors.

The newspaper alerts the public to any potential abuses of power, conflicts of interest, or regulatory failures.

2. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?

E: The Daily Times provides extensive news coverage on political campaigns, candidates, and the issues at hand. It reports on candidate profiles, party platforms, and election-related events. By presenting balanced and in-depth information, the newspaper offers citizens a comprehensive understanding of the choices and issues involved. The Daily Times also plays a critical role in fact-checking political statements, claims, and promises. It verifies the accuracy of information and exposes any false or misleading statements made by candidates. By providing objective and verified facts, the newspaper helps citizens distinguish between truth and misinformation, aiding them in making more informed decisions.

Further, The Daily Times publishes opinion pieces and editorials that present different viewpoints on elections and related issues. These articles often analyse policies, discuss the pros and cons of different candidates or political parties, and offer critical analysis. By exposing readers to diverse perspectives, newspapers stimulate critical thinking and engagement, allowing citizens to form their own well-rounded views.

Towards elections, The Daily Times and other newspapers often publish voter guides summarizing the candidates' positions on key issues. These guides provide citizens with easy-to-understand information, allowing them to compare and contrast candidates' stances. Voter guides can act as a valuable resource for voters seeking clarity and insight when making their choices.

3. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy?

E: The Daily Times provides a platform for different voices, opinions, and perspectives to be heard and discussed. The newspaper facilitates public engagements and participation by inviting readers to comment, share, and respond to the issues and stories that matter to them.

4. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?

E: It would not be entirely correct to label The Daily Times as an urban-based and elite newspaper. Any media outlet sets out its objectives and comes up with target audiences. The Daily Times' main audiences are officer workers (not necessarily urban based) who are policy makers and anyone who is literate (in English, at least). But the newspaper exists in a portfolio that also has Malawi News and The Sunday Times which appeal to different audiences.

5. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?

E: The Daily Times, like most newspapers, ensures fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in Malawi's democracy by following some of the best practices and principles of journalism ethics. It strives to verify the facts and avoid spreading misinformation, disinformation, or propaganda. As you may have seen on some occasions, whenever the newspaper has erred, it has been quick to acknowledge and correct any errors or mistakes it makes.

6. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

E: The Daily Times has survived and remained relevant due to innovation and a willingness to embrace change as a factor for growth. As part of the larger Times Group, The Daily Times survives because of the economies of scale where the same resources (financial and human, for instance) are used across all other channels such as Times Radio, Times TV, Times Online, The Sunday Times and Malawi News.

7. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?

E: The media everywhere is under pressure from powerful interest groups such as politicians and advertisers. They want at all times to exert their influence on editorial decisions a newspaper makes. They exert this influence by having stories favourable to them published regardless of their news value or insisting that stories unfavourable to them be pulled off the page or force a retraction following a publication. The advertisers achieve by threatening to withhold advertising. The Daily Times is not an exception to these wiles.

8. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

E: The Daily Times, like most newspapers in the world, has experienced a decline in circulation figures due to incursions from the internet as well as economic challenges and low literacy levels, among other challenges. This decline means reduced audiences. The traditional media all across the world has witnessed a decline in adspend as advertisers have fled to the new media where most of the audiences are. The new media offers advertisers a platform where they can control the extensity and intensity of their advertising, besides that it provides instant feedback to the advertisers.

Questions and Responses (Key informant F)

1. How do you think The Daily Times helps in providing checks and balances in both public and private sectors?

F: The Daily Times as a privately-owned newspaper questions decisions, actions or inactions of both government and the private entities. It is a newspaper which publishes stories of government's underfunding of critical ministries, departments and agencies and lays bare any possible government's cover ups which can hardly be the case if it was a government owned newspaper. The same goes to the private sector although there is a little bit of leniency to question and expose the private sector especially key advertisers like National Bank, Airtel etc.

2. How do you think The Daily Times helps the citizenry to make informed choices on elections and similar issues?

F: The Daily Times believes in covering all sides of stories and critical issues at hand. Hardly do stories or analyses come out unbalanced and if that happens the second opinion is also published whenever is available. In times of elections for example, all campaign rallies are covered as fairly as possible and in cases of reporters own generated stories, all major political parties are asked to comment to help readers appreciate all angles of the issues before making their decisions.

3. How do you think The Daily Times performs as a medium for public debate and deliberation in our democracy-

F: Mainly it's to do with balancing stories and seeking as many alternative views as possible. The Daily Times newspaper does not have preconceived blockages to say such and such viewpoints cannot be carried in the paper. The Daily Times newspaper's sister paper The Sunday Times however has a column which has two articles addressing the same issue in two different viewpoints all together.

4. Can you comment on the readership and circulation of The Daily Times which is generally seen as an urban-based and elite newspaper?

F: The readership and circulation is indeed urban based, at least primarily. The newspapers are mainly sold in major cities and towns but later they find their way in rural areas as secondary and tertiary destinations when those in the urban areas read and pass them to their relations there. These newspapers are also found in NICE offices which are available in almost every districts although not as timely as meant.

5. How does The Daily Times ensure fair and balanced reporting on all emerging issues in our democracy?

F: The Daily Times does not take sides. It is linked with the ruling Malawi Congress

Party as it is owned by the MCP's founding president Kamuzu Banda but it has over time tried to be independent and provides equal opportunities to everyone to be heard.

6. How does Times Group ensure that The Daily Times stays afloat on what is generally seen as a volatile, unstable and hostile market?

F: Mainly I would say it's by letting the paper be as independent as possible and as widely circulated as possible to attract advertisers which are the paper's only source of income. The Times Group also came up with an E-Edition which has all its papers including The Daily Times at cheaper prices. The coming of sister media houses of Radio and Television also helps The Daily Times newspaper to have a back-up source of income when its revenue base shakes.

7. Does The Daily Times experience pressure from advertisers or sponsors or any other financing quarters?

F: Yes it does but some of the pressure is just perceived. There are times that The Daily Times refrains from pursuing a certain story not because the concerned entity has asked the paper to drop it but because the paper itself is trying to be cautious on its own.

8. Does The Daily Times experience neglect from advertisers or sponsors or other financing quarters in terms of adspend?

F: Maybe not neglect but companies do not advertise primarily to keep The Daily Times Newspaper afloat, no. The companies do not advertise out of mercy so to speak. They will always have their own needs and wants they want to be addressed. It is the duty of the paper's marketing team to ensure that whenever

those needs arise among the advertisers, The Daily Times is among the first to be considered. Remember the paper survives solely on advertisements, sales of the printed copies and subscriptions of the E-Editions I have talked about. It does not have any additional sponsors who pump money into the paper just for the sake of it or to advance a certain agenda.

APPENDIX E: APPROVAL FROM UNIMAREC



VICE-CHANCELLOR
Prof. Samson Sajidu, BSc Mlw, MPhil Cantab, PhD Mlw

Our Ref: P.06/23/266

Your Ref.:

7th September 2023,

Mr Curthbert Nachamba
Philosophy Department
University of Malawi
P.O. Box 280
Zomba

Email: ma-aet-03-21@unima.ac.mw,

Dear Mr Nachamba

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL NO. P.06/23/266. THE COMMERCIAL VERSUS THE PUBLIC INTEREST: THE CASE OF THE DAILY TIMES NEWSPAPER

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above-referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for **one year** from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat.

Once the study is finalized, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Vice Chancellor with a final report of the study. The committee reserves the right to carry

out a compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

UNIMAREC wishes you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Victoria Ndolo
CHAIRPERSON OF UNIMAREC



CC: Vice Chancellor
Registrar
Director of Finance and Investments
Acting Head of Research
UNIMAREC Administrator
UNIMAREC Compliance Officer

APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ENGLISH EDITION)

I am **Cuthbert Nachamba**, a student of the University of Malawi, pursuing a Master's degree in Applied Ethics in the Philosophy department but focusing on Media Ethics.

I am here because I want to find out how your newspaper *The Daily Times* newspaper negotiates the commercial versus the public interest in its operation. In other words, how does *The Daily Times* manage to pursue the commercial but also serve the public interest?

This study will take two months before its completion. But coming to collect data from *The Daily Times* newspaper will take two weeks only. One week for key informant interviews and the second week for secondary data collection from *The Daily Times* Archives. Regarding the interviews, I shall ask questions to one person working in the marketing or advertising department and four others who are working as editors in the editorial department. Answers to the questions will be written down on a piece of paper in the process of the interviews. I will not use any audio recording devices. The answers to the questions I shall ask will be analysed and presented at the University of Malawi in a written report.

There are no dangers associated with this research. Those who are taking part as key informants shall be respected and their names will be kept in confidence. The findings of this study can also benefit your newspaper by serving as a yardstick for evaluating your performance as medium of communication. Apart from the research findings, the research questions might also help you as a newspaper to reflect on how you negotiate the commercial versus the public interest in your operation.

I also assure you that your names and the integrity that is your due shall be upheld.

You are not forced to take part in this research study. You shall reserve the right to withdraw from this study at any point. You can also stop the interview at any time for any reason.

Remember that we want to know what you think and that there are no right and wrong answers.

Please feel free to contact the University of Malawi about this research study. You can also contact the chairperson of UNIMAREC, Dr Victoria Ndolo, on the following address: Chairperson of University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC), P.O. Box 280, Zomba. +265 995 0427 60.



I _____ have understood the nature of the study and wish to participate.

I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent

Age:

Male/Female

Signature:

Date:

Name of the interviewer:

Signature:

Date:

THANK YOU

