



A television study on the influence of media ownership on news content in Uganda: A comparison of Wavah Broadcasting Services (WBS) and Nation Television (NTV)

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DECLARATION

College of Humanities

Declaration – Plagiarism

I, Samuel Kazibwe, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work except where otherwise indicated. The thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. It does not contain data, graphs, pictures or other information from any other person or the internet except where it is specifically acknowledged and the sources are detailed both in the text and the reference list. This study was undertaken between March 2015 and November 2017 under the supervision of Prof Ruth Elizabeth Teer-Tomaselli.

Signature: Date:

Supervisor: Date:

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ABSTRACT

The media play an important role of entertaining, educating and informing society (Herman and Chomsky, 1988:1). The education and information offered by the media consequently helps citizens to make informed decisions. However, a number of factors including media ownership have over time stifled the functions of the media limiting its ability to advance issues of public interest (Mcchesney, 2008:37; Nyarko, 2015: ii). This study therefore sought to investigate how media ownership has influenced news content in Ugandan television stations. The study compared two television stations (WBS and NTV) representing different ownership structures. WBS is an independently owned station while NTV is owned by a regional media conglomerate called Nation Media Group (NMG). A study on television was necessary given that the existing literature on media ownership in Uganda does not adequately address television. Most studies on this subject have focused on newspapers and radio stations. Yet, television is increasingly becoming a major source of information for many Ugandans. Quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews were the main methods used in this investigation. Content analysis was used to examine news bulletins on the two stations to establish how the differences in ownership structures affected news content. In total, twenty news bulletins were examined. The in-depth interviews were employed to collect respondents' views on the influence of media ownership on editorial independence as well as the effect of external factors on news. The data from the interviews was also used to complement the results from quantitative content analysis.

The study found out that media ownership influenced news content on the two television stations during the period under study. It however contradicted the view in the political economy of the media that media concentration diminishes the performance of television stations. The findings demonstrated that NTV (which is owned by a media concentration) had more diverse news bulletins than WBS which is independently owned. It was further discovered that NTV journalists exercised more editorial independence than their counterparts at WBS. However, it was observed that news content in all television stations in Uganda, regardless of the structure of ownership, was affected by political interference and advertisement. Both politicians and advertisers influenced news content directly and indirectly.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACME – African Centre for Media and Excellence
BC – Broadcasting Council
CP – Conservative Party
DP – Democratic Party
FDC – Forum for Democratic Change
FCC – Federal Communications Commission
HRN-U – Human Rights Network – Uganda
HRNJ-U – Human Rights Network for Journalists – Uganda
IGG – Inspector General of Government
IMCU – Independent Media of Council of Uganda
MC – Media Council
NAB – National Association of Broadcasters
NIJU – National Institute of Journalists in Uganda
NMG – Nation Media Group
NRM – National Resistance Movement
OB Unit – Outside Broadcasting Unit
PPU – Presidential Protection Unit
RDC – Resident District Commissioner
SPSS – Statistical Package for Social Sciences
STBs – Set Top Boxes
UCC – Uganda Communications Commission
UMOA – Uganda Media Owners Association
UPC – Uganda People’s Congress
URN – Uganda Radio Network

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The study explored the influence of media ownership on television news content in Uganda. Since the liberalisation of airwaves in 1993, channels of television in Uganda have risen from one to over thirty (Chibita and Kibombo, 2013:1; Uganda Communications Commission, 2016:11). Most of these stations broadcast in English, Swahili and several local Ugandan languages spoken by the different ethnic groups in the country. While the growth in the television industry is phenomenal, it is not systematic. Most of the television stations are concentrated in urban centres because these areas are considered commercially viable by the owners who are primarily interested in maximising profits (Chibita and Kibombo, 2013:1). The differences in the ownership structures of these television stations have also had varying effects on the diversity of content available to the public in Uganda. The study thus explored the influence of these ownership structures. The chapter starts with the objectives and main research questions of the study. It also presents the context of the study by examining Uganda's economy, political structure and her geographical location. The background to the study and the rationale are also discussed in this chapter. A brief profile of NTV and WBS is also provided here. The chapter is finally concluded with the synopsis and organisation of the thesis.

Research objectives and research questions

The major objective of this study was to explore how media ownership influences news content in Ugandan television stations. The major objective was further divided into three specific objectives:

- To examine how different ownership structures influence news content in Uganda.
- To analyse how media owners influence editorial independence.
- To examine how factors outside of media houses influence news gathering and production.

The objectives were further used to develop key questions that guided the entire research process:

- How do media ownership structures influence news content in Uganda?

- In what ways do media owners influence editorial decisions in newsrooms?
- How do factors outside of media houses influence news gathering and production?

Study context

Uganda is found in the Eastern part of Africa and is surrounded by five countries including Kenya (East), Tanzania (South), Rwanda (South-West), Democratic Republic of Congo (West) and South Sudan (North) (Semujju, 2016:1; UBOS, 2016:1). The country is located 800 kilometres away from the Indian Ocean and its inhabitants have to move through Kenya or Tanzania to access the ocean. Uganda “has a total area of 241,551 square kilometres, of which the land area covers 200,523 square kilometres” (UBOS, 2016:1). The country has an equatorial climate with two rain seasons in a year. The first rains are often received between March and May, while the second rains are received between September and November (UBOS, 2016:1).

Uganda has a population of 34.6 million people. Of all these people, 7.5 million live in abject poverty. For every one hundred people in Uganda, thirteen live in urban centres while the rest stay in rural areas. There are currently 259 urban centres in the country. They include a single capital city, several municipalities, town councils and town boards (Semujju, 2016:4; UBOS, 2016:8-10). Administratively, Uganda is also made up of 112 districts. Each district is headed by a chairman who is elected every five years. The number of districts has dramatically increased from 21 in 1969, to the current number of 112 (UBOS, 2016:1). Initially, the creation of smaller administrative units was meant to bring services closer to the people. However, it later lost meaning when the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party started using the creation of districts as an inducement “to communities to vote” its candidates during elections (Singiza and De Visser, 2011:8). It is therefore not surprising that in the last fifteen years, new districts have mostly been created in years preceding general elections. For example, government created eleven new districts a year before the 2001 elections and another twenty-two ahead of the 2006 elections (Singiza and De Visser, 2011:8).

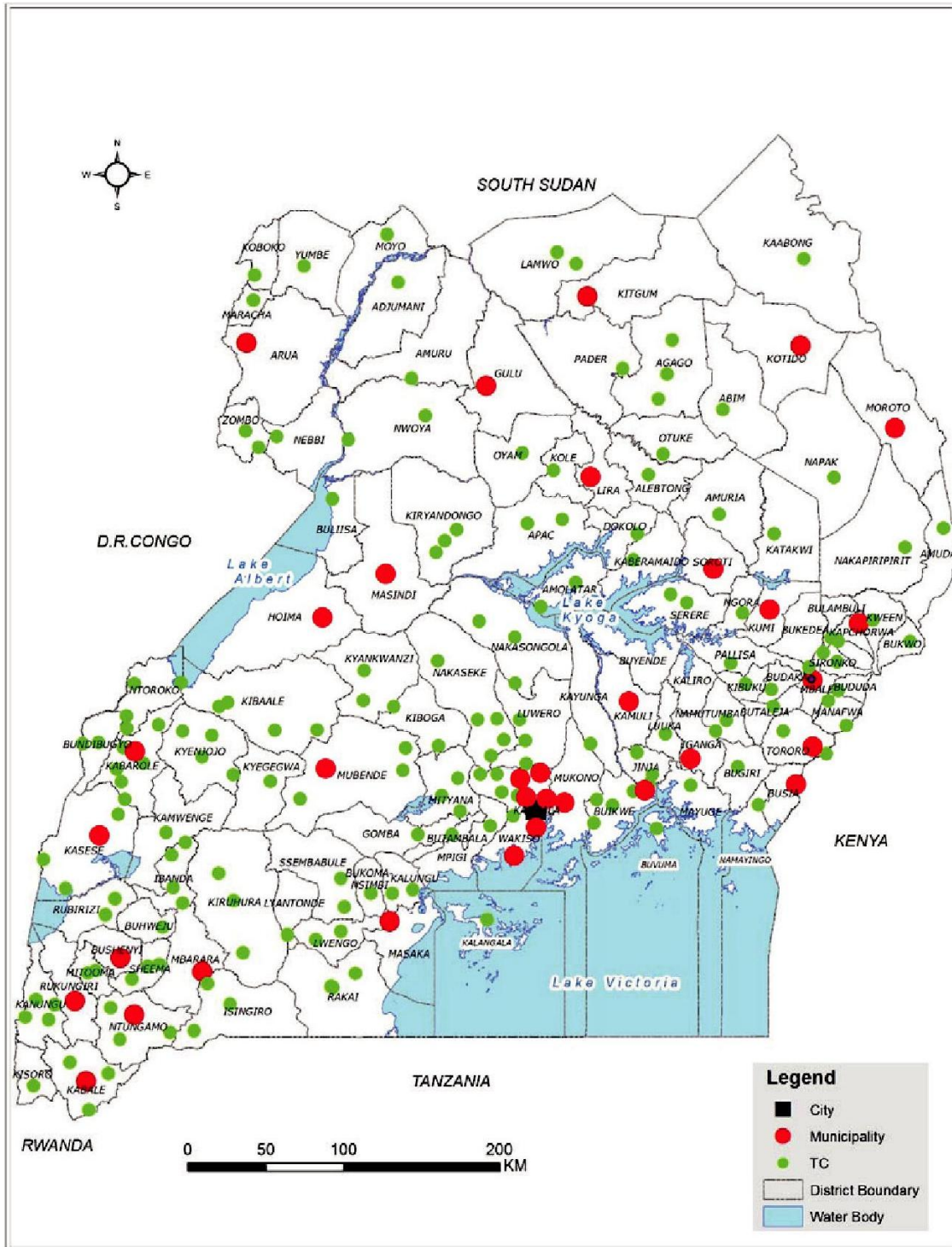


Figure 1.1: A map showing Uganda’s districts and neighbouring countries
Source: UBOS, 2016:3

Catholics are the largest religious denomination in Uganda totalling 39%. They are followed by Anglicans, Moslems, and Evangelicals at 32%, 13% and 11% respectively (UBOS, 2016:19). All

these four leading denominations own radio and television stations. Uganda is culturally diverse and it is made up of 65 ethnic groups. The largest ethnic group are the Baganda totalling 5.5 million, while the Vonoma people are the smallest group with a population of a paltry 2613. Some of these ethnic groups are headed by kings while others are headed by chiefs. These traditional leaders have no political power. They however play a vital role in community mobilisation and moral build-up (Chibita, 2006:1; UBOS, 2016:4, 71-72). They also own media houses including television stations which they use for mobilisation. The next chapter discusses in detail the structure of television ownership in Uganda.

Governance

The government structure in Uganda is a hybrid of the presidential and parliamentary systems of government, albeit with more inclination to the former. The president in Uganda is the head of government just like in a typical presidential system. However, he appoints a prime minister who serves as the leader of government business in parliament. There are three pillars of government in Uganda including the executive, legislature and the judiciary. The executive comprises of the president and the cabinet. All ministers in the cabinet are appointed by the president and approved by parliament. Currently, Uganda has 81 ministers making the biggest cabinet in the country's history. President Yoweri Museveni has often defended his large cabinet arguing that many ministers are needed to adequately supervise government projects and programmes. He has also maintained that a big cabinet helps him to include the different ethnic groups in his government (*Daily Monitor*, 2016).¹ However, critics have argued that the large cabinet has increased the wedge bill and consequently consumed the resources which would have been allocated to key areas such as health, education and agriculture (Mugerwa, 2016).²

Another important arm of government in Uganda is the legislature (parliament). Its main function is to make laws and oversee government programmes. It also has the duty to vet persons appointed by the president. These include ministers, high commissioners and other government officials. The legislature is headed by a speaker who is chosen from the elected members of parliament. The legislators serve a five year term (Uganda, 1995 s. 78-82). Although there are

¹ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/SpecialReports/Elections/Museveni-defends-large-Cabinet/859108-2973694-12gypumz/index.html>

² <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/Why-big-Cabinet-threatens-Museveni-s-middle-income-dream/689844-3255912-hdtgquz/index.html>

over thirty “registered political parties” in the country, only four have representatives in parliament (Golooba-Mutebi, 2016:3). The parties with legislators include the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the Uganda Peoples’ Congress (UPC), the Democratic Party (DP) and the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) (Golooba-Mutebi, 2016:3). There are also some parliamentarians who are not affiliated to any political party having contested as independent candidates. Critics have denigrated parliament’s importance in Uganda and called it an appendage of the ruling NRM party for rubberstamping government proposals (Ainebyoona, 2017: Muhumuza 2009:31-32). With a total of 295 legislators, the NRM party more than doubles the number of all opposition and independent parliamentarians combined, which has enabled it to push through all its desired policies and laws with ease (Golooba-Mutebi, 2016:3). Unlike previous parliaments, the current body (also known as the 10th parliament) has been at the forefront of suppressing media freedom in Uganda. For example, at the beginning of its term, it expelled all experienced journalists who had covered parliament for more than ten years. It has also continued to engage in other activities that blatantly violate the freedom of expression (see details in Chapter Three).

The third pillar of government in Uganda is the judiciary. Its “independence is guaranteed by the” current constitution of Uganda which was made in 1995 (Twinomugisha, 2009: 3). The judiciary comprises of “the Supreme Court, [...] a Court of Appeal/ Constitutional Court, the High Court and the Magistrates Court” (Adonyo, 2012: 6). The Supreme Court is the top most court in the land and it is chaired by the Chief Justice who also doubles as the head of the judiciary. It is purely an appellant court with only the exception of the presidential election petitions which start and end in this court. Below the Supreme Court is the Court of Appeal which is also known as the Constitutional Court. It hears cases on appeal from the High Court. This means that it does not have original jurisdiction unless if it is hearing constitutional matters. The High Court is the third most important court in Uganda’s court structure. It has original jurisdiction to try all crimes. The lowest court in Uganda is the Magistrates Court and its decisions can be reviewed by the High Court. The Magistrates Court consists of different categories of magistrates (Adonyo, 2012:6-9; Uganda, 1995 s. 129-135).

Of all the three arms of government, the Judiciary is given a stronger responsibility in the constitution to protect basic human rights including media freedom. This freedom is necessary

since it is the media that often draws the attention of the public to issues where they ought to demand for accountability (Twinomugisha, 2009:3). As prescribed in article 50 of the Uganda constitution, the judiciary has on several occasions intervened to protect freedom of speech and expression (Twinomugisha, 2009:12-13) (see details in Chapter Three).

Economy

About 64% of the people in Uganda survive on subsistence farming (UBOS, 2016:28). They grow crops such as cotton, bananas, coffee, cassava, groundnuts, millet and sweet potatoes. They also rear animals such as goats, cattle and sheep especially in western Uganda. Fishing is also an important source of income for some people living along rivers and lakes. Uganda is gifted with a number of fresh water bodies including Lake Victoria, Lake Kyoga, Lake George, Lake Edward, Lake Albert, Lake Wamala, Lake Mburo, River Nile and River Sezibwa, among other water sources (Semujju, 2016:8). Professionals and associate professionals surviving on employment earnings account for 16%, while those depending on commercial agriculture account for just 2%. In terms of house hold assets, 73% of the population own their houses, while 62% own agricultural land. The radio remains the commonest source of information at 63% in male headed households and at 43% in female headed households. Ownership of television sets stands at 14% (UBOS, 2016:28-36). However, with the “influx of cheap televisions from China, more and more people, especially those in the rural areas, are able to acquire these sets” Gicheru, 2014:9). This makes the study on television relevant given that more and more people in sub-Saharan Africa are acquiring television sets and are using them as a major source of information.

The study rationale

Media are very important channels of communication with the capacity to transmit messages to large audiences. This gives the media power to influence society in many ways as opined by Wilbur Schramm (1964:20) as far back as the early 1960s when he noted that; “there is little doubt that media can be influential”. The media also function as a system for disseminating symbols as well as messages to the populace. “It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988:1). Thus, due to such importance, it is vital to understand how choices for media content are made.

However, in any discussion about media content, news deserves special treatment because of its great impact. The significance of news is further exemplified by the level of analysis and the extent of attention it gets. “News occupies a significant place in the informal talk of workplace, pub and street. And at the level of formal learning, there is a productive industry of articles and books all seeking to understand what news” (Hartley, 1982: 7-8). However, while forces affecting news have been extensively researched elsewhere, little has been done in Uganda especially when it comes to television news content.

In fulfilling their role, the media ought to execute their duties of news gathering, writing, editing and presenting, in an unbiased and objective way. This compels journalists to rest their news choices on news values such as frequency, unambiguity, meaningfulness, threshold, continuity, consonance, reference to elite nations, unexpectedness, negativity, personalisation, reference to elite persons and personalisation (Galtung and Ruge, 1965:66-69). The fairness and objectivity helps to give credence to media houses as well as the trust in the news and opinions published. “It is important that news media are independent, clearly distinguish advertising from news, separate facts and opinion, and present alternative viewpoints as completely as possible” (Van, 2014:440).

While the foregoing stresses the value of unbiased news content, it is also important to note that there are a number of factors that influence production of news content. One such factor is media ownership. “The most important source of altering the professional codes comes from the owners. Their constant drumbeat for profit, their concern with minimising costs and enhancing revenues, invariably influences the manner in which news is collected and reported” (McChesney, 2008:37). Many times, media content is a reflection of the people or companies that finance the media (Herman and Chomsky, 2008: xi). The owners often exert their influence on content indirectly by appointing key personnel like news editors as well as making important decisions on where most of the resources should be allocated (Doyle, 2002:20). The study therefore seeks to examine whether such key decisions are made by owners in Uganda’s television industry.

A review of various studies has revealed that media ownership has a great influence on news content (McChesney, 2008:37; Wang, 2003:15). However, most of these studies have been conducted elsewhere in Europe, Asia and other parts of Africa. For example, one study

conducted in Macedonia revealed how ownership affected television news content in that country:

The trade of industrial stations that own television stations use them continually as space for advertising products that they produce or sell. On the other hand, the individuals behind these media, who belong to different political parties, use them as space for personal political promotion, especially at the time of election campaigns. [...] To our knowledge, we have seen several instances of pressure on journalists from media owners. One recent example is a quarrel between the owner of a television station and its editor in Chief provoked by the owner's insistence to influence the manner of reporting the news, which led to the journalist's transfer to another TV station (Trpevska, 2004:314).

In Uganda, the few studies carried out on television content have not investigated the impact of media ownership. For example, a study by Chibita and Kibombo (2013) dwelt more on the regulatory framework and people's perceptions towards the content on Uganda's television channels. Another study by Thembo (2013) which dealt with the subject of ownership and content, focused on print media leaving television aside. A study on television in Uganda is thus vital because of its pervasiveness as a Compaine (1995:755) aptly put it; "television with its power as an audio-visual medium, with the immediacy it can convey, and with the entertainment it generates, has earned its weighty consideration as a social cultural, political and economic phenomenon". Therefore, this study will examine how media ownership has influenced news content in Ugandan television stations. The study focuses on Uganda because as indicated above other studies have not given it prominence.

Although there are many operating television stations in Uganda (Uganda Communications Commission, 2016:11), the current study covered two television stations; WBS and NTV. The two stations are based in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, but with national coverage. They are also among the leading ten television stations in terms of diversity of content, reach, and viewership (Chibita and Kibombo, 2013:22). The stations under study also represent two different structures of ownership. WBS is an independently-owned single channel television while NTV is owned by a media conglomerate called Nation Media Group (NMG). This makes the sampled stations relevant for the study since they can easily be compared. However, it is important to note that despite the difference in ownership structures, both NTV and WBS are privately owned.

A brief profile of WBS³

WBS was established in 1998 by local businessman Gordon Kasibante Wavamunno becoming the first privately owned commercial television station in Uganda. It is a free to air single channel network without any sister station. At the beginning, the station covered only parts of central Uganda. However, it later expanded to cover the northern, southern, eastern and western parts of Uganda (Atuhura, 2010:46). A study conducted by Chibita and Kibombo (2013:22) on the viewers' perceptions about television content revealed that WBS was among the top five preferred television stations countrywide. The study also revealed that viewers in Uganda favoured WBS because of its clear signal, in-depth news and content variety. This partly informed the selection of WBS for this study.

Before the establishment of WBS, the television industry in the country was monopolised by the government owned *Uganda Television*⁴ (UTV). Over the years, UTV acted as the official government mouthpiece. It “carried mostly official news that focused uncritically on the activities and pronouncements of government leaders” (Lugalambi, 2010:21). However, the emergence of WBS changed the television industry tremendously. The station introduced uncensored news bulletins and political talk-shows in which political leaders and government programmes were criticised on television for the very first time. This won the station many viewers something that consequently broke the dominance of the state broadcaster. To further destroy UTV, WBS scheduled its main news bulletin (Prime News) at 9:00pm (21:00) forcing UTV to relocate its main bulletin to a non-competitive time zone of 10:00pm (22:00). It is this “Prime News” bulletin which is the subject of this study.

The talk-shows introduced by WBS included *Issues at Hand*, *Tuula Twogere*, *Question Time* and later on *Kibazo on Friday*. The shows became very popular to the extent that every new television station copied the WBS' programme format and started with at least one political talk-show per a week.

³ It is important to note that WBS was in November 2016 purchased from Gordon Wavamunno by Econet Media owned by Zimbabwean tycoon Strive Masiyiwa. The station has since been renamed *Kwese Sports Television* and turned into purely a sports channel (Barigaba, 2016). However, this did not affect the study in any way since the acquisition took place long after the research had been conducted at the station.

⁴ *Uganda Television* was in 2005 renamed *Uganda Broadcasting Corporation* (UBC). This was done with the aim of transforming the state owned station into an independent public broadcaster. However, despite the change in the name, UBC still remained a government mouthpiece (Lugalambi, 2010:43-44).

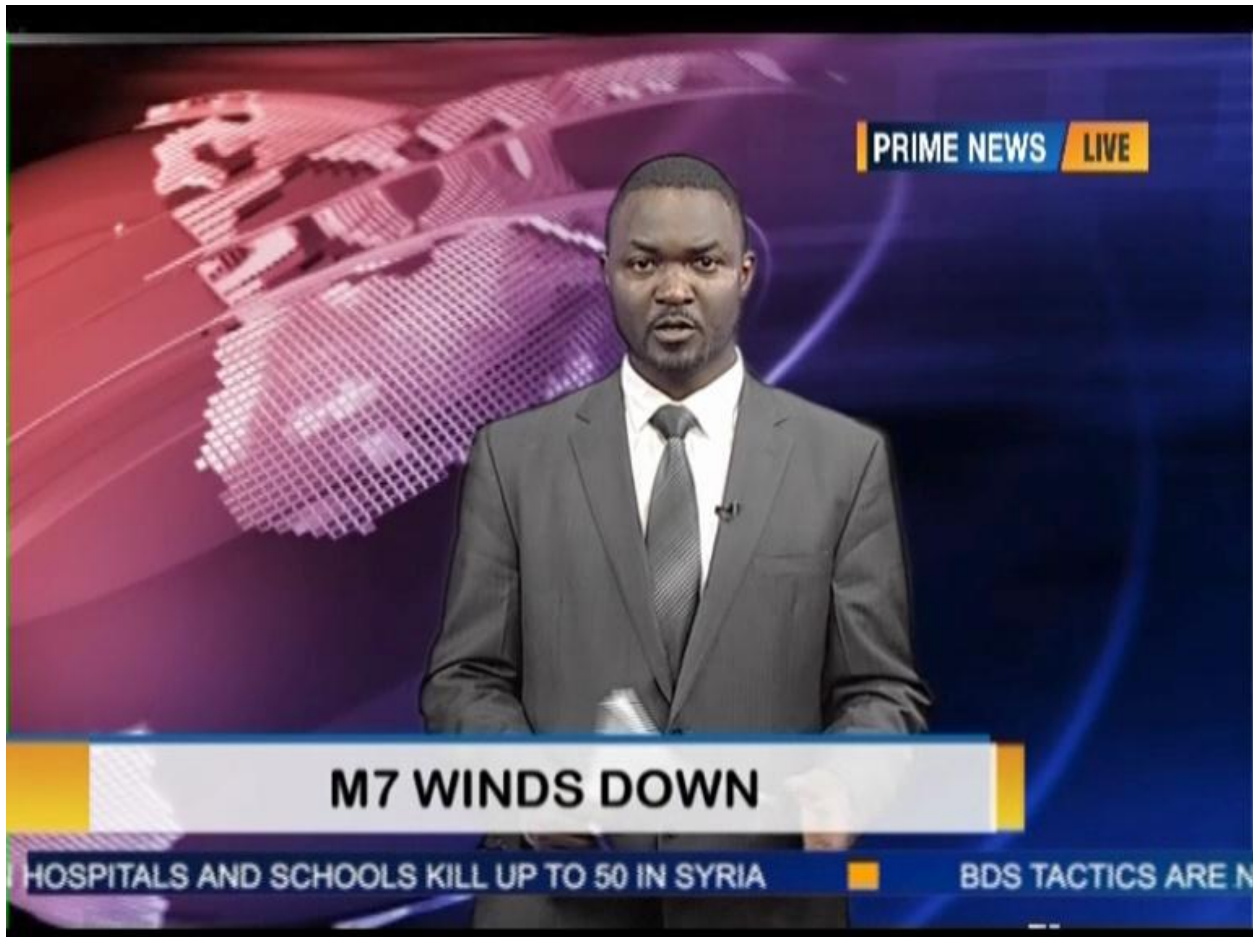


Figure 1.2: A photograph showing a WBS news anchor reading news
Source: The picture was retrieved from the news bulletins analysed in this study.

A brief profile of NTV

NTV was established in Uganda in 2006 by the Nation Media Group (NMG), the largest media conglomerate in East Africa. For its part, NMG was started in Nairobi in 1959 with the aim of promoting economic and social progress through the media. Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismailis, has held majority shares in this organisation since its establishment (Davidson, 2017).⁵ NMG has grown tremendously over the years and now owns a number of stations across the region including *Spark Television*, *NTV Kenya*, *KFM radio*, *Dembe FM*, *Easy FM*, *Daily Monitor*, *Daily Nation* and *The East African* newspapers, among others. This pattern of ownership made NTV relevant for this study since the author was interested in examining the influence of media concentration on news content.

⁵ <http://www.wan-ifra.org/articles/2017/05/31/nation-media-group-learning-from-experience>

The television station, however, suffered its first major setback in February 2007 when it was closed by the Broadcasting Council (the then official regulator of the broadcast media) for allegedly violating broadcasting regulations. It took the two parties three months to solve the misunderstanding and NTV was subsequently re-opened in April 2007. This also followed a parliamentary resolution urging the regulator to have NTV back on air in the shortest time possible (Odyek, 2007).⁶ Although the Broadcasting Council claimed that NTV was closed for violating broadcasting regulations at the time, the former chairman of Nation Media Group (which owns NTV) Dr Martin Alier disagreed noting that it was one of their competitors that influenced the regulator to switch them off:

The reason for closing NTV was the most unconvincing. It was alleged that our equipment was too heavy for the mast on top of Kololo hill. [However,] since we re-opened, other equipment have been added to the mast and it has not yet keeled over. We knew then that a competitor station had a hand in the closure of our station (Alier, 2017:15).

Since its re-opening, NTV has made the industry more competitive and over time it has become the leading television station in terms of viewership, diversity and reach (Geopoll, 2016; Kalungi, 2012). This made NTV appropriate for this study.

NTV was also selected for this study partly because it is one of the stations that run elaborate news bulletins. A study by George Lugalambi (2010:120) revealed that of all the programmes run by NTV, news takes the biggest portion of air time. In the week he sampled, Lugalambi discovered that news on NTV consumed 53 hours of air time a week. The news programmes on this station include *NTV at One* (1:00pm), *NTV Akawungeezi* (7:00pm), *NTV Tonight* (9:00pm) and *NTV Late night* (11:00pm). For purposes of this study, the main news bulletin of *NTV Tonight* was chosen since it is the most popular and elaborate bulletin on NTV (Lugalambi, 2010:119). This is also the time when most leading television stations in Uganda broadcast their main news bulletins making it easier for comparison purposes.

⁶ http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1166117/ntv-air



Figure 1.3: A photograph showing NTV news anchors reading news.
Source: The photograph was retrieved from the data analysed in this study.

Synopsis of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter One presents the context, background and rationale for the study. It further presents the research questions and objectives that guided the entire study. Brief profiles of the case studies (WBS and NTV) are also provided here. The chapter is concluded with the structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two presents the literature review. It examines concepts related to the subject of investigation. The concepts examined include news, news values, news sources and journalism. Literature on the practice of journalism in Africa is also presented in this chapter. The author further explores the evolution of the broadcast media in Uganda. The chapter further presents the current organisation and operation of the media in Uganda. Literature on broadcast media ownership is also reviewed in this chapter. The chapter was concluded with the examination of

literature concerning the coverage of elections in Uganda. This was important because the study did not examine news in general but rather news bulletins during the 2016 presidential election in Uganda.

Chapter Three reviews literature on media control and regulation in Uganda. The chapter reviews the major pieces of legislation that act as a break on the freedom of information. Some of these laws were made by the colonial government while others have been enacted by successive post-independence governments. The chapter observes that while the Ugandan constitution expressly provides for freedom of the media, there are many other laws that limit this freedom.

Chapter Four presents the theoretical framework. The major theory underpinning this study is the political economy of the media. The chapter starts with the history and development of the theory. It further explores the applicability of the theory on the Ugandan media. Concepts such as media concentration are also examined in this chapter. The chapter is concluded with an examination of the mass manipulative theory.

Chapter Five presents the research methodology. The chapter discusses the various methods that were employed in collecting and analysing data. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. In order to investigate ownership influence, two television stations (WBS and NTV) representing different ownership structures were selected for the study. WBS represented independently-owned stations while NTV represented stations owned by media concentrations. Validity and reliability issues were also addressed here. The chapter further provides the operational definitions of the variables employed in the study. The chapter is finally concluded with the study limitations.

Chapter Six presents the results of the first research question: How do media ownership structures influence news content in Uganda? The research question was answered using data generated from both quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. Percentages and tables were used to present the quantitative data.

Chapter Seven presents participants' views on editorial independence in Ugandan newsrooms. It also presents findings on how external factors influence the collection and production of news. The factors examined here are political interference, corruption and the role of advertising. The

data used in the presentation and analysis was from the in-depth interviews conducted. The research questions addressed here are:

- In what ways do media owners influence editorial decisions in newsrooms?
- How do factors outside of media houses influence news gathering and production?

Chapter Eight is the conclusion. This chapter summarises the entire study. It further identifies areas for future research. The author concludes the chapter with recommendations and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter examines literature on research findings and concepts related to the study. It focuses on the concepts of news, sources, news values and journalism. The review further examines the structure of broadcast ownership in Uganda and its influence on news content. It also briefly presents the introduction and development of broadcast media in Uganda. Emphasis is put on the liberalisation of the broadcast media in Africa and Uganda in particular.

Understanding news

This section explores the concept of news, its constructions and meanings. It is crucial to understand this concept given that news content is the main focus of this study. The section therefore examines what constitutes news and how editorial decisions are made in newsrooms. The news values or elements that guide both reporters and editors in the production of news are also analysed. News is also important for this study because it is the foremost local product produced by Uganda's broadcast media.

Various scholars have defined news differently and as such there is no agreed definition for news. Lula Andrews was one of the earliest scholars who explicitly explored the concept of news. He defined news as "the very newest fact, the very latest information, the most surprising development, the most unexpected intelligence, the most startling knowledge, the most shocking report, about a topic" (Andrews, 1910:48). News has also been defined as "an account of events in the world produced for public consumption" (Golding and Murdock, 1979: 211). The reporting of these events in the news should be nonpartisan and objective (McChesney, 2008:26). An objective journalist is compelled to collect and disseminate news that depicts reality accurately (Ryan, 2001:4). Shixin Zhang (2015:181) argued that "objectivity emerged and developed as a means of attaining journalistic credibility". Zhang noted that journalists are able to avoid mistakes when they follow the tenets of objectivity in sourcing and broadcasting information. Philosophical constructs underpinning objectivity in journalism include fairness, clarity, accuracy, completeness, honesty and verification. Objectivity also requires a journalist to desist from supporting and serving any social, political, cultural or economic interests (Ryan, 2001:5). This is necessary because support for such interests would affect news decisions

(Patterson and Donsbach, 1996:456) and violate the core and real meaning of news reporting (Stenvall, 2014:464). However, this does not mean that an objective journalist should not apply analytical and interpretative skills in the news production process. In fact, completeness cannot be achieved if a journalist does not interpret information at the collection stage (Ryan, 2001:5).

In their study on the structure of news more than fifty years ago, Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge (1965:66-67) examined news in terms of news values. The aim of their study was to establish how foreign events made news in the Norwegian media. Their findings revealed a number of factors that seemed particularly important in selecting news (Harcup and O’Neil, 2001:262). The factors included threshold, frequency, meaningfulness, unambiguity, consonance, continuity, unexpectedness, reference to elite nations, personalisation, reference to elite persons and negativity (Galtung and Ruge, 1965:66-67). Five decades after their study, Galtung and Ruge’s findings have remained influential in explaining news values. However, one major flaw in their study was the presumption that news comes from only events. This is certainly not true since journalists can produce investigative and other feature stories without necessarily attending any event. Galtung and Ruge also failed to give a complete explanation of other factors that affect news production such as economic and political pressures (Harcup and O’Neil, 2001:265). The news values presented by Galtung and Ruge do not also apply to some genres of journalism such as travel journalism (Cocking, 2017:3):

The ideological imperatives of travel journalism—though arguably as potentially powerful as their “hard” news counterparts—serve a very different purpose. They facilitate patterns of leisure-time consumption rather than informing democratic participation. Additionally, the distinction Galtung and Ruge make between events happening in the real world and the kinds of coverage they attract is not applicable to travel journalism. Travel journalism content is rarely, if ever, based on unplanned and unaccounted for “happenings. [...] These differences might suggest that the concept of news values is not one that is readily applicable to the genre of travel journalism.

It is, however, important to note that the foregoing criticisms do not invalidate Galtung and Ruge’s theory of news values but rather suggest that the selection process should not be limited to their twelve news factors. The theory remains the most widely studied classification of news values and thus a starting a point in discussing the selection of news (Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh, 2012:989). Judy McGregor (2002:1) argued that Galtung and Ruge’s theory ought to be expanded mainly because news determinants need to reflect the dramatic changes in the media industry. For example, McGregor explained that the ubiquity of television has turned a

picture into an important news value. He noted that the ability and inability “of journalists to get pictures determines whether an event is selected as news” in television (McGregor, 2002:3).

Despite the debates around the classification of news values, the time-element has remained an important and most frequent determinant of news over the years (Alejandro, 2010:9; Andrews, 1910:48). Every television, radio station or newspaper wants to be the first to break a story. What is fresh today and appears on the front page will be thrown in the middle of the newspaper the following day. However, the scramble for the latest news at times affects the quality of stories. In the attempt to be the first to break a story, journalists compromise on accuracy and end up making many errors which affects the quality of news (Alejandro, 2010:9; Andrews, 1910:49).

It is also worth noting that it is not only the newsworthiness of events or news makers that determine news selection but also the external factors that influence the practice of journalism. These external aspects include the influence of proprietors or directors, advertisers, government regulations, audience interests and meeting deadlines (Caple and Bednarek, 2013:5-8). Consequently, advertisers and the audience have compelled media especially television to incorporate more entertainment in their news (Murphy, 2011:70-72).

News was also defined by Herbert Gans (1979:80) as information conveyed from a source to audiences. He further noted that the journalists, who are employed by bureaucratic profit-making organisations, refine, summarise, and alter the information got from sources in order to make it suitable for their listeners, viewers and readers. “Attention is directed at what is noticeable (and worthy of notice) in a form suitable for planned and routine inclusion as a news report” (McQuail, 1994:268). Denis McQuail noted that as a result, journalists regularly survey places such as courts, police stations, hospitals, national assemblies, city or district councils, and political party offices where most events are likely to take place.

In summary, this section has examined what constitutes news and the elements that guide the process of gathering and producing news. However, it is necessary to note that in the past two decades, the emphasis has moved from studies on ‘news’ to studies on ‘journalism’. Therefore, the next section explores the concept of journalism.

The concept of journalism

Journalism has been theorised and studied around the world by scholars coming from various disciplines. Research on journalism and journalism practices has also been a widely recognised field since the latter part of the 20th century. Indeed, across the globe one can find colleges and universities with faculties and research specialising in journalism. The field also has its own national, regional and international peer reviewed journals (Deuze, 2005: 442). However, this does not mean that there is a consensus on defining journalism as Barbie Zelizer (2004:13) aptly put it: “Although one might think that academics, journalism educators, and journalists themselves talk about journalism in roughly the same manner, defining journalism is not in fact consensual”. Mark Dueze (2005:442) explained that there are no universally accepted practices and methods of researching and teaching journalism. This is a consequence of the disagreement between the academics and journalists who define journalism using different attributes (Ponte, 2005:177; Zelizer, 2004:3). Since the end of the 20th century, the discipline of journalism has grappled with the conflict between university and industry, “each with its own institutionalised expectations and assumptions” Dueze (2005:443). However, even media scholars themselves do not agree on the most appropriate method of examining the practice of journalism. Sarah Niblock (2007:21) noted that while some scholars have made conclusions about editorial decisions basing on the analysis of news text, others disagree with this method arguing that examining the practices and products “of journalists from a position that is outside the daily pressures faced within the industry leaves many important contextual and practical questions unanswered”.

It is worth noting that the dissonance between journalism practice and journalism scholarship creates a great opportunity for the complete understanding of journalism. Educators, journalists, technologists and researchers who are committed to journalism can use their diverse approaches to achieve a common understanding of the discipline. All the divergent voices in the study of journalism are necessary and none is more important or more authoritative than the other (Niblock, 2007:22; Zelizer, 2004:4). Barbie Zelizer further argued that both journalism practice and scholarship matter and are thus crucial for the vitality of journalism:

For journalism, that social map has two valuable referent points – journalists and journalism scholars. Both groups are invested in the shape of inquiry about journalism as it persists and changes. Both play a part in shaping that inquiry, and both have much to lose if that inquiry is not made explicit to all those it touches. Conversely, the common

interest of both groups necessitates a workable and ongoing awareness of what each group thinks in regards to journalism (Zelizer, 2004:6).

In light of the foregoing discussion, the boundary between theory and practice is increasingly being breached by the rising number of practitioner-academics. Nowadays, many higher institutions of learning recruit experienced journalists to ensure that their courses reflect the working world of journalists (Niblock, 2007:21). As Zelizer (2004:2) observed, this was not the case in the past. She argued that journalism departments were mostly filled with scholars who had no practical experience in journalism which widened the gap between theory and practice. Zelizer revealed how her own experience from journalism practice to the academy brought her face to face with this reality. She noted that everything she studied in graduate school was not applicable in the real world of journalism. However, Niblock (2007:22) argued that the trend is now changing with many journalism schools integrating theory and practice. Niblock further noted there is even an increase in the number of academic institutions offering professional doctorates in journalism as well as practice-based PhDs.

Despite the disagreements over the definition of the concept of journalism, there seems to be an agreement among scholars that journalists in democratic countries share related characteristics and values (Deuze, 2005:5; McChesney, 2008:26). Mark Deuze (2005:445) noted that there are common occupational values of journalism on which most news writers in democratic societies “base their professional perceptions and praxis”. In his study on the practice of journalism, Ivor Shapiro (2010:146) also discovered that journalists ascribe to a definable and common set of values or traits. However, Deuze (2005:445) noted that these values or traits are applied and interpreted differently by news-workers across countries and media houses. Deuze grouped these values into five categories. They include public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics (Deuze, 2005:447).

This section has presented the debates around the concept of journalism. It is clear that for many years there has been a big gap between journalism practice and theory. However, in recent years attempts have been made to integrate theory and practice. Despite the disagreements on the definition of journalism, scholars agree that journalists across the world have similar traits or values. However, these values are applied differently in various countries. Therefore, the next section examines the practice of journalism in Africa.

Challenges of journalism practice in Africa

Journalism is a responsible profession with the power to cause change. Journalists can effect change by monitoring the behaviour of authority and investigating structural imbalances that propagate misery and poverty in society. As watchdogs, journalists play the role of providing the required information for decision making in a democracy. The information role of journalists can also help to ensure accountability and transparency in public and private institutions (Andaleeb, 2014:177). It is in this spirit that Robert McChesney (2008:26) observed that; “society needs a journalism that is a rigorous watchdog of those in power and who want to be in power, can ferret out truth from lies, and can present a wide range of informed positions on the important issues of the day”. However, journalists in Africa face a lot of challenges that make it difficult for them to produce this quality of journalism.

Francis Nyamnjoh (2010:11) argued that practising journalism in Africa is akin to swimming upstream mainly because of the many hurdles that news reporters and editors face in the different countries. Nyamnjoh noted that the constraints confronting journalism in Africa are political, economic and institutional in nature. Notable among these constraints is the tendency by governments in Africa to excessively politicise state media, “making it very difficult for state-employed journalists to reconcile the government’s expectations with their professional beliefs, or with the expectations of the public” (Nyamnjoh, 2010:11). Nyamnjoh’s observation is also true of the state owned *UBC* television in Uganda. This study has revealed that several journalists at *UBC* have been sacked for either writing stories critical of government programmes or hosting opposition politicians on their talk-shows. For example, Tom Gawayya-Tegulle was sacked in 2007 for hosting opposition leader Kiiza Besigye on his *Tonight with Tegulle* talk-show (Gawayya-Tegulle, 2017).⁷

Governments in several African countries have continued to harass independent media especially when they publish investigate stories that expose their impropriety. For example, Catherine Gicheru (2014:15) noted that the Nigerian government in 2014 confiscated all printed copies of four leading newspapers for criticising the military after its failed attempts to rescue over two hundred high school girls who were abducted by the *Boko Haram* terrorists earlier that year. Gicheru added that earlier in 2006, masked policemen had raided the *Standard* newspaper in

⁷ <http://thetowerpost.com/2017/07/21/gawayya-tegulle-how-i-was-fired-for-hosting-besigye-on-ubc-tv>

Kenya and dismantled their printer before burning all the newspaper copies awaiting distribution. According to Gicheru's study, the Kenyan police defended its actions arguing that they had reliable information that the publication would endanger national security. However, despite police's accusations, no journalist at the *Standard* was charged in court for endangering national security.

The practice of journalism in Africa is also affected by the poor remuneration of journalists. In most African countries, journalists are poorly paid to the extent that many of them fail to meet their basic needs (Nyamnjoh, 2010:11). In her study of the media in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Vicky Lukulunga (2012:63) discovered that the average salary of Congolese journalists ranged between US\$20 – US\$150 per month. Lukulunga blamed the poor remuneration of journalists on the precarious economic state of the Congolese media. He argued that in the press sector, for example, sales by issue have proved to be deficient due to the weak purchasing power of the average Congolese. This means that newspapers survive on mainly advertisement revenue which has also reduced due to the deteriorating economic fabric in Congo. Therefore, in the struggle to survive, the first budgets to be cut by media organisations are the ones for remuneration. Consequently, journalists who work in such conditions cannot carry out their watchdog role responsibly.

Francis Kasoma (2000) observed that donors have also exerted influence on African journalism in various ways. He noted that the “influence is exerted from the donors to the press directly or indirectly through the other media players whom the donors largely support” (Kasoma, 2000:59). For example, the donor agencies directly give financial aid to the media to promote western values which may not necessarily be relevant for the African continent. The media is often cajoled through the regular press conferences held at the embassies. Some donor agencies also offer senior journalists and broadcasters with educational tours in the western world which are meant to influence their editorial decisions (Kasoma, 2000:60-61).

In countries such as South Africa, the quality of journalism has also been affected by the declining advertising income resulting from the global recession since 2008. Jane Duncan (2012:10) argued that “these pressures in profitability have in turn placed pressures on newsrooms to reduce costs, leading to mass retrenchments and the overburdening of remaining

staff'. Duncan noted that media houses such as *Media 24* have centralised control of their newsrooms and retrenched many experienced journalists. Consequently, these cutbacks have impacted on the quality of journalism. The current study has revealed that a similar situation has started to emerge in Uganda. For example, the Nation Media Group (the owner NTV) has also centralised its newsroom in Uganda. The reporters interviewed under this conglomerate revealed that they are now required to write stories for television, radio and newspapers. Those that have failed to cope with the changes have been forced to leave the organisation.

Apart from the political, economic and institutional constraints, African journalism has also been criticised by Francis Nyamnjoh (2015:37) for failing to redefine itself to reflect the particularities of Africa. Nyamnjoh argued that the current practice of journalism has a tendency to debase African humanity and realities. He added that since journalism has been treated as a trait of superior and modern societies, African journalists believe that it is proper to be taught journalism precepts by the so-called 'civilised societies'. As a consequence, African journalists end up operating in a world where mimicry is the norm to the extent that they only implement what others have predefined for them. Therefore, if African journalists do not resist this trend of events, then "they would in effect be working against the interests of the very African communities they claim to serve with their journalism" (Nyamnjoh, 2015:38).

The section has presented the environment in which journalists operate in Africa. It has been observed that journalism is greatly affected by the political, institutional and economic domain. The economic and political considerations have also compelled journalists to focus most of their reporting on official sources located in particular places. The next section examines the concept of sources.

Sources and their influence on news content

This section explores news sources and their characteristics. This is important for this study because all news comes from sources. The study also discusses the influence of sources on the process of news gathering, as well as the final product on air. The interrelationships between the journalists and the sources are also examined in this section. The author further explores the role of the economic domain in this relationship between the news media and the sources.

News sources are integral in journalism because they provide information and analyse news stories. They are “people who provide information as individuals, members or representatives of interest groups” (Motjamela, 2005: 37). Such sources help in adding credibility to claims in the stories. News sources include official sources and non-official sources. Official sources include appointed or elected government officers at national, regional or local levels. They tend to come from those “organisations that traditionally wield power in society, the government, police and large corporations. These sources are then able to act as the ‘primary definers’ of news and establish the boundaries of public discourse on issues and news events” (Mathews, 2013:298). Non-official sources, on the other hand, include private citizens, civil society members and experts. Various studies indicate that official sources usually take the biggest share of news bulletins since many media practitioners usually view their information as credible, important and regular (Lacy et al., 2013:460).

The other reason that forces journalists to rely on official sources is that news reporting emphasizes the notions of impartiality and objectivity. Therefore, official sources help to ensure that news reporting is based on authoritative accounts and proclamations from accredited people. This consequently helps to keep journalists’ personal biases out of the news (Motjamela, 2005:37).

The economic necessity as explained in the political economy of the media also compels reporters to rely on official sources. Official sources are usually readily available and live in the cities closer to the media outlets. This makes it cheaper for reporters to access them since they do not have to travel long distances. “A large part of the appeal of official sources is their availability. For example, reporters relied more on official sources when covering full-time state legislators than when covering part-time state legislatures” (Lacy et al., 2013: 460).

Due to the incessant contact between reporters and their sources, the two tend to develop personal relationships which at times affect content. Powerful sources can use such relationships to influence journalists. For instance, a journalist can deliberately carry a suspicious story without asking critical questions in the attempt to maintain a close relationship with a source (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 12). Powerful sources may also use threats to influence the media: “Critical sources may be avoided not only because of their lesser availability and higher cost of

establishing credibility, but also because the primary sources may be offended and may even threaten the media using them” (Herman and Chomsky, 1988: 12).

In the final analysis therefore, the political economy has forced the media and the news sources into an interdependent relationship which has consequently affected the process of producing news. It was observed that official sources are preferred because they are closer to the news media which reduces operational costs. It was also noted that influential sources can use their leverage to determine what should be aired in the news. As a result, news ends up being dominated by the views of the ruling and dominant classes in society. In the next section, the author explores the introduction of broadcast media in Uganda.

The introduction and development of broadcast media in Uganda

While newspapers in Uganda were introduced by Christian missionaries, broadcasting was mainly the work of colonial administrators. The first radio station, *Uganda Broadcasting Service*, was established in 1954 by the British colonial government (Kiwanuka-Tondo, 1990:54). “The primary objective in setting up the service was to support the imperial agenda of the government, which needed a communication system to execute and promote its colonial policies and programmes” (Lugalambi, 2010:20). At the beginning, the radio aired mostly re-broadcasts from the *British Broadcasting Corporation* as well as communications from the colonial government. It was also used to counter anti-colonial voices in the local language newspapers (Kiwanuka-Tondo, 1990:54; Lugalambi, 2010:20). The British also needed the radio for public education:

One of the major aims of starting radio broadcasting by the colonial government in 1954 was public education. In this, the target group was the adult population who had not had the chance to attend school. An adult literacy campaign had already been initiated way back in 1948 using folk media such as music, dance and drama as well as film shows in rural areas. The role of radio was seen as boosting this literacy campaign. Apart from the programmes on the literacy campaign, programmes on general education such as talks on health and hygiene, women and current affairs were also broadcast on radio (Kiwanuka-Tondo, 1990:55).

Nine years later in 1963, the television branch of *Uganda Broadcasting Service* was also established under the same management. The radio branch was renamed *Radio Uganda* while the television branch was named *Uganda Television*. The two branches of the service monopolised the airwaves for over three decades under the direct control of the state. The service operated

under the ministry of information and all employees were civil servants. For many years, most of the funds that ran the stations came directly from government supplemented by the income generated from the few commercial advertisements. Their news bulletins mostly consisted of stories that were uncritical of government activities and pronouncements (Lugalambi, 2010:20). This consequently turned the service into a government mouthpiece instead of being an independent information channel. *Radio Uganda* and *Uganda Television* became symbols of power in Uganda in the 1970s and 1980s. Every coup leader during this period could not declare himself head of state before securing control of *Radio Uganda* and *Uganda Television* (Lugalambi, 2010:20-21).

At the beginning, *Uganda Television* and *Radio Uganda* lacked programmes that were indigenous in nature since most of the broadcasting staff were British. The few Ugandans working in the broadcasting section of the state broadcaster translated English programmes into local languages. However, this changed gradually when the managers of the station employed more Africans. The new recruits later started broadcasting local content in indigenous languages (Chibita, 2006:113). The indigenous languages adopted by *Radio Uganda* and *Uganda Television* were chosen on the basis of demographic considerations and political pressure: “Bowling to political pressure from different ethnic languages, post-independence governments permitted the inclusion of up to 24 indigenous languages on state radio in the first decade after independence” (Chibita, 2010:4). This explains why Luganda language, spoken by the biggest and most dominant ethnic group of Buganda, was the first language to be adopted by *Radio Uganda* and *Uganda Television*.

When Idi Amin toppled government in 1971, he invested heavily in the development of the national broadcaster. Despite the country’s failing economy at the time, Amin was able to import the latest broadcasting equipment and *Radio Uganda’s* reach was expanded to cover all regions of the country. Government also bought outside broadcasting equipment for *Uganda Television* as well as establishing a modern satellite station at Ombachi in the north western part of Uganda. International and regional events like the annual hajj pilgrimages to Mecca and the 1975 summit of the now defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) were broadcast live on *Uganda Television*. Colour television was also introduced during Idi Amin’s regime (Kakooza, 2012:57).

Although Amin played an important role in developing the broadcasting infrastructure in Uganda, it is important to note that broadcasting remained a preserve of the state. Military people were employed to run the ministry of information which controlled the state broadcasters. Monica Chibita (2010:5) observed that military officers had the powers to hire and sack editorial staff. They also directly and indirectly influenced editorial content. She added that this impelled many Ugandans to turn to foreign media such as *Deutsche Welle* and *BBC* to get truthful information about events in the country. However, Amin's government later criminalised listening to such foreign stations. At the peak of Amin's dictatorship, many journalists decided to quit the profession since even those employed by government were not sure of what to publish:

Prior to the Amin regime, media offenses had been handled largely through the law. With Amin, intimidation, arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial killings became the norm. Because he ruled by decree, it was impossible for journalists, even those who worked for the government, to know the limits of media freedom or predict the repercussions of crossing the line. Many therefore either quit the profession or played safe (Chibita, 2010:6).

Some of the prominent journalists who lost their lives in line of duty include James Bwogi of *Uganda Television* and Jimmy Parma a journalist working with the ministry of Information (Bichachi, 2013).⁸

Although Idi Amin invested heavily in the development of the broadcasting infrastructure, the war that brought down his regime in 1979 destroyed many of the developments. The war resulted in the destruction of *Uganda Television's* booster in Masaka district and *Radio Uganda's* external service booster at Bobi. Many other boosters and satellite stations were also neglected during the war (Kiwanuka-Tondo, 1990:57).

The defeat of Amin heralded a new political direction with the balance of power shifting from the north to the south (Chibita, 2010:6). The new government restored the 1967 constitution which provided freedom of the media. Many broadcast journalists who had fled the country during Amin's dictatorship returned and were reinstated on their jobs at *Uganda Television* and *Radio Uganda*. However, despite this relative press freedom, attacks on journalists continued although at a lower rate than during the Amin era. For example, Roland Kakooza Mutale, an economic analyst on *Uganda Television* and an editor of the *Economy* newspaper, was arrested

⁸ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/The-dark-history-of-Uganda-s-media-and-past-governments/-/689844/1869456/-/item/2/-/751u7hz/-/index.html>

by the Army Chief of Staff Major General Oyite Ojok for discussing what the army described as intelligence information (Kakooza, 2012:60). After his release, Mutale abandoned journalism and joined the National Resistance Army (NRA) rebels led by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. In a remarkable turn of events, Ojok died in 1983 when his helicopter crashed while pursuing the NRA rebels.

As the 1980 general elections drew closer, media suppression intensified. The army openly supported Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party in the elections. Therefore, *Uganda Television* and *Radio Uganda* had to prioritise UPC in their coverage. Serwadda Sempiri, who was a news editor at the state broadcaster during the time, told *Daily Monitor* newspaper in an interview that during the elections the minister for information David Anyoti ordered him to give prominence to UPC. Sempiri noted that it was very challenging for him to balance the coverage of UPC with other parties like Democratic Party (DP), Conservative Party (CP) and Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) which took part in the elections (*Daily Monitor*, 2015).⁹ The situation was worsened later when the interim head of state Paulo Muwanga banned the broadcast of election results and declared that he was the only one with the mandate to announce election results. Muwanga subsequently declared UPC the winner of the elections paving way for the return of Milton Obote as president of Uganda for the second time (Kalinaki, 2014:26). After the elections, the various ministers for information continued to censor the media as it had been the case in the previous regimes. For example, news stories relating to the military had to be approved by the ministers themselves (Bichachi, 2013).¹⁰ This brief history reveals that for many years in Uganda, media ownership directly influenced content in the broadcast media. The government which owned *Uganda Television* and *Radio Uganda* made decisions on what to broadcast. Therefore, this study sought to find out whether this direct influence has continued until today.

News media under Museveni (1986 to date)

Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA) rebels took over government on 26th January 1986. However, it took the rebels four days to swear in their leader Yoweri Museveni as

⁹ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/Radio-Uganda-and-history-through-Sempiris-eyes/-/691232/2712196/-/3ovwqb/-/index.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/The-dark-history-of-Uganda-s-media-and-past-governments/-/689844/1869456/-/item/2/-/751u7hz/-/index.html>

president of Uganda on 29th January 1986. Thousands of excited Ugandans turned up for the swearing-in ceremony which took place at parliament. The NRA rebels were welcomed in most parts of the country because of their discipline and the values they claimed to stand for at time. They unveiled a ‘ten-point programme’ under which they were to govern Uganda. The programme included the restoration of democracy and media freedoms (Museveni 1997: 217). This created an environment that allowed the establishment of over fifty newspapers in the first three years of Museveni’s administration. The publications covered a variety of issues such as corruption, human rights violations by security agents and rebel activities. However, many of these publications collapsed due to high illiteracy levels that resulted in low circulation revenue. Government also stopped its departments from advertising in some of the newspapers which further reduced their sources of revenue (Nogara, 2009:8). Lawsuits against newspapers and journalists also affected the press immensely; “another important cause of the high mortality of newspapers was libel and sedition charges against journalists, which often carried the threat of high legal fees for protracted proceedings as well as onerous bail conditions” (Nogara, 2009:8).

The intolerance for critical reporting in Museveni’s government was first witnessed in 1987 when it banned the *Weekend Digest* for publishing a story about a failed coup that involved members of the Democratic Party (DP) (Tabaire, 2007:32). Two reporters at the newspaper, Wilson Wandera and Tony Geoffrey Owana, were also questioned and harassed by police. The proprietor of the publication Tom Mashate fled to United Kingdom and later won a court case against Museveni’s government for illegally banning his newspaper. In the same year, *Sunday Review’s* news editor Francis Odida was arrested and charged with sedition for publishing a mock interview involving Alice Lakwena the head of the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) rebel group. Three years later in 1990, three journalists were arrested for asking visiting Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda questions that the state considered to be embarrassing during a joint press briefing with Museveni. The three journalists were Hassan Abdi, a correspondent for *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC), Alfred Okware who worked for *Third World Media* and Festo Ebongo of the government owned *New Vision* newspaper. After this incident, all permits for foreign correspondents were suspended and everyone was asked to reapply. Those

deemed critical were not issued with new accreditation permits (Bichachi, 2013).¹¹ These events entrenched a pattern of media persecution that persisted into the current period of study.

The persecution that started with newspapers later extended to the broadcasting industry. In 2005, *KFM* radio was shut down for airing a talk show that blamed the Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni for the death of Col John Garang, who was Sudan's first vice president and interim president of South Sudan. Later in September 2009 government shut down four radio stations including *Central Broadcasting Services (CBS)*, *Radio Sapiensia*, *Ssuubi FM* and *Akaboozi ku Bbiri Radio* for allegedly inciting violence during the riots that broke out that month in different parts of central Uganda (Bichachi, 2013).¹² During the same time, government further banned a talk-show on *WBS* television called *Kibazo on Friday* and also suspended a talk-show host on *Radio One*, Robert Kalundi Serumaga, on similar grounds of inciting violence. The closed radio stations were reopened one by one after a few months with the exception of *CBS* which was reopened after one year. Moreover, no judicial process was followed in the reopening of these radio stations but rather presidential directives (Kalinaki, 2010).¹³ Since its reopening in October 2010, *CBS* has been operating without a broadcasting licence. Government has consistently argued that despite the reopening, it will not grant *CBS* a licence unless it withdraws a court case in which it is seeking compensation from government for what they termed as unlawful closure. Such blatant disregard of the judicial process by the president and his government has forced many media houses in Uganda to engage in self censorship (Lugalambi, 2010:74).

The liberalisation of the broadcast media in Africa

Until the end of the 1980s, television and radio stations in Africa were virtually owned and controlled by the state (Van der Veur, 2002:93). However, this dramatically changed in the early 1990s when many African governments started to liberalise the broadcasting sector paving way for the establishment of private radio and television stations. Indeed, Van der Veur observed that by 1995 there were over 130 private radio and television stations in twenty-seven African

¹¹ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/The-dark-history-of-Uganda-s-media-and-past-governments/-/689844/1869456/-/item/2/-/751u7hz/-/index.html>

¹² <http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/The-dark-history-of-Uganda-s-media-and-past-governments/-/689844/1869456/-/item/2/-/751u7hz/-/index.html>

¹³ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/OpEd/OpEdColumnists/DanielKalinaki/-/878782/1041722/-/tjq4m9z/-/index.html>

countries. These changes in Africa's mediascape were influenced by mainly political and economic factors (Teer-Tomaselli, 2017:10). Politically, in 1990s many African countries started embracing democratic governance which required media pluralism as Francis Nyamnoh (2005:53) aptly put it: "The current democratic process in Africa has brought with it not only multipartyism but also a sort of media pluralism". Consequently, media reforms were made in many African countries including Uganda which allowed the proliferation of private broadcasters.

On the economic front, African governments also came under a lot of economic pressure from western governments, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to liberalise the broadcasting sector. It ought to be remembered that privatisation was one of the cornerstones of the structural adjustment programmes of the World Bank. Therefore, African governments were expected to privatise state owned companies including the media as a precondition for receiving development assistance (Van der Veur, 2002:93). Moreover, many sub-Saharan governments could not withstand the western pressure at the time given that they were experiencing an economic downturn which was evident in the rising inflation and declining per capita income (Teer-Tomaselli, 2017:11).

West African countries such as Mali and Nigeria led the way in the liberalisation of the broadcast media. These were quickly followed by other countries in sub-Saharan Africa including Madagascar, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia and Uganda (Teer-Tomaselli, 2017:10; Van der Veur, 2002:91). In Nigeria, for example, when the broadcasting sector was liberalised in 1992 over 100 new applicants were licensed to operate radio and television stations in the first four years. Today Nigeria has more than 150 radio stations and over 100 television stations. In Mali the broadcast media was liberalised in 1991 shortly after the fall of Mousa Traore's government. In the first two years of the liberalisation the government issued operating licenses to 16 new private stations. Currently, Mali is estimated to have more than 200 radio stations and over 100 television stations. The pattern is similar in many other sub-Saharan countries (Myers, 2014:3).

Despite the proliferation of television and radio stations in many African countries, it is important to note that there is little evidence to suggest that the development of commercial radio and television stations has been sufficient in guaranteeing a wide representation of experiences

and views in Africa (Van der Veur, 2002:100). The commercial media in Africa especially television is skewed towards the urban elite who are already being served by the print media. The urban bias is partly due to the fact that stations are “dependent on advertising revenues that are unlikely to come from rural areas” (Van der Veur, 2002:100). The advertisers in Africa are also more interested in the urban constituency which has the purchasing power thus compelling media managers to neglect the rural voices in their programming.

The liberalisation of the broadcast media in Uganda

This section is very important because the two television stations under study (NTV and WBS) are privately owned and were established after the liberalisation of the broadcast media. Previously, the airwaves were monopolised by the state broadcasters (*Uganda Television and Radio Uganda*).

It is important to note that despite the continued attacks on the media, president Museveni’s government has allowed more press freedom than all previous regimes. Just like in many other African countries, the global economic forces explained in the previous section compelled the Ugandan government to liberalise the broadcasting sector in 1993 breaking the monopoly of *Radio Uganda* and *Uganda Television*. *Sanyu FM* was the first radio to be opened that year, followed by *Capital Radio* in 1994. The two radio stations at the beginning focused mainly on entertainment and western music. Many other radio stations and television stations that came later copied the programming formats of *Sanyu FM* and *Capital Radio* which focused on entertainment. In the first ten years of the liberalisation, government licensed over twenty television stations and one hundred radio stations which operated in different parts of the country (Chibita 2010:7; Kakooza 2012:69).

Later, there was a movement towards talk-show formats. Social and political issues became popular radio and television fare. For instance, in 1995 *Capital Radio* introduced a weekly political show called “Capital Gang”. The show featured regular panellists including William Pike, Patrick Quarcoo, Charles Onyango Obbo, Frank Katusiime and Winnie Byanyima. The show became very popular since the panellists were influential politicians and veteran journalists respected in society. Due to the popularity of the show, almost every new station started with at least one political show in a week (Chibita 2010:7; Kakooza 2012:70). The first private television station was *WBS* television opened in 1999. The managers of the television

appreciated the value of political talk shows and thus introduced a weekly political talk show called *Issues at Hand*. Most of the other television stations that came later reproduced *WBS*' format albeit with slight adjustments. Most television and radio stations used local languages that were dominant in their regions of operation. For example, *Radio Paidha* used Luo, the language spoken in northern Uganda, while *Central Broadcasting Service (CBS)* ran programmes in Luganda for the people of central Uganda (Khamalwa, 2006:17).

Radio and television stations also became more innovative in their programme formats. For instance, *Radio One* introduced a popular talk-show genre dubbed "*Ekimeeza*" in 2000. It was an open air debate held in a drinking place called *Club Obligatto* every Saturday afternoon (Chibita, 2010:8; Khamalwa, 2006:17). Participants in the show were ordinary citizens interested in discussing topical issues of the day and it was moderated by a professional broadcaster. The show became very popular and many radio and television stations copied it (Nassanga, 2008:655). The television stations that reproduced the show were *Top television, Star television, and Bukedde*, while the radio stations included *Central Broadcasting Service (CBS), Voice of Tooro, Metro FM, Mega FM, Radio Buddu* and *Radio Simba*, among others.

While *Radio One*'s talk show was in English and targeted mainly the urban elite, the shows on most of the other stations were mainly in local languages. This gave ordinary Ugandans an opportunity to challenge government policies in their local languages (Chibita, 2010:8): "Soon rural folks, hitherto unheard in the media except when they announced the death of a loved one or sent a special music request were calling in to give opinions on a range of issues". However, some people disliked *Ekimeeza* because in many Ugandan cultures it is deemed uncouth to challenge authority as one author observed:

There are people who are still fixated in the traditional setting where they believe that the cultural value of respect and reverence for authority implies that one cannot question the decisions or actions of government. Some people in the rural areas are uncomfortable with the open debate at *Ekimeeza*, where government policies are questioned or challenged, accountability is demanded in cases of corruption and lack of transparency and violations of human rights are condemned. However, the elite, who are more liberal minded, have come to appreciate the media's function of providing a forum for public debate and they participate in *Ekimeeza* (Nassanga, 2008:657).

At the beginning, the shows were well moderated and participants followed set rules to avoid slandering and mudslinging in the discussions. However, at the height of political events such as

elections, the discussions would degenerate into aggressive confrontation and name-calling (Chibita, 2010:8). This prompted the minister for information Basoga Nsadhu to ban the shows in 2002. The ban received widespread condemnation from the general public and Nsadhu lifted it (Kakooza, 2012:70). The government took notice of the protests and reversed its decision for fear of losing more support to the opposition given that the political temperatures were already high. At that time, president Museveni had started his controversial campaign to suspend the presidential term limit in the constitution and it was thus unnecessary for him to take another unpopular stance. The *ebimeeza* (plural) continued to shape public opinion and policy makers also started taking part in the debates which were initially for ordinary citizens. In the run-up to the 2006 presidential elections, president Yoweri Museveni himself appeared on CBS' *ekimeeza* called *Mambo Bado* (Nassanga, 2008:657). The appearance of the head of state on the show intensified the already soaring popularity of *ebimeeza*. However, the *ebimeeza* did not live to celebrate their tenth birthday as government totally banned them during the September 2009 riots in central Uganda. The riots were sparked off by government's decision to stop the Kabaka (king) of Buganda from visiting one of his principalities. Government claimed that Buganda loyalists had used *ebimeeza* programmes on the different television and radio stations to incite people to take part in the riots (Kakooza, 2012:70).

Ownership of broadcast media in Uganda (1993 to date)

Despite threats from the government, Uganda's broadcast media has grown tremendously since the liberalisation of the airwaves in 1993. "Spurred on by the government's generally positive disposition towards liberalisation, private entrepreneurs and non-governmental institutions including faith-based organisations invested heavily in setting up radio and TV" (Lugalambi, 2010:45). Currently, there are over two hundred and ninety radio stations and over thirty television stations operating in different parts of the country with most frequencies still in the hands of the state (Uganda Communications Commission, 2016:11).

No.	Television station	Ownership type	Ownership structure	Language
1	Nation Television (NTV)	Private foreign	Concentration	English, Luganda
2	Wavah Broadcasting Service	Private local	Independent	English, Luganda
3	Nkabi Broadcasting Service	Private local	Concentration	English, Luganda
4	TV Wa	Religious organisation	Concentration	Luo
5	BBS Television	Traditional kingdom	Concentration	Luganda
6	UBC Television	Government	Concentration	English, Luganda
7	Step Television	Private local	Concentration	English, Lumasaba
8	Star Television	Government	Concentration	Luganda
9	Basoga Bainho (BABA)	Traditional kingdom	Concentration	Lusoga, Luganda
10	Life Television	Religious organisation	Independent	English
11	Bukedde Television	Government	Concentration	Luganda
12	Light House Television (LTV)	Religious organisation	Concentration	English
13	Top Television	Religious organisation	Concentration	English, Luganda
14	Citizen Television	Private foreign	Concentration	English, Swahili
15	Channel 44	Religious organisation	Independent	English, Luganda
16	East Africa Television	Private foreign	Concentration	English, Swahili
17	Record Television	Religious organisation	Concentration	English, Luganda
18	Kodheo Television	Private local	Concentration	Lusoga, Luganda
19	Bunyoro Television	Private local	Concentration	Runyakitara
20	TV West	Government	Concentration	Runyakitara
21	Urban Television	Government	Concentration	English
22	B24 Television	Private local	Independent	Luganda
23	Salt Television	Religious organisation	Concentration	Luganda
24	Hunter Television	Private local	Independent	Runyakitara
25	Delta Television	Private local	Independent	Luganda
26	Horizon Television	Private local	Independent	Luganda
27	Kingdom Television	Religious organisation	Concentration	Luganda
28	Sanyuka Television	Private local	Concentration	Luganda
29	Dream Television	Religious organisation	Concentration	Luganda
30	Spark Television	Private foreign	Concentration	Luganda
31	Salam Television	Private local	Concentration	Luganda
32	Sports Television	Private foreign	Concentration	English
33	Shiloh Television	Religious organisation	Independent	Luganda
34	ABS Television	Religious organisation	Independent	Luganda
35	Capital Television	Private local	Independent	English
36	Born Free Technologies	Private local	Independent	Luo
37	U-Gospel Television	Government	Concentration	English
38	Magic One Television	Government	Concentration	English
39	K24	Private foreign	Concentration	English, Swahili
40	KTN	Private foreign	Concentration	English, Swahili

Table 2.1: Operating television stations in Uganda and their nature of ownership

Source: Drawn by the author using information from Uganda Communications Commission, academicians, media owners and journalists.

The table above summarises the landscape of the Ugandan television ownership. It presents the different operating television stations and their nature of ownership. Despite the different geographic locations of these stations, their signals can be clearly received in all parts of the country. This is due to the fact that Uganda migrated from analogue to digital transmission in the year 2015. During the analogue era, signals of television stations were limited to particular geographical areas yet under digital broadcasting signals can be received in all parts of the country as long as one has a digital television set. Those who still have analogue sets especially in rural areas are required to buy set-top box (STB) decoders which enable their television sets to receive the digital signals. This study discovered that in the bid to ease this digital migration, the Ugandan government partnered with private business companies to provide subsidised decoders at about US\$27 each. The table further reveals that most television stations in Uganda are privately owned. Most private stations are owned by local entrepreneurs while a few are owned by foreign investors.

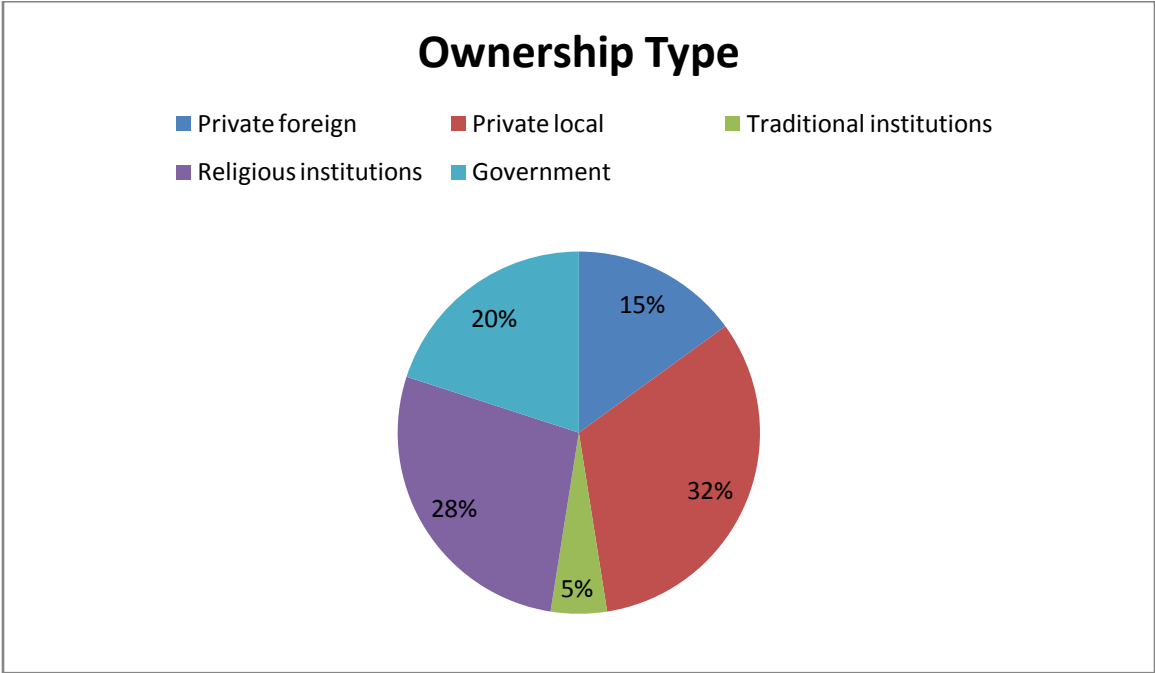


Figure 2.1: Pie-chart showing the type of television ownership in Uganda
Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

Figure 2.1 shows that locally owned private stations have the biggest share standing at 32%. However, it is worth noting that most privately owned television stations in Uganda are either owned by politicians from the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party or their

business associates (Chibita, 2006:127; Khamalwa, 2006:16). For example, *Khodeo Television* is owned by a ruling party legislator representing Jinja East constituency while the owner of *NBS*, *Sanyuka* and *Salam* television stations is a former presidential aide. *Channel 44* is also owned by a Pentecostal pastor known for openly supporting the incumbent party during elections. So far, only one opposition politician has been given a license to run a television station in Uganda and that is the Lubaga North legislator Kato Lubwama who owns *B24* television.

In the second position are the stations owned by religious and faith based organisations taking a share of 28%. Evangelical Christians in Uganda have the highest number of faith based television stations, followed by Muslims and Catholics in that order. This corresponds with the earlier findings of Monica Chibita (2006:127) that evangelical Christians led the way in establishing broadcasting stations in Uganda. For Example, *Dream Television*, *Top Television*, *Kingdom Television*, *Life Television*, *Light House Television*, *Salt Television*, *ABS Television*, *Record Television* and *Shiloh Television* are all owned by evangelical churches.

Despite the liberalisation of the broadcasting sector in 1993, the government still has a major stake in the television industry. Stations owned by the government are in the third position making up 20%. They include *UBC*, *Star Television*, *U-Gospel*, *Urban Television*, *Bukedde Television* and *TV West*. A study conducted by African Center Media Excellence (2016:43) during the 2016 presidential election revealed that most of these government owned stations disproportionately gave more coverage to the ruling national Resistance Movement (NRM) party. This corresponds with the observations of Paul Van der Veur (2002:93), fifteen years ago, that state run television stations in Africa “have by and large continued their coverage of the political activities of the ruling party, while leaving out the opposition. This has become an especially significant issue at times of elections”.

Although most television stations in Uganda are owned by local entrepreneurs, foreign investors have also started investing in the country’s broadcasting sector. Foreign owned television stations in Uganda now make up 15%. For example, *NTV* and *Spark* television stations are owned by the Kenyan based Nation Media Group (NMG), *East African Television* (EATV) is based in Tanzania, while *Citizen and K24* television stations are based in Kenya (Chibita, 2006:128; Khamalwa, 2006:20).

The old kingdoms of Busoga and Buganda which are seen as custodians of cultural values, also own television stations (Chibita, 2006:129). Busoga owns *Basoga Baihno* (BABA) television while Buganda is the biggest shareholder in *Buganda Broadcasting Service* (BBS) television. Shareholders in these media houses include prominent business people, heads of clans and highly placed individuals in the administration of these kingdoms. The stations have played an important role in promoting cultural, political and economic interests of the kingdoms. *BBS* broadcasts mainly in *Luganda* language, the mother tongue of the Baganda people. *Luganda* is “also the language spoken by the largest number of non-Baganda in Uganda” (Chibita, 2006:129). It is therefore not surprising that even *BABA* television owned by Busoga kingdom uses *Luganda* as a second language of broadcast.

When government liberalised the airwaves in the early 1990s, most private/commercial stations were independently owned. However, the trend has dramatically changed with now most television stations being owned by conglomerates. The following pie-chart graphically illustrates the current structure of television ownership in Uganda.

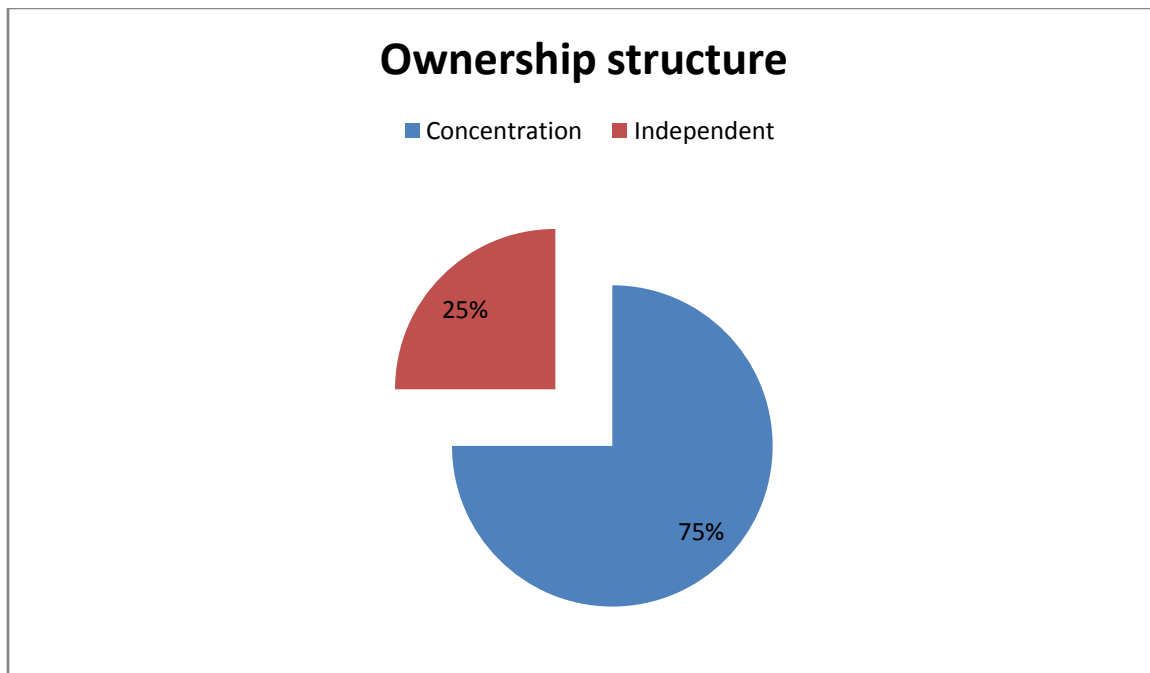


Figure 2.2: Pie-chart showing the television ownership structure in Uganda
Source: Derived from data collected by the author

The pie-chart above reveals that conglomerates own 75% of the television stations in Uganda while only 25% are independently owned. This is mainly because private entrepreneurs, government and religious organisations have all established media concentrations which run multiple television and radio stations. For example, the government owned *Vision Group* owns a number of television and radio stations as well as newspapers across the country while Victory Christian Church under its Impact Media Consortium (IMC) runs *Dream Television* as well as *Alpha* and *Impact FM* radio stations. Even some stations that started as independent networks have over time expanded to include other stations. Notable among these is *Nkabi Broadcasting Service* (NBS) which started as a single channel network but has now established two new television stations (*Sanyuka* and *Salam* television stations). This drastic movement towards media concentration partly informed the decision for this study. The author sought to explore how concentrations have affected the diversity of news content.

Entertainment, live chat and music dominate most of the programming on commercially/privately owned television and radio stations in Uganda (Anderson and Hutchins, 2007:4). Some television stations have altered their programme formats and content after realising that audiences are “more inclined towards music than news and analysis” (Khamalwa, 2006:18). *Urban Television* and *B24 Television* are examples of stations that have changed their programme formats to suit the audiences’ interests. On most television stations, a few hours are allocated to political talk shows and news which is normally broadcast at the top of the hour. Popular talk-shows around the country include *On the Spot* and *Fourth Estate* on *NTV*, *Issues at Hand* on *WBS Television*, *Frontline* and *Barometer* on *NBS Television* and *Amaaso ku ggwanga* on *Buganda Broadcasting Service* (BBS). All these are live talk-shows where viewers are given an opportunity to call in and participate in the discussions (Lugalambi, 2010:47).

In the attempt to maximise profits, most media managers in Uganda also employ inexperienced journalists who are willing to work for low pay unlike international stations like *Cable News Network* (CNN) and *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC) that employ experienced broadcasters (Khamalwa, 2006:22). This has consequently affected the quality of broadcasting in the country. Many proprietors are also involved in the direct management of their television and radio stations. In their study on Uganda’s broadcast media, Gavin Anderson and Rob Hitchins (2007:14) discovered that such “managers were unwilling to authorise out-of-studio expenses”.

The authors further noted that this affected the potential of certain programmes to be field-based and investigative.

This section has examined broadcast media ownership in Uganda with emphasis on television. It was observed that most television stations are in the hands of local private entrepreneurs albeit with a connection to the ruling party. Most stations were also found to be run by media conglomerates. The next section examines election coverage in Uganda.

Election coverage in Uganda (1996 to date)

Regular elections have been held in Uganda every five years since 1996. However, during every cycle of elections journalists face a number of obstacles ranging from harassment to occasional violence which affect the way they report news. For example, during the 2011 elections several journalists were arrested, shot at, intimidated and openly battered by security personnel in different parts of the country. In February that year, Julius Odeke (a photo journalist working with the *Redpepper* newspaper) was shot by a soldier while covering election related violence. Odeke was taking photographs of soldiers who were beating up an opposition member of parliament, Nandala Mafabi. The stakes were so high given that Mafabi was defending his parliamentary seat against the then minister for the Presidency, Dr Beatrice Wabudeya. It was widely believed that Wabudeya relocated to this constituency on the orders of the president to ‘punish’ Mafabi for opposing government (Freedom House, 2012).¹⁴ Similar incidents were also observed in the run-up to the 2016 general elections. For example in October 2015, Alfred Ochwo, a journalist with *The Observer* was assaulted and later arrested for taking pictures of policemen who were roughing up Ibrahim Semujju Nganda (an opposition member of parliament) at his home (Ochwo, 2015).¹⁵ Many other journalists were also manhandled and arrested during the elections. Surprisingly, most of them were always released without any charge brought against them.

Apart from the arrests and harassment, proprietors of some broadcast stations especially in the countryside directly influence content during elections by shutting out the views of the opposition. As observed in the previous section, most television and radio stations in Uganda are owned by people in government or their business partners who do not want their competitors to

¹⁴ https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Uganda%20draft_0.pdf

¹⁵ <http://observer.ug/news-headlines/40473-observer-journalist-arrested-for-covering-ssemujju-s-arrest>

appear on their stations. They often give orders to talk-show producers not to host opposition politicians:

For instance, stations owned by politicians are known to shut out views other than those that support their own parties or positions. Although this practice as well as the political orientations of particular stations may not be obvious to the average or unsuspecting listener, a few opposition politicians have brought their concerns to the attention of the media and have alluded to seeking the intervention of Parliament. During the campaigns for the 2006 general elections, some radio stations in the countryside were said to have refused to host opposition politicians on orders of their owners who were either ministers, members of Parliament affiliated to the incumbent party, or its supporters (Lugalambi, 2010:48).

In the run up to the 2011 elections, government used Resident District Commissioners (RDCs)¹⁶ to stop opposition politicians from appearing on several radio stations. In Jinja district, the office of the RDC stopped *Kira FM* from hosting Dr Kizza Besigye, the main opposition leader in Uganda, and the managers of the radio were told to refund the money which Besigye had paid for the talk-show. After being frustrated at *Kira FM*, Besigye later went to another radio station in the same district (*Victoria FM*) and paid US\$200 for a two-hour talk-show. At *Victoria FM* Besigye's show went on successfully without any interference. However, a few hours later, the RDC's office summoned the managers of the radio station to explain why they had hosted Besigye. These actions scared many radio and television stations from hosting opposition politicians throughout the election period (Tabaire and Bussiek, 2010:15).

Conclusion

The chapter has reviewed literature on the concepts of news, new values, sources and journalism. It has also examined the practice of journalism in Africa. The author further explored the state of the media during Yoweri Museveni's leadership. It was discovered that despite the existing limitations on media freedom, Museveni has provided more freedom to the media than all the previous regimes. However, it is important to note that the relative media freedom during Museveni's rule is largely due to the global economic and political forces.

The chapter also examined the structure and ownership of the media in Uganda with emphasis on the broadcast media. It was observed that most television and radio stations in Uganda are owned

¹⁶ RDCs are representatives of the central government in the different districts of Uganda. They are very powerful especially in the rural areas of the country given that they head the security committees in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

by ruling party politicians and their business associates who directly influence content in their stations. Many other television and radio stations are owned by faith based organisations and cultural institutions which also have their own agendas. The next chapter reviews literature on media control and regulation in Uganda.

CHAPTER THREE

MEDIA CONTROL AND REGULATION IN UGANDA

Introduction

States world over control and regulate the media through the law as John Hartley (1982:54) put it; “the main mechanism of state control of the media on a day-to-day basis is the law”. The Media in Uganda are governed by a number of laws. They include the Uganda Constitution (Uganda, 1995), Press and Journalist (Amendment) Act, Cap 105 (Uganda, 2000), Penal Code (Amendment) Act, Cap 120 (Uganda, 2007), Uganda Communications (Amendment) Act, Cap 106 (Uganda, 2013), Access to Information Act, No.6 (Uganda, 2005), among others. Over time these laws have ended up restricting media operation instead of regulating it causing a bitter relationship between successive governments and the media. Some of these laws were enacted after independence in addition to other colonial laws which still exist in the country’s law books. It is worth noting that even those colonial laws that have been amended, have been replaced with legislation which is retrogressive (Kimumwe, 2014:9). However, the current government has always denied the accusation that the laws are being enacted to suppress the media noting that “it put in place a legal and institutional framework to guide the operations of the media, both print and electronic, to protect the interests of the public” (Uganda Government, 2011:4).

This chapter examines the main pieces of legislation that impinge on the working effectiveness of journalists in Uganda. These laws also act as a break on the freedom of information by influencing the process of collecting and producing news. This ultimately has an effect on the final news product on air.

The Uganda Constitution (1995)

The constitution of Uganda guarantees freedom of expression and the media (Uganda, 1995 s.29). The Chief Justice of Uganda Bart Katureebe (2015)¹⁷ observed that freedom of expression was entrenched in the Uganda constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, because there cannot be democracy if the citizens do not have the freedom to freely express ideas and opinions. Katureebe, who was also a member of the constituent assembly that made the constitution in 1995, argued that media freedom enables citizens to critique and provide new ideas that help to

¹⁷ <http://acme-ug.org/2015/04/10/chief-justice-katureebe-says-judiciary-is-committed-to-jealously-guarding-the-right-to-freedom-of-speech/>

improve the performance of public institutions. The constitution further recognises the right to seek and receive information (Uganda, 1995 s. 41 (1)): “Every citizen has a right of access to information in the possession of the State or any other organ or agency of the State except where the release of the information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the State or interfere with the right to the privacy of any other person”. However, the same constitution contains other claw-back clauses that limit the media freedom described above for example article 43 (1) which states that: “In the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms prescribed in this Chapter, no person shall prejudice the fundamental or other human rights and freedoms of others or the public interest”. The trouble with this article is that it does not clearly define public interest which has always given the government leeway to suppress the media (Kimumwe, 2014:30; Tayebwa, 2012:47). The net effect of these claw-back clauses is that they impel journalists to become overly cautious to the extent of dropping some credible news stories.

The parliament of Uganda has also used the ambiguity in some sections of the constitution to gag the media. A good example is article 90 which parliament has variously invoked to summon and grill editors of media houses that publish stories critical of parliamentarians. The article gives parliamentary committees authority to summon public officials and private individuals to give evidence. It states that:

In the exercise of their functions under this article, committees of parliament – may call any Minister or any person holding public office and private individuals to submit memoranda or appear before them to give evidence; may co-opt any member of parliament or employ qualified persons to assist them in the discharge of their functions; shall have the powers of the High Court for – enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or otherwise; compelling the production of documents; and issuing a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad (Uganda, 1995 s. 90 (3)).

Parliament has interpreted this law to mean that even journalists can be summoned to answer questions about some of their stories. It was in this spirit that the speaker of parliament Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga summoned editors of four leading media houses in October 2016 to appear before parliament’s committee on rules, discipline and privileges, to explain why they published stories that were critical of parliament (Kaija, 2016).¹⁸ The media houses invited included the

¹⁸ <https://acme-ug.org/2016/10/06/we-need-independent-media-regulation-vision-group-editor-in-chief/>

government owned *New Vision*, *The Observer*, *The RedPepper* and *Uganda Radio Network*. However, only editors from the *New Vision* appeared before this committee. The others argued that parliament did not have the powers to summon them. Although until now the committee has not yet released the report of its findings and no action has been taken against the three ‘defiant’ media houses, the act of grilling the *New Vision* editors for over five hours instilled fear among many members of the press in Uganda.

Proponents of parliament’s actions argued that there was nothing wrong with summoning journalists to appear before a committee of parliament. Notable among these was Chris Obore, the director for communication and public affairs in Uganda’s parliament. Obore, who is also a veteran journalist, was convinced that article 90 gave parliament the powers to summon anyone including journalists (Obore, 2016:12). He further noted that it was unfortunate that some editors chose not to appear before the committee yet it was a legal obligation:

It is not correct to cast journalists as people who are the beginning and an end to themselves. Journalists are part of society and are also expected to play by the established rules. For order to prevail there must be authority; whether in the newsrooms, homes, factories or even the marketplace. I feel deeply troubled when the media is depicted as people who must be defiant to authority all the time. The media is called upon to thoroughly play the watchdog role within the professional limits. [...] I am no lawyer but am told if a court summons you and you believe that it has no jurisdiction to try you, you first appear and tell the court that it has no authority to try you. You do not snub the summons. It becomes contempt of court. There is really nothing wrong to appear before any court if summoned unless one has something to hide. A committee of parliament has powers of the High Court. This is a fact my colleagues should have put into consideration before joining the fray to say MPs have no powers (Obore, 2016:12).

While Obore and many members of parliament believed that the editors who snubbed parliamentary summonses were contemptuous, a critical evaluation of the matter showed that they were not (Oloka-Onyango, 2016:14). Firstly, contempt of parliament applies to actions that inhibit parliament from performing its legislative duties yet in this case media houses only published stories which criticised parliament’s lavish expenditure. There was no way this would have constituted a contemptuous offence. Secondly, it was repugnant to rules of natural justice for parliament to act as both accuser and judge (Oloka-Onyango, 2016:14). The parliament’s summonses were thus unconstitutional as eloquently argued by Prof Joe Oloka-Onyango, a constitutional law expert at Uganda’s Makerere University:

Contempt of parliament was really intended to prevent behaviour that was disruptive of the operations of the legislature. This includes making sure that witnesses attend committees when summoned, produce documents they are asked to and to enforce other reasonable measures of compliance in order to ensure that Parliament is able to carry out its legislative functions. In other words, contempt of parliament is not designed to act as a form of punishment against those with whom Parliament or its members have disagreements. Once it is used in this manner, it obviously offends Article 29 of the 1995 Constitution (Oloka-Onyango, 2016:14).

Oloka-Onyango further argued that by summoning news editors, parliament was re-enacting the law of sedition which was nullified by the High Court in 2010. He hastened to add that even before the nullification of that law, it did not protect parliament from criticisms. It only protected the president, the executive and the judiciary. Oloka-Onyango's views were supported by Moses Khisa (2016:6) who argued that summoning editors was disgraceful and irregular. Khisa contended that the rules, discipline and privileges committee only has powers to deal with matters concerning parliamentarians. He also wondered whether parliament had the professional competence to investigate the way journalists do their work. Khisa urged parliament to find better ways of interacting with news editors and reporters if it really wanted to learn how the journalists do their work:

If parliament wants to interact with media editors to learn how the media does its work and challenges faced, then just hold a breakfast event and invite all print and electronic editors for a symposium. But to summon means you want the editors to go defend their work and account to a parliament that has no business meddling in the work of the media! Parliament's work is primarily to legislate – make laws. Its other function is to provide oversight against the executive and other public departments. [...] The few MPs who know procedure all too well and understand the basic tenets of modern government ought to come out and speak against this absurdity and counsel their overzealous colleagues to cut their losses (Khisa, 2016:6).

The foregoing discussion clearly shows that Article 90 is ambiguous. Different legal experts, journalists and parliamentarians have interpreted it differently. Some believe that it gives parliament powers to summon journalists for questioning while others disagree. However, despite this ambiguity, parliament has continued to use it to instil fear among journalists that they can be summoned any time for questioning. The net effect of this development is that it has entrenched self-censorship among journalists. This has happened in different ways. Firstly, few journalists would be willing to engage in this continued fight with politicians. Secondly, parliament is one of the biggest advertisers in Uganda's media industry. This means that a media

house has to maintain a good relationship with them to be considered in their advertisement budget. Consequently, most media houses have chosen to exercise editorial cautiousness when producing critical stories about parliament. Therefore, parliament has succeeded in manipulating the free flow of information contrary to Article 29 of the Uganda Constitution which allows freedom of speech and expression. This threatens Uganda's democracy given that an independent media plays a vital role in creating an informed citizenry which is necessary in a democratic society as Murdock (1992:20) aptly put it: "Without these basic legal rights to express dissent and to organise opposition, it is impossible to work towards a fully democratic society based on open debate".

Press and Journalist (Amendment) Act, 2000 (Cap 105)

The Press and Journalists statute was passed into law in 1995 by the National Resistance Council (NRC) which performed the duties of parliament at the time (Kayanja, 2002:160-161). It was in 2000 declared an Act by the parliament of the republic of Uganda (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:23). When it came into force in 1995, it effectively repealed previous restrictive laws such as "the Newspaper and Publications Act and the Press Censorship and Correction Act" (Shale, 2008:22). The new law abolished the heavy bonds that were initially required for anyone to establish a media house as well as the provisions under which many newspapers had been banned in previous regimes. The law further eased the process of registering newspapers. The process of making this law had started way back in 1990 when the first draft was presented. However, it received a lot of criticism from the media, legislators and the general public which compelled government to shelve it for some time until 1995 when government reached a compromise with most of the stakeholders (Kayanja, 2002:160-161).

The supporters of the Press and Journalists Act initially argued that it was meant to professionalise the practice of journalism just as it was being done in the medical and legal professions. They convincingly noted that the new law would enhance the journalism profession by creating processes and structures that would eliminate quacks who were masquerading as journalists (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:23). It is thus not surprising that the law established a media council to regulate media activities (s. 8 of the Press and Journalists Act 2000). While the spirit of the law meant well for the practice of journalism, the letter of the law had negative

consequences for the profession. The media council which was supposed to work independently ended up being under the direct control of the minister for information:

Because of the complexity of its objectives and composition, the council wields little influence in its own right. The information minister has the power to regulate the operations of the media council. The secretary of the council must be a senior public servant in the ministry of information, and he appoints eight members out of the thirteen. This structure ensures that the council is under the control of the government (Kayanja 2002:161).

In the attempt to fight the statutory media council, media practitioners decided to establish a voluntary non-statutory regulatory body. The process was started in 2006 by a media development non-governmental organisation called Panos Eastern Africa. Later, countrywide consultations were made and finally the Independent Media of Council of Uganda (IMCU) was launched in 2008. Abedenego Kintu Musoke, a former premier under Museveni's government and one of the founding fathers of journalism in Uganda, was appointed chairman of IMCU (Lugalambi, 2010:32). It was open to both print and electronic media. The major aim of IMCU was to give journalists an opportunity to regulate themselves (Shale, 2008:33). Unfortunately, no complaint has been forwarded to IMCU since its launch. For its part, the government controlled media council has received more than one hundred complaints since 2008. For the period between 2008 and 2009 alone, government referred to the media council fifty three cases of which thirty nine were against the *Redpepper*. The *Daily Monitor* came second with nine cases while *The Observer* had three cases. The government owned *New Vision* newspaper had only one case brought against it (Lugalambi, 2010:32). Some of the outstanding cases handled by the media council include one logged by the state minister for regional cooperation against the *Redpepper* on behalf of the Libyan government. The *Redpepper* had published a story which alleged that the then Libyan President Muamar Ghadafi had an affair with a certain Ugandan queen mother. The media council ruled in favour of the litigant and awarded damages worth US\$50,000 (Lugalambi, 2010:32).

The Press and Journalists Act further set minimum standards for the practice of journalism in Uganda. For one to qualify to be a journalist, he or she must be a degree holding member of the National Institute of Journalists in Uganda (NIJU) (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:27; Shale, 2008:31) as provided in s. 15 (2) (a) of the Press and Journalists Act 2000 that: "A person shall be eligible for full membership of the institute if he or she is a holder of a university degree in journalism or

mass communication”. However, a criticism has been made that it is wrong to equate journalism to the medical profession where medical practitioners must be members of a professional body. This is because unlike medical practice, dissemination of information is a fundamental human right for everyone as clearly explained in the advisory opinion to the Costa Rican government by the Inter American Court on Human Rights¹⁹ (Shale, 2008:27). Although government has not fully enforced this section, some government organs have used this rule to prohibit some journalists from covering them. In 2016, the parliament of Uganda used this particular section to suspend all reporters without a college degree in journalism from covering parliamentary proceedings. This denied many experienced journalists the opportunity to continue reporting on the activities of the parliamentarians. Reporting in the legislature was thus left in the hands of novices and fresh graduates without the institutional memory.

In all, the government has successfully used the Press and Journalist Act to instil fear among journalists and media owners. Journalists covering other government organs such as the judiciary and the army are exceedingly cautious in their reporting for fear that they can also be suspended under this law just like their colleagues at parliament. In due course, this has affected the reporters’ sense of judgment and selection of stories. Many journalists end up writing only those stories that they think would not offend those in power.

Penal Code (Amendment) Act, 2007 (Cap 120)

The Act was enacted by the colonial administrators in 1950 and it has been maintained by successive post-independence governments albeit with some amendments. The law has a number of provisions that undermine media freedom in Uganda (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:22) for example sections 39-40 of the Penal Code Act which establish and define the offence of sedition (Kimumwe, 2014:33; Tayebwa, 2012:64). Section 39 specifically defines sedition as:

To bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the person of the President, the Government as by law established or the Constitution; to excite any person to attempt to procure the alteration, otherwise than by lawful means, of any matter in state as by law established; to bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the administration of justice; to subvert or promote the subversion of the Government or the administration of a district (Uganda, 2007 s. 39(1)).

¹⁹Compulsory Membership in an Association Prescribed by Law for the Practice of Journalism (Arts. 13 and 29 of the American Convention on Human Rights), Advisory Opinion OC-5/85, November 13, 1985, Inter-Am. Ct. H.R. (Ser. A) No. 5 (1985) Available from: https://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/iachr/b_11_4e.htm (Accessed on 10 July 2015).

A critical examination of this section illustrates “the wide latitude the law provided to government to charge journalists on seditious charges” (Tayebwa, 2012:65). It is therefore not surprising that most of the journalists that have been arraigned before courts in the last thirty years have been charged under this section. Despite the fact that the state has lost most of the sedition cases brought against media practitioners, the law has intimidated journalists and media proprietors leading to self-censorship (Chibita, 2006:140).

One of the most prominent cases of sedition was in 1995 when the editor of *The Shariat* newspaper Haruna Kanaabi was arrested and charged with sedition. Kanaabi had written a story which alleged that Uganda’s president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni had visited Rwanda to campaign for president Paul Kagame who was previously an officer in Uganda’s army. In the story, Kanaabi also referred to Rwanda as the 40th district of Uganda. Uganda at the time had thirty-nine districts that have since been divided into one hundred and twelve smaller districts (Mbaine, 2003:49). For publishing this story, Kanaabi was arrested and charged on 28th August 1995, four days after the publication of the news article. The magistrate denied him bail on grounds that he would escape and was remanded to Luzira Maximum prison. In December 1995 magistrate Flavia Munaaba found him guilty of sedition. Kanaabi was consequently sentenced to five months in jail and was also supposed to pay a fine of approximately US\$300 (Mbaine, 2003:49). In 2010 the constitutional court nullified this section. However, the state appealed in the Supreme Court and thus the law remains in force until the Supreme Court makes its ruling (Kimumwe, 2014:37).

The Penal Code Act, under the disguise of preventing sectarianism, also prohibits the media from discussing issues relating to unfair distribution of resources and nepotism (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:22). The Act states that:

A person who prints, publishes, makes or utters any statement or does any act which is likely to— degrade, revile or expose to hatred or contempt; create alienation or despondency of; raise discontent or disaffection among; or promote, in any other way, feelings of ill will or hostility among or against, any group or body of persons on account of religion, tribe or ethnic or regional origin commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years (Uganda, 2007 s. 41 (1)).

The law was enacted to mainly protect Rwandan refugees who were serving officers in Uganda’s army at the time. The refugees later left Uganda and formed a rebel group called Rwandese

Patriotic Front (RPF) which toppled government in Rwanda in 1994. After the departure of the refugees, the law remained unused until 1998 when it was used to charge the editor of *The Crusader* newspaper George Lugalambi. Lugalambi had published opinion articles that condemned President Museveni's government for arming the *Bahima*²⁰ herdsmen of western Uganda (Mbaine, 2003:44). In the same week, Allan Mujuni, a correspondent for *The New Vision* newspaper was also arrested for writing a follow up story about the arming of the *Bahima* herdsmen. In 2006 the managing editor of *The Weekly Observer* newspaper James Tumusiime and his political editor Ssemujju Ibrahim Nganda were arrested and charged with promotion of sectarianism. The two had published a story alleging that senior military officers were persecuting opposition leader Col Dr Kiiza Besigye because of tribal differences (Tayebwa, 2012:67).

The Penal Code Act further criminalises defamation which has greatly affected media freedom (Uganda, 2007 ss. 179-186). "Defamation represents probably the worst charges that can be brought against a media practitioner, and has been systematically employed by both the state and other actors to squeeze life out of the media in Uganda" (Kimumwe, 2014:37). This law has compelled many journalists to censor themselves thus abandoning their watchdog role. Due to the effects of criminal defamation on media freedom, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2010 urged member states with such laws to repeal them. However, the law is still in existence in Uganda. One of the recent victims of this law is Ronald Sembuusi who was a correspondent for *Central Broadcasting Service* (CBS). Sembuusi was in 2014 convicted of criminal defamation by a Magistrate's court and was fined approximately US\$400 or serve one year in jail²¹. Sembuusi had written a story claiming that a local politician knew the whereabouts of some solar panels that had disappeared from the district stores (Sempala, 2014).²²

Mbaine (2003:39-40) observed that while the civil defamation law is necessary in resolving disputes between the media and the public, in Uganda the law has been abused. He noted that courts have often given disproportionate awards against the media which has crippled some of them. He gave the example of *Uganda Confidential* newspaper which collapsed after excessive awards against it. Mbaine also noted that media houses have lost defamation cases not because

²⁰ President Yoweri Museveni belongs to the Bahima ethnic group (Mbaine, 2003:44).

²¹ Sembuusi had appealed against the ruling but he passed on before the case was heard.

²² https://www.ifex.org/uganda/2014/10/20/ssembuusi_sentenced/

they published falsehoods but rather due to the fact that employees in affected organisations are not willing to testify against their bosses for fear of losing jobs. He further argued that courts in Uganda have failed to appreciate that investigation into the behaviour of public officers may be greater than their reputation.

It is also important to note that in ss. 34 to 38 of the Penal Code Act, the minister for information is given power to ban the publication of information and importation of any publication likely to prejudice national security (Mbaine, 2003:42). Television stations and radio stations have also been shut down under the disguise of maintaining national security. While the spirit of this law is good, state agents have often abused it. Media houses publishing information about the condition of armed forces during times of war and other conflicts have been shut down under this section for example *Radio Kyoga Veritas* in 2003 and *KFM* in 2005. While the big media houses are able to rise again and recommence production, smaller stations are at times unable “to recover from such repressive measures” (Chibita, 2006:140).

Over time, journalists in Uganda have successfully challenged the constitutionality of some of the restrictive clauses in the Penal Code Act. In 2004, the Supreme Court nullified section 50 of the Act which created the offence of ‘false news’ arguing that it contravened the constitution of Uganda which expressly guaranteed media freedom²³. The nullification was a result of a petition filed in 2002 by Andrew Mujuni Mwenda and Charles Onyango Obbo, who were journalists at *The Monitor* (later changed to *Daily Monitor*) newspaper at the time (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:22; Tayebwa, 2012:67-68). Initially, Mwenda and Obbo had been arrested and charged under this law in 1997. The two published a story which alleged that Laurent Desire Kabila, the then president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, had paid Uganda’s government in gold in appreciation for the assistance offered in the armed struggle to overthrow the government of Mobutu Sese Seko. The case against the two journalists was dismissed by court later in 1999 after several court appearances (Mbaine, 2003:51; Tabaire, 2007:35). The dismissal of the case prompted the two journalists to file a petition challenging the constitutionality of the law in 2002. It took two years for the Supreme Court to nullify this section. The following is an extract from the judgement as published by the Centre for Human Rights:

²³ Freedom of expression and the media is guaranteed under article 29(1) (a) of the Uganda Constitution 1995.

From the foregoing different definitions, it is evident that the right to freedom of expression extends to holding, receiving and imparting all forms of opinions, ideas and information. It is not confined to categories, such as correct opinions, sound ideas or truthful information. Subject to the limitation under article 43, a person's expression or statement is not precluded from the constitutional protection simply because it is thought by another or others to be false, erroneous, controversial or unpleasant. Everyone is free to express his or her views. Indeed, the protection is most relevant and required when a person's views are opposed or objected to by society or any part thereof as 'false' or 'wrong' (Centre for Human Rights, 2004).²⁴

The Supreme Court further consented that the law was outdated and had been made by the British colonialists with the aim of suppressing the views of nationalists who were agitating for independence:

I think it is reasonable to infer from the wording of section 50, that at the time, when political agitation for self governance was in early stages, the colonial legislature in Uganda would have wanted to provide a legal safeguard against the spreading of news, rumours or reports that could destabilise the populace, with probable effect of undermining the authority of the colonial regime. As for the retention of that law subsequent to the colonial administration, the probable reason is that the process of law reform has not been vigorous or extensive enough to review the relevance of laws, such as section 50, in changed circumstances since their enactment. In the circumstances, one cannot with certainty, point to the purpose for which section 50 is retained in the Penal Code today (Centre for Human Rights, 2004).²⁵

Despite this ruling, the state has continued to arrest and charge journalists under this nullified section. For example, Yoweri Musisi, a correspondent with *Central Broadcasting Services* (CBS), was arrested and charged with publication of false news in March 2011. The case was later dismissed in May 2011 by a magistrate who concurred with the defendant's lawyer that the offence was no longer in existence. Musisi had written a number of stories about increasing criminal activities in Buwama sub-county which police considered false (Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda, 2011:21). The continued persecution of journalists under that scrapped law affects the working effectiveness of journalists in Uganda.

²⁴ <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/browse-by-subject/486-uganda-obbo-and-another-v-attorney-general-2004-ahrlr-256-ugsc-2004.html>

²⁵ <http://www.chr.up.ac.za/index.php/browse-by-subject/486-uganda-obbo-and-another-v-attorney-general-2004-ahrlr-256-ugsc-2004.html>

Uganda Communications (Amendment) Act, 2013 (Cap 106)

The law was enacted in 2012 and entered into force in 2013. The law effectively repealed the Uganda Communications Act of 2000 and the Electronic Media Act of 1996 (Kimumwe, 2014:48; Uganda, 2013:5). It merged the Uganda Communications Commission and the Broadcasting Council into one body called Uganda Communications Commission (UCC). Initially, the Broadcasting Council was charged with the responsibility of licensing and regulating radio and television stations while the Uganda Communications Commission had the powers to issue frequencies to radio stations, television stations and telephone companies (Kimumwe, 2014:48-53). Government however realised later that it was difficult to distinguish the functions of the two bodies and it decided to merge them into one. The problem with this law is that it did not address the inconsistencies in the Electronic Media Act of 1996 and the Uganda Communications Act of 2000 that affected media freedom. The two acts were just bundled together into one (Kimumwe, 2014:53).

The law gives the minister for information, communication and technology direct control over the commission, yet it is supposed to operate independently (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:43-44).

The law states that:

All members of the Board shall be appointed by the Minister with approval of Cabinet, one of whom shall be a person with disability and at least three of whom shall be women; a member of the Board shall hold office on the terms and conditions specified in the instrument of appointment; a member of the board shall hold office for three years and shall be eligible for reappointment for only one further term (Uganda, 2013 s. 9 (3-5)).

Anite and Nkuubi (2014:44) argued that board members of the commission end up serving the interests of the minister who has the power to hire and sack them. In s.7 of the act, the minister is also empowered to give policy guidelines to UCC regarding the execution of its functions. Anite and Nkuubi noted that because of these excessive powers the law bestows on the minister, it falls short of internationally accepted broadcasting standards. They thus recommended that; “the commission should be accountable to the public and not to the minister because it is executing its duties for the people at large and not to an individual” (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:46).

Of all the laws regulating the media in Uganda, the Uganda Communications Commission Act has had the greatest impact on the broadcasting industry. The minister for information, communication and technology has often used the excessive powers given to him to ban

coverage of certain opposition activities. For instance, in May 2016 the minister together with UCC banned television and radio stations from covering live opposition protests. They even threatened to withdraw operating licences of stations that dared to cover the protests (Mutambo, 2016).²⁶ UCC, under the influence of the minister, has also banned the discussion of some controversial topics on several occasions (see details in Chapter Seven). Such developments have made it difficult for broadcasters in Uganda to know where freedom of expression starts and ends. Consequently, many talk-show hosts have chosen to steer clear of some important topics in their discussions to avoid the wrath of the state.

Access to Information Act, 2005 (No.6)

The law was passed to operationalise article 41 of the Uganda constitution 1995 which proclaimed that every individual had a right of access to information. Before the enactment of this law, it was difficult to access information in public offices since there was no enabling law. Individuals who wanted information from public offices had to file petitions in the constitutional court. However, this was a tiresome, frustrating and expensive process for ordinary citizens (Munghinda, 2009:8). The process of making this law was kick-started by Abdul Katuntu, a prominent lawyer and an opposition member of Uganda's parliament. Katuntu in 2004 drafted a private members bill which sought to provide a framework of access to information. This compelled government to rush and draft their own version of the law which they tabled in parliament before Katuntu could table his. The bill tabled by government was later in 2005 debated and passed amid protests from Katuntu who argued that government had plagiarised his work. The president finally assented to the act on 7th July 2005 and it entered into force on 3rd March 2006 (Munghinda, 2009:9).

The main aim of the act was to promote transparency in government departments. It further laid down the classes of information and the procedures for obtaining that information (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:33; Uganda, 2005 s. 2(1)). The Act states that:

This Act applies to all information and records of Government ministries, departments, local governments, statutory corporations and bodies, commissions and other Government organs and agencies, unless specifically exempted by this Act (Uganda, 2005 s. 2(1)).

²⁶ <http://www.nation.co.ke/news/uganda-media-protests/1056-3191382-13awgoqz/index.html>

While the law clearly listed the bodies that are supposed to provide information to the public, officers in these organisations have variously continued to deny members of the media some information. In 2013, an investigative reporter from the *Daily Monitor* applied to the office of the Inspector General of Government (IGG) for information regarding the wealth of all permanent secretaries ²⁷(Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:33). The IGG rejected the reporter's request on the following grounds:

- That the information requested for was omnibus in nature and the IGG was thus concerned about the high costs associated with the retrieval and reproduction of this information;
- The Leadership Code Act does not yet provide for a prescribed form through which the IGG can divulge the information requested for to the public;
- The Access to Information Act does not apply to information submitted to the Inspectorate under the Leadership Code Act; and
- The IGG and Attorney General could be sued for breach of right to privacy for indiscriminately releasing the information requested for because it extends to the affairs and property of leaders' spouses, children and dependents, especially since the requester could publish these details in the press once they are divulged to him (Anite and Nkuubi, 2014:34).

The decision by the Inspector General of Government (IGG) contradicted the spirit of the Access to Information Act which sought to bring about transparency in government. Permanent secretaries are the chief accounting officers in their respective ministries and therefore journalists should have a right to know their wealth to examine whether it corresponds with what they earn.

Earlier in 2009, two prominent Ugandan journalists, Angello Izama and Charles Mwanguhya Mpagi requested government to make public the oil production agreements that were signed between Uganda's government and the oil exploring companies. The main aim of the request was to test the effectiveness of the access to information law in Uganda. As expected, the request was rejected and the two journalists went to court and filed a petition demanding government to disclose the agreements. However, court sided with government and dismissed the case arguing that government was not obligated to disclose the oil production agreements (Bibangambah, Ngabirano and Ssekyana, 2012:34). The court held that "whereas natural resources were held in trust for the people of Uganda the government as a trustee had no obligation to disclose each and every information that related to that trust, in other words a trustee had no obligation to disclose

²⁷ Permanent secretaries are the technical heads of ministries in Uganda.

all information to the beneficiary” (Bibangambah et al., 2012: 34). Bibangambah et al. further observed that this case highlighted the difficulty in forcing government to disclose information it does not want to make public despite the enactment of the access to information law in 2005.

The Act is also affected by the existence of other outdated laws that stop public officers from revealing some information. The laws include the Official Secrets Act, Cap 302 (Uganda, 1964) and the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act, Cap 258 (Uganda, 1955) (Kimumwe, 2014:61; Munghinda, 2009:74). Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act makes it an offence for anybody to approach, inspect, pass over or enter premises that have been prohibited by government. Under this section, cabinet ministers have the power to declare any premise a prohibited place. The word ‘prohibited’ under this Act has a broad definition which affects access to information. With the recent discovery of oil in Uganda, any journalist found with a camera at any of the oil fields across the country is likely to be arrested under this law (Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:11-12). Section 4 of the Act also prohibits public officers from disclosing some information to unauthorised people. The information includes sketches, plans, models, passwords, and notes. It also criminalises the act of receiving such information which is prohibited. By widening the liability scope to include both the public officer and the recipient of the information, the law scares citizens from inquiring about government activities thus limiting access to information (Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:11-12). The Act does not also define ‘authorised persons’ to whom information should be disclosed:

Under the section disclosure is limited to authorised persons. Unfortunately, the Act does not define who these persons are. The net effect of this is that the public and citizens are unfairly and indeed unjustly denied clusters of information under the guise that they are not authorised persons. This constitutes an unjustifiable limitation on the right of access to information. Secondly, it is provided under the Constitution that information prejudicial to state security is expressly excluded. Nonetheless it should be noted that not all information on security is prejudicial to state security. Taking the example of the inquiry into the purchase of junk helicopters by the UPDF, it is clear that certain information on security matters pose even more threat to state security when not disclosed and subjected to scrutiny (Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:13).

The Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act, Cap 258 (Uganda, 1955) also affects access to information especially section 14. The section unjustifiably limits access to pieces of information laid before parliamentary committees unless if the person seeking such information has been granted permission by the speaker of parliament. Unfortunately, the section does not specify

conditions under which the speaker may grant or deny access to documents laid in parliament. The Act therefore gives the speaker unlimited powers which may be abused (Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:18). Section 14 should thus be amended to provide grounds under which the speaker may deny access to documents before parliament. However, “the reasons for non disclosure should conform to those that are acceptable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society” (Human rights Network-Uganda, 2010:19).

Another law that inhibits access to information is the Evidence Act, Cap 6 (Uganda, 1909). The law was enacted by the British colonialists in 1909 but it has been maintained in Uganda’s law books by all successive governments. It applies to all proceedings in courts of judicature including the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal/Constitutional Court, the High Court, and all Magistrates Courts. While it is mostly concerned with matters of proof and facts before law courts, it has an effect on freedom of access to information and the right to know (Bibangambah et al., 2012:39; Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:15). The worst provision in this regard is section 122 which prohibits anybody from giving evidence originating from official records which have not been published unless permitted by the concerned head of department. The section is also problematic because it does not provide grounds under which a head of department may deny disclosure (Bibangambah et al., 2012:39; Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:15-16). Section 123 of the Evidence Act also prohibits disclosure of information if public interest is likely to suffer from that act. However, “while public interest is vital, it should be construed only within the limitations set out in Article 41 of the Constitution that guarantees the right of access to Information” (Human Rights Network-Uganda, 2010:16).

The foregoing discussion suggests that while the Access to Information Act was made in 2005 to enable Ugandans access records and information in government agencies easily, there are still numerous challenges that limit the right to information in Uganda. Many technocrats in government departments such as the Inspectorate of Government (IG) have not yet appreciated the importance of the right to information. That is why they always turn down requests from journalists for information about public officers. The judiciary which should have played a leading role in defending this right has not also been supportive. Courts have variously dismissed cases in which journalists sought orders to compel government to reveal certain public information such as the oil sharing agreements between government and the oil drilling

companies. In other African countries like Ghana, such oil sharing agreements are often made public. The right to information is also limited by several other Acts such as the Official Secrets Act, Evidence Act and the Parliament (Powers and Privileges) Act which prohibit public officers from revealing certain information. These contradicting laws ought to be amended if the right of access to information is to be realised.

Conclusion

The chapter has examined the laws relating to media freedom in Uganda. When Yoweri Museveni captured power in 1986, his government made a number of policies and laws which provided media freedom. One of the major policies in this respect was the liberalisation of the communications industry in 1993. This led to the increase in the number of radio and television stations breaking the monopoly of the state broadcaster. Museveni's government followed this up by making the 1995 Uganda Constitution which expressly provided for media freedom under article 29. This gave Ugandans an opportunity to start criticising their government openly through the media for the first time. As these critical voices increased, government felt threatened and it started passing laws that limit the freedom provided in the constitution.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MEDIA AND THE THEORY AROUND NEWS

Introduction

The major theory underpinning this thesis is the political economy of the media. The chapter begins with an examination of the development of the theory as well as its challenges. Literature on the concept of concentration is also reviewed in this chapter. The researcher further explores how the political economy affects the role of the media in democracy. In this thesis, the researcher also examines the applicability (Tayebwa, 2012:77) of the political economy of the media in Uganda since most studies (Bagdikian, 2006; McChesney, 2008) have focussed on its applicability in the western world. The chapter concludes with an examination of the mass manipulative theory in relation to news content.

The political economy of the media theory is relevant to the study because it examines the relationships between the government, audiences and news media. This involves discussions about private power and public policy, as well government relations with media organisations. The paradigm further examines the important subject of *ownership* on the one hand and *control and management* on the other – locating the role of the two in influencing news content. It also explores the significance of advertisement and its ideological importance tracing the historical progression of branding. It further considers the power of the state in relation to professional journalism (Wasko, Murdock and Sousa, 2011: 6).

Background of the political economy of the media

This section briefly presents the historical foundations of the theory. It also examines the relationship between the media and the political economy over time. It further explores the historical progression of the political economy of the media as well as examining the key theorists and their contribution to the development of the theory.

For many years, various communication studies did not embrace the political economic perspective. For example, during the time between 1920 and 1950 most communication research concentrated on individual effects with less emphasis on the environment in which media content was produced and distributed (Wasko, 2005:27). Dallas Smythe is arguably the scholar who pioneered the explicit study of the political economy of the media and communications in the

1950s and 1960s (Wasko, 2005:27-28). Smythe studied economics and later worked with the Department of Labour in the United States where he closely interacted with progressive trade unionists and civil servants who strengthened the critical views he espoused. Later in 1943, he joined the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as its first economist (Mosco, 2009:83). Smythe joined FCC at the time when the organisation was under pressure from the business world to allocate more radio frequencies and television channels. The lessons he learned at the FCC greatly influenced his future work in the study of the political economy of the media (Mosco, 2009:83-84). Janet Wasko (2005:28) observed that later in 1948 Smythe joined the University of Illinois as an academic where he introduced a course on the political economy of communications. While at the university, he also published a number of papers which explained the political economy of the media including *Communications: Blind spot of western Marxism* in 1977 (Smythe, 1977:1-8). Several other scholars in the 1960s and 1970s joined Smythe in teaching and researching around the area of the political economy of the media. They included Herbert Schiller, Thomas Guback, Charles Osgood, George Gerbner and Theodor Ardono (Mosco, 2009:84; Wasko, 2005:28).

Still in the 1970s, two British scholars, Graham Murdock and Peter Golding, expanded the realm of the political economy of the media by examining the effects of consolidation, concentration and internationalisation of the media in publishing, broadcasting and recording. They observed that the dimensions of concentration such as integration, merger and diversification of the media had resulted in restricted choice for media content (Mosco, 2009:92; Murdock and Golding, 1979:199; Wasko, 2005:28). Murdock and Golding further argued that a complete analysis of mass communications must “begin by confronting this emerging economic structure and exploring the ways in which its organisation and underlying dynamics shape the range and forms of media production” (Murdock and Golding (1979:199)). They contended that any media analysis that fails to give due attention to economic determinants in influencing the production of media content would be impartial.

More recently, scholars such Vincent Mosco (2009:12) have widened the scope of political economy of the media by extending the analysis of audience research to include the examination of audience history as well as the relationships between audiences and content producers. Mosco noted that political economy had a tendency of concentrating more on media content than the

audiences and the labour that produces the content. He argued that this paradigm shift is necessary because in this internet age the labour and audience characteristics differ from those described by Smythe in the 1960s (Mosco, 2009:13). However, despite the noted variations, all the explications of the political economy of the media at least “emphasize capital, class, contradiction, conflict and oppositional struggles” (Wasko, 2005:30).

The political economy and media content

This section explores the influence of the political economy on the production and distribution of media content especially news which is the main subject of this thesis. This is important because “the economic organisation and dynamics of mass media production determine the range and nature of resulting output” (Golding and Murdock, 1979:198). The thesis thus examines how the dynamics of content production affect the final product on air.

Writers within the political economy of the media paradigm (Bagdikian, 2006:3; Herman and Chomsky, 2002:14) have observed that dominant media companies are in the hands of a few wealthy people and the media managers are supposed to serve the interests of those media owners as well as the interests of the advertisers. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (2002:14) noted that “media managers are subject to sharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces, and have important common interests, with other major corporations, banks, and government”. Subsequently, this relationship affects the way news choices are made. Therefore, the independence of the press is within the confines of the owners’ interests in the sense that if the media organisation is commercial, the content will mirror the view points of the proprietors and the advertisers (McChesney, 2008:44). Robert McChesney explained how commercial interests have corrupted news integrity:

Commercial interests directly penetrate the news, corrupting its integrity. This process has been well chronicled. To some extent it entails savvy corporate marketers, who produce slick video features to be played on TV newscasts as news stories, but also includes a plug for the firm’s product. It also includes when the traditional news hole increasingly permits commercial messages such as selling obituaries, running advertisements on the front page, or putting commercial overlays over editorial content, be it in print or broadcast. More ominously, the practice of permitting advertisers to influence the news and how it is covered has become more common. This has been especially true in areas of health care and medicine where the commercial corruption of reporting has become, pun intended, epidemic (McChesney, 2008:44).

Political economists of the media such as Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky (2002:18-19) have argued that the economic necessity has compelled news media into an interdependent relationship with influential sources of information which directly impacts on content. Economics dictate that the media cannot be everywhere all the time. No media house will have all those reporters, recorders and cameras. Therefore, this economic situation compels the media to put resources where most significant stories may break. Such places include presidential palaces, national assemblies, local and urban councils, police, courts of judicature, political party headquarters, government ministries, business corporations, among others (Herman and Chomsky, 2002:19). As a result, most news content is always skewed towards these places mostly frequented by reporters. This explains why coverage of the United States' presidents grew dramatically in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. All major news networks have assigned special reporters to cover the White House who regularly file news stories irrespective of what has happened (McChesney, 2008:31). However, this study observed that while media houses in Uganda have assigned some reporters to cover places like parliament and courts, there were no special reporters assigned to cover the president's office. The duties of political reporters also include covering the president. Unlike in the United States of America where presidential aides address the press about government operations on a weekly basis, in Uganda the president only convenes a press briefing if he wants to make a major pronouncement. In most cases, news from the president's office comes through press statements. Therefore, it would not make economic sense for media organisations to have special reporters assigned to such an office.

Economic considerations also dictate where most resources should be allocated in news media hence influencing media content:

Within individual organisations, economic imperatives may play an important role in determining the allocation of productive resources between divisions with varying ratios of costs to audience appeal, as between sports coverage and educational programming, or between foreign and crime news for example (Golding and Murdock, 1979:211):

In the terms of this paradigm, journalism advances the interests of the elites (McChesney, 2008:60). Robert McChesney noted that this is because journalists in large news corporations are comfortable with the status quo since journalism in such organisations has gradually changed

from a blue collar occupation to a much desired profession. He further argued that; “journalists at the dominant media are unlikely to have any idea what it means to go without health insurance, to be unable to locate affordable housing, to have their children in underfunded and dilapidated schools” (McChesney, 2008:60). He contended that because most journalists live on a ‘planet’ different from that of ordinary citizens, they can never prioritise issues affecting the common man in their coverage. However, this thesis posits that the situation is different in many African countries where journalists are poorly paid. In the Ugandan context, most journalists especially in rural areas are employed on a freelance basis and their employers pay them as little as US\$1 per story (Mayiga, 2011:10). Additionally, even those that are employed on a permanent basis earn meagre salaries. Tabaire and Bussiek (2010:68) broke down the average salaries of journalists and media practitioners in Uganda:

The net monthly income for a junior reporter in the private media is slightly above Shs 500,000 (US\$250), for senior reporters between Shs 1 million (US \$500) and Shs 2 million (US\$1000). At the state broadcaster, UBC, reporters earn anything between Shs 300,000 (US\$150) and Shs 900,000 (US\$450), while managers get paid Shs 3.5 million (US\$1750) to Shs 5 million (US\$2500). Freelancers earn between Shs 100,000 (US\$50) and Shs 300,000 (US\$150). Rural reporters get paid Shs 1,000 (US\$0.50) per story, and Shs 2,000 (US\$1.00) is the average across the board in radio stations. A radio manager in northern Uganda, for example, earns Shs 200,000 (US\$100) a month.

Therefore, this thesis posits that journalists in Uganda are not necessarily comfortable with the status quo, but they are rather influenced by media ownership and the market forces. The thesis further argues that economic considerations have had a direct effect on the production and distribution of media content in Uganda especially news. Advertising agencies can now influence content in many ways. Economic considerations have also dictated where most resources should go in media organisations. This is why more resources are allocated to entertainment programmes which tend to attract larger audiences. The thesis further explores this economic imperative in Chapter Six.

Within the theory of the political economy of the media, the author examines areas of media concentration, government and the media, as well as media and democratic governance. The author also examines the mass manipulative paradigm.

Concentrated media ownership and news content

Concentrated media ownership has been defined as “the amount of an industry controlled by individual firms. This type of concentration is usually considered only in aggregate, national terms rather than in relation to specific local geographic markets” (Picard, 1989:34). Like other profit-oriented businesses, the major aim of commercial media firms is to pursue returns that are above average. Basing on this principle, many media companies around the world have integrated to form media concentrations in a bid to attain competitive advantages that would result into higher profitability (Jung and Chum-Olmstead, 2005:183). By reducing the number of independent players in a particular market, concentration allows for the emergency of bigger and more powerful economic units that are financially capable of weathering the vagaries of the globalised economy (Dohnanyi, 2003:28). Media concentration also permits firms to better manage “the production, distribution, and exchange of communication” which in turn increases profitability (Mosco, 2009:158-159). For example, “a newspaper article might be expanded to a magazine article; which could become the basis for a hardcover book; which, in turn, could be a paperback; then, perhaps, a TV series; and finally, a movie” (Jung and Chum-Olmstead, 2005:183). In this case, a conglomerate would be able to earn more profits from one idea. Additionally, even in the case of a movie flop, the loss can be cross-subsidised or funded by another booming business unit of the conglomerate (Jung and Chum-Olmstead, 2005:185).

Concentration can occur either vertically or horizontally (Donhanyi, 2003:28). However, while these two terms are commonly used by scholars examining the question of concentration in the media, there is no universal agreement on their definitions. The lack of consensus on the definitions is partly due to the rapid changes in the media industry as noted by Vincent Mosco (2009:159): “Changes in industry structure, technology, services, as well as in state policy and regulation (which typically lags these changes), have made it difficult to provide a generally agreed upon language for mapping media concentration”. Although there is no consensus on the applications of the two terms, the definitions by Vicent Mosco (2009:159) and Janet Wasko (2005:33) are the most relevant for the present study. According to Mosco and Wasko, horizontal concentration is a situation where a media company grows larger by acquiring other media outlets. A typical example of horizontal concentration is when a newspaper company buys a television or radio station. In Uganda, this happened in 2008 when Vision Group, a newspaper

company, acquired several radio stations including *Radio West* and *Bukedde FM* (Lugalambi, 2010:50).

Conversely, Mosco (2009:160) and Wasko (2005:33) defined vertical concentration as the form of integration where a media company expands its businesses to include firms in the same chain of supply in order to extend its control over the production process. For example, under vertical concentration companies that produce motion pictures may buy television networks to ease the distribution of their products while newspapers can purchase paper milling companies to extend their control to the bottom of the process of production (Mosco, 2009:160; Wasko, 2005:33). However, irrespective of the form of integration, media concentration implies that “the supply of media is dominated by few rather than many different owners” (Doyle, 2002:13). In the United States for example, by 2006, five global media conglomerates owned most of the leading media organisations (Bagdikian, 2006:3). Ben Bagdikian noted that the five conglomerates including Walt Disney Company, News corporation, Viacom, Bertelsmann and Time Warner owned book publishers, newspapers, motion picture studios, magazines, television and radio stations that covered the entire country. Gilian Doyle (2002:16) observed that this trend of events has spread to the entire world where respective governments have supported the development of powerful conglomerates. For example by 2002, the media industry in France was dominated by Havas while Fininvest dominated the market in Italy (Doyle, 2002:16). In Uganda, the media industry is dominated by Nation Media Group and Vision Group (Lugalambi, 2010:50).

The legal and communication law scholar Edwin Baker (2006:16) criticised media concentration arguing that it “creates the possibility of an individual decision maker exercising enormous, unequal, and hence undemocratic, largely unchecked, potentially irresponsible power”. Baker noted that history is replete with cases of authoritarian leaders who came to power due to the support of media conglomerates. He cited the example of Adolf Hitler whose rise to power was aided by Germany’s first media conglomerate called *Ufa* (Baker, 2006:18-19). The conglomerate that was owned by Hitler’s friend Alfred Hugenberg controlled newspapers, advertising agencies, and news agencies in Germany. Hugenberg used *Ufa* to help “Hitler into power without being integrated into the Nazi party system” (Kleinsteuber and Peters, 1991:185). This clearly illustrates how conglomerates have always abused their concentrated communicative authority in many countries at both local and national levels (Baker, 2006:16).

Baker's argument corresponded with the observations of Gilian Doyle (2002:20) that media concentrations sometimes promote the values and views of the dominant owners of those firms. Doyle argued that in many countries the owners of these concentrations have used them to promote their political interests at the expense of objectivity and editorial independence. A good example is of former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi who used his television empire that controls 40 percent of the audience in Italy to promote his campaign to become prime minister in 1994. Berlusconi did the same thing to win a subsequent election in 2001 (Doyle, 2002:20). Therefore, dispersal of media ownership would be the best way to reduce the risks of abusing the communicative power of concentrations (Baker, 2006:16).

Dell Champlin and Janet Knoedler (2002:465) also observed that news in the era of concentrated media ownership is "increasingly a practice aimed at enriching the corporate parent rather than enriching the public debate". They argued that media conglomerates lately appoint more business executives than professional journalists to head news departments thus increasing the pressure to generate more profits (Champlin and Knoedler, 2002:463). The news departments are then given profit goals that are similar to those of the entertainment departments of the conglomerates. Consequently, in the bid to save the firm's resources, journalists are compelled to focus on sensational stories that are cheaper to cover. The pressure to reduce costs has also led to an over-reliance on press releases and news conferences instead of investigative reporting (Champlin and Knoedler, 2002:465). The public relations industry has surreptitiously taken advantage of this flaw in journalism practice. By producing sleek news releases and providing paid experts to comment on news, public relations officers are able to alter news coverage to serve the corporate interests of their clients (McChesney, 2008:33). Jelle Boumans (2017:4) noted that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have also utilised similar public relations strategies to influence the news agenda. Boumans explained that many NGOs now position themselves "as expert news sources, providing background information and reliable eyewitness accounts" (Boumans, 2017:4). However, Bouman noted that it is mostly the large and well-resourced NGOs that have been able to position themselves as regular sources of news. The smaller organisations still have limited access to the news media.

The demand for profit has also compelled large media conglomerates to rely mostly on content from syndicated sources (Badgikian, 2006:3; McChesney, 2008:40-41). The process of

syndication where material is supplied from a central source to numerous media outlets is a profit driving force that has greatly affected the diversity of content and traditional news reporting values. In many countries this trend has left many journalists jobless since media outlets can now fill their news bulletins with agency material (Niblock and Machin, 2014:17). For example in 2013, *Step Television* in eastern Uganda (owned by a local conglomerate, Step Broadcasting Corporation) sacked all its presenters and news reporters following management's decision to suspend all local programming in favour of syndicated programmes produced by foreign agencies (Olaka, 2013).²⁸

In his study on the impact of concentration on professional journalism, Johannes Donhanyi (2003:32) also discovered that most independent daily newspapers tend to lose their independence when they are bought by conglomerates. Donhanyi observed that many of the absorbed titles either disappeared completely or were downgraded to become local supplements under the financially strong dailies thus losing their journalistic and editorial independence. This observation corresponds with the findings of Gerald Walulya (2008:94-96) in his study on ownership influence on news coverage in Uganda. Walulya's study revealed that *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Uganda lost its independence after being purchased by Nation Media Group (NMG). The study noted that before the purchase in 2000, *Daily Monitor* was known for publishing investigative stories that exposed corruption in government. However, the study added that after the acquisition journalists at the newspaper were told to tone down on their critical reporting since this would jeopardise the business interests of their new employer. This new working environment at the *Daily Monitor* even forced some senior journalists such as Andrew Mujuni Mwenda to resign in protest (Walulya, 2008:95).

Ownership concentrations have also been criticised for constricting the diversity of content available to the general public (Bagdikian, 2006:3). A classic example of how concentration affects diversity of information was seen in the United States of America when regulations on television ownership were changed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1999 to allow ownership of more than one television (Smith, 2009:388). Shortly after changing the rules, numerous television stations were bought by conglomerates. However, a study that was later conducted by Laura Smith (2009:388) in Florida on the impact of this type of ownership on

²⁸ <https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/step-tv-workers-stranded-as-station-suspends-local-programs>

content revealed that the newly absorbed stations devoted less time to coverage of non-dominant groups compared to their pre-concentration coverage. Therefore, concentration affected content diversity in the newly acquired stations.

The effect of media concentrations on content has also been prevalent in media conglomerations which have non-journalistic companies. The news in such concentrations is used to promote products and services of sister companies (Bagdikian, 2006:8; McChesney, 2008:45). This study has observed that *Delta Television* in Uganda is often used to promote sister companies that produce flour, purified mineral water and bread, while *B24 Television* (formerly *Believe Television*) was previously used to promote a network marketing company owned by its proprietor. The study also discovered that *NTV* also produces feature stories about services provided by its sister companies. The services include leisure and hospitality, education, health and transport.

This thesis, however, posits that under media concentration of ownership there are different categories of ownership and the degree of influence varies from one to another. For example, media concentrations owned by companies are less likely to have owner influence on news content compared to those owned by single families and individuals (Hanrety, 2014:348). International repeat stations also have less ownership influence on content; “ownership groups which are international repeat players are significantly less likely to exercise owner influence, compared to an ownership group which possesses a single title or channel” (Hanrety, 2014:348).

Due to the effects of media concentration on content as discussed above, the European Union through the Council of Europe spent years debating this matter and finally took steps to curtail this movement (Dohnanyi, 2003:30). It consequently passed a non-binding resolution in 2007 with the aim of limiting media concentrations. The resolution urged member states in Europe to adopt rules that would limit the influence a company or an individual would have in the media industry by creating a favourable environment for dispersed media ownership (Council of Europe, 2007).²⁹

Despite the fact that many other countries in Europe and elsewhere have made laws to protect media pluralism and diversity, in Uganda there are no such laws yet media conglomerates have

²⁹ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d6be3

taken control over the country's media industry as illustrated in Chapter Two. The closest Uganda came to making a similar regulation was in the national broadcasting policy where it was recommended that parliament should enact a law to "ensure pluralism and diversity in the provision of news, views and information" (Uganda, 2006:26). However, George Lugalambi (2010:52) observed that "in the current circumstances, it appears unlikely that any tough laws against media concentration will be implemented as they would be strongly opposed by the industry". He added that the politicians would not also risk sponsoring a law that offends businessmen who have the capacity to fund the campaigns of their opponents during elections.

In all, the thesis has argued that media concentration has had a negative effect on the diversity of content available to the public. It has been observed that due to the profit maximisation motive of concentrations, television and radio stations have to rely on syndicated content produced from a central source. However, while other countries have adopted regulations to curtail this movement, in Uganda nothing has been done so far. Apart from concentration, there are also other factors that affect diversity. The next section explores government's influence on the production of content.

Government and the media

The section examines how government policies, actions and inactions affect the diversity of content. This is important because political-economic evaluation of ownership influence goes beyond those who own and manage resources within media organisations. To fully comprehend the environment in which the media operate, it is imperative to understand the interrelationships between the news media and government (Wasko, 2005:25). The different ways in which both the media and government influence each other are also examined.

Various studies have shown that governments are more likely to influence the content in state owned media than in privately owned media (Djankov et al., 2003:342; Kasoma, 2000:61). There are many instances where government ownership of the media has resulted in restriction of information flow to the audience. Governments usually find it easier to use their media to propagate their ideas while at the same time locking out the views of the opposition. For example in Zambia during the 1991 first multiparty elections, the government owned *Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation* (ZNBC) refused to run paid advertisements by Movement for

Multiparty Democracy (an opposition party) until it secured a court order to that effect (Kasoma, 2000:69). A similar incident happened in Uganda during the 2011 presidential election when the state owned *Uganda Broadcasting Corporation* (UBC) refused to air paid spot messages of the opposition doyen Dr Kiiza Besigye (Bath, 2012).³⁰

Election coverage studies (ACME, 2016:4-5; Djankov et al., 2003:342) have also illustrated the effect of state ownership on the dissemination of election information where government media often give only the government side of the story. They usually cover the opposition only when the stories are negative. In Uganda during the 2016 presidential election, the state owned *UBC* television gave disproportionate coverage to the incumbent president Yoweri Museveni (ACME, 2016:4-5). The station “gave the incumbent 73% of its entire news and commentary airtime on elections, with the next candidate, Mr Mbabazi, receiving only 12% of the coverage. Dr Besigye the eventual runner-up in the election, received only 4.5% of the *UBC* coverage” (ACME, 2016: 4-5). This has also happened in many other African countries. For example, during the 2007 Kenyan elections coverage in government media was heavily biased in favour of the incumbent president Stanley Mwai Kibaki. The national broadcaster, *Kenya Broadcasting Corporation* (KBC), skewed its coverage to favour Kibaki (Eseh, 2008:413-414). This trend of events affected people’s trust in the media and it heightened tensions which resulted in the 2007 post-election violence in which over one thousand people lost their lives. Peter Eseh added that a similar situation happened in Nigeria during the 2007 general elections where state media compromised their ethical responsibility and openly supported candidates of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Programmes on “the state-controlled television network National Television Authority (NTA) and state-controlled Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), which should have been a model of public service broadcasting, demonstrated considerable bias in favour of the incumbent PDP” (Eseh, 2008: 413-414).

Simeon Djankov et al. (2003:363) observed that despite the negative influence of the government in state-run media houses as illustrated above, many governments in Africa and the Middle East control the leading newspapers, television and radio stations. This consequently impacts on the way journalists from these organisations carryout their day-to-day activities. As a result, reporters and editors are not free to report in the most professional manner. In their study

³⁰ <https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/besigye-drags-ubc-to-court-over-campaign-adverts>

conducted some fourteen years ago in ninety-seven countries, Djankov et al. (2003:363) discovered that on average African governments run sixty-one percent of the leading newspapers as well as eighty-four percent of the leading television stations. The situation was worse in Middle Eastern countries where all governments in this region monopolised television broadcasting, with the exception of Israel. On the contrary, the situation was different in Europe and the Americas where single families have managed media firms for decades.

In Uganda, the state-owned media giant, Vision Group, is the market leader in the media sector. It now has a number of radios and television stations including *Urban* television and *Bukedde* television covering central Uganda, *Radio West*, which covers western Uganda, *Arua One* covering the West-Nile region of Uganda, *Bukedde FM* and *XFM*, covering central Uganda, and *Etop Radio* covering Eastern Uganda (Lugalambi, 2010:50-51).

It is also important to note that while the foregoing discussion stresses that state owned media cannot report independently, there are instances where state owned media have been independent in their coverage. For example, in Benin, “the state-owned newspaper *La Nation* is protected from interference by the government of the day by a constitutionally-empowered oversight body composed of state and non-government appointees,” (Stapenhurst, 2000:10-11). Rick Stapenhurst further observed that even in Uganda although reporters at the government owned *New Vision* newspaper are criticised for having political considerations in their news judgements, they have at several occasions published critical stories on corruption within government.

While state media are always castigated for being biased, this thesis posits that some private media houses have also been compromised in many countries including Uganda. The government in many poor countries is usually the biggest advertiser, so the media in such countries do not want to antagonise business due to their profit-making orientation (Dunaway, 2013:24). The private radio and television stations have to survive economically. Therefore, it would not make sense for them to offend government. Other private stations at the provincial level and local council level are in many cases owned by politicians or their business cronies. This makes it difficult for reporters and editors to expose them when they engage in corruption (Nogara, 2009:4).

This study argues, however, that newspapers tend to be more independent financially than the broadcast media even in poor economies given that they can survive on circulation revenue. A good example of a newspaper that has weathered such storm is the *Monitor* newspaper in Uganda, which has since changed to *Daily Monitor*. The newspaper was started in 1992 by a breakaway group of journalists led by one Phillip Wafula Ogutu³¹. The journalists started *Monitor* after the owners of the newspaper they were working for were appointed ministers in government. After their appointment, the ministers wanted their newspaper to tone down on its critical reporting something that forced a group of journalists to break away and establish *Monitor* (Nogara, 2009:9). The *Monitor* then embarked on critical reporting and exposures of corruption which compelled government to stop all government departments from advertising with them in 1993. In Uganda, where government is the biggest advertiser, such a ban was very harmful. Nevertheless, *Monitor* survived on sales for the next five years until the ban was lifted in 1997 (Nogara, 2009:9).

It is also important to note that media outlets, whether state-owned or privately-owned, function within a commercial environment. They all compete for the same audience and they all want to minimise costs of production by using cost effective means in the production of content (Champlin and Knoedler, 2002:465; Hartley, 1982:48). Therefore, because of the economic factor, media outlets do not merely reproduce the views and ideologies espoused by the owners:

We have seen that not all news media have one owner, and even among newspapers which do have a continuous history of private ownership, often by a single 'press baron', his ideas and ideology play second fiddle to a more imperative commercial dictate, namely financial survival. In short, in a competitive capitalist environment, the news is seen as both a commercial undertaking in its own right and as a desirable vehicle for disseminating particular views – but these two can be mutually exclusive (Hartley, 1982:48-49).

In all, this section has examined the interrelationships between the state and news media. The section is vital because the analysis of ownership influence would be incomplete without understanding the role of state power. It is the view of this thesis that government influences the production and distribution of content in both private and state-owned media. Private media is usually influenced through national policies and regulations

³¹ Due to the pressure from government, Phillip Wafula Ogutu later quit journalism and became an opposition member of parliament for Bukhooli Central constituency.

while state media is often influenced through directives from state operatives. However, in a capitalist society, there are instances where the media may also influence government policies. The next section thus explores the media's role in democratic governance.

Political economy, media and democracy in Africa

Political economists of the media including Ben Bagdikian (2006:10) have argued that the news media and state are often in a reciprocal relationship where each has the capacity to influence the other. Therefore, while the preceding section has focussed on the state's influence on the media, this section dwells on the ways how media organisations influence government policies and in particular democratic governance. The section also explores the numerous structural constraints that limit the media's role in Africa's democracy (Chibita, 2006:185).

The media create a public sphere or space where people readily find information concerning the public good (Curran, 2002:233). Within this space, the masses collectively determine how they want to develop their societies through rational arguments. Media practitioners facilitate this exercise by providing a forum for discussion and organising private citizens (Curran, 2002:233). In his study on the role of the media in African democracy, Robert White (2008:276) discovered that "in Africa the use of media is the single most important factor in active, knowledgeable capacity to participate in democratic governance".

Independent media is therefore necessary for democracy to be born and sustained. Francis Kasoma has written extensively on the inter-connection between media freedom and democracy in Africa. Kasoma (2000:24) argued that history has shown that democracy takes a longer time to come to countries with quiescent media yet countries with a higher degree of media freedom have been able to attain democracy faster. In Africa, there a number of countries where a vibrant press accelerated democratic governance. They include Tanzania, Senegal, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia among others (Kasoma, 2000:25). In Nigeria, journalists kept media freedom alive by continually challenging media suppression by successive autocratic governments. In Zambia, during Dr Kenneth Kaunda's firm grip on the media, a church owned newspaper, the *National Mirror*, refused to succumb to the intimidation and coercion even when government stopped its parastatals and other bodies from advertising with it. The newspaper continued to criticise Zambia's single-party rule as well its excesses. The *Family Mirror*

newspaper is also remembered to have put pressure on Julius Nyerere's government to introduce multiparty democracy in Tanzania. In Kenya, the media also played a big role in challenging Daniel Arap Moi's³² dictatorship (Kasoma, 2000:25-26).

Academic analysts including Vitalis Torwell (2008:357-358) have posited that investigative journalism in some African countries has also helped to build public opinion against autocratic regimes by exposing illegal actions of dictators. Torwell noted that this has consequently generated demand for democratic governance and accountability. Unlike beat reporters, investigative journalists have reasonable time to dig deeper into issues. They go beneath headlines and question issues that are taken for granted by casual observers. The aim of investigative journalism is usually to uncover illegal behaviour by powerful people in society (Torwell, 2008:360). In Nigeria, three newspapers (*Newswatch*, *Tell* and *The News*) distinguished themselves in uncovering government corruption. The three newspapers are remembered to have consistently exposed wrongdoing during the autocratic regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida, General Sani Abacha and General Abubakar Abdulsalam (1985-1999). Due to its fearless exposes, the founding editor of *Newswatch*, Dele Giwa, was even killed in 1986 by a letter bomb. However, this did not stop the newspapers from publishing more investigative stories which, in part, led to the return of multiparty democracy in 1999 (Torwell, 2008:362-363).

The media also played a major role in fighting colonial autocracy in Africa. Robert White (2008:281) observed that the "independence leaders quickly discovered that the press, even with its limited circulation, was very useful for transforming the rather limited parochial interests of trade unions, syncretic churches and social clubs into nationalist aspirations". He argued that while the rhetoric at political rallies raised enthusiasm, the media provided a better channel for somehow more intellectual policies and goals for their new nations. White further noted that many independence personalities had previously worked as journalists and it was thus easy for them to use the media in influencing public opinion. These included Jolly Joe Kiwanuka and Eridad Mulira in Uganda, Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Mzee Jomo Kenyata in Kenya and Joseph Mobutu Sese Sekou in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of

³² Daniel Arap Moi was Kenya's President from 1978 to 2002. International pressure compelled him to hand over power peacefully.

Congo), among others. Mulira became leader of the Progressive Party (PP) in Uganda while Azikiwe, Nkrumah, Kenyatta and Mobutu became either presidents or prime ministers in their respective countries. Other pre – independence journalists such as Gama Pio Pinto in Kenya and Aloysius Darlington Lubowa (popularly known as AD Lubowa) in Uganda also occupied senior government positions shortly after independence.

The local language press in East Africa was also used in stimulating demand of low-status groups for better education, health services and employment. The *Swahili* language newspapers played that role in Kenya and Tanzania while *Luganda* language newspapers did the same in Uganda. In Francophone West Africa, the French language press was instrumental in demanding for more democratic processes during colonial autocracy. These newspapers were able to delegitimise colonial rule by showing that the colonial dictatorship contradicted their own western values of liberal democracy. The press also introduced a forum which independence leaders used to demystify the perception that everything European was modern (White, 2008:281).

This thesis, however, posits that there are instances where the media have either covertly or overtly supported autocratic regimes around the globe. The media may indirectly support the existence of a dictatorial regime by failing to investigate its excesses such as arbitrary arrests of people, state inspired murders, among other atrocities (Curran, 2002:221). The media may also directly endorse an autocratic regime by rationalising its excesses and justifying its existence. In many of these instances, the support was usually a result of the close relationship between the media owners and the military rulers (Curran, 2002:221).

The role of the media in democracy has also been limited in Africa because of the limited access to media. Robert White (2008:277) found out that in Africa while forty-four percent of people living in urban areas watch television news and twenty-three percent read newspapers daily, in the rural areas merely eight percent watch television news while only six percent read newspapers daily. White argued that sections of the public with no access to media, especially rural peasants, tend to have a blind loyalty to the governments in power. This corresponded with the findings of Ryan Gibb's (2016:96) study on Uganda's elections which revealed that the incumbent president's support came from the rural areas, whereas the support for opposition candidates originated from urban centres. This means that the practice of one-party and

patrimonial rule can easily be tolerated in countries such as Uganda with a large population of peasants who have limited access to news media. However, in better societies like Kenya with a higher degree of media penetration, “attempts to manipulate elections, thinking that the rural and urban lower-status population is passive and tolerant, can be explosive - as the violent reactions to the 2007 Kenyan elections proved” (White, 2008:277).

It is also important to note that while the media have played an enabling role in democratising Africa, the political economy limits the extent to which they may serve that role. The people who own capital have continued to use the media to further their interests and to protect their positions in the economic system by creating strategic alliances (Tomaselli, 2002:153). In this respect, international capitalists have formed joint ventures involving media organisations in Africa. Keyan Tomaselli further argued that these ventures create linkages which diminish the role of the media in enabling political transitions:

This is an important point for appreciating the extent to which the media may serve an enabling role in political transitions. This observation is not an indictment of ongoing political reform efforts but a call for caution that the media won't necessarily serve the interest of all. And, it won't necessarily be deep enough to tackle underlying socio-economic inequalities. Still, the economic domain-the political economy, as discussed in this chapter-is going to be vital for the role that the media will play in the future in Africa's democratisation (Tomaselli, 2002:153).

Finally, this section has argued that the media have the capacity to influence government. The study explored different African countries where vibrant media successfully led democratisation struggles. However, it was also observed that the economic imperatives have in some places limited the media's role in democracy. It was evident that some media houses are not keen on publishing stories that are critical of government for fear of losing adverts from government departments. In many African countries, the government is usually among the biggest advertisers and media owners are not willing to tolerate journalists who offend this huge source of revenue.

News and the mass manipulative theory

This section examines the principles of the mass manipulative theory. The theory is important for this study because it explores how media content can be manipulated to serve the interests of the upper classes in society. It also discusses ways through which news can be used to legitimise the dominance of powerful nations. The section further explains how the mass manipulative theory is, in some ways, related to the political economy of the media.

In the terms of this theory, news is used by the dominant ruling class to enforce their ideas and agenda on the dominated class. In the capitalist world, the dominant class has the resources and the power to control the production and dissemination of ideas. On the contrary, the dominated class has no choice but to accept these ideas since it does not have the resources at its disposal and the power to challenge the ideas of the ruling class. The paradigm contends that news is deliberately manipulated to serve the interests of society's powerful sectors. This is done by the individuals in these sectors who directly influence the censorship and production of news (Marx and Engels, 1972:136; Teer-Tomaselli, 1992:11). Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan Turner summarised the nature of the dominant ideology in this widely quoted extract:

The intellectual life of a society is dominated by the ruling class, so that an observer will necessarily perceive only the ruling ideas and will not be able to apprehend the culture of subordinate classes simply because that culture does not have institutions to give it public expression. More strongly, it can be argued that the command exercised by the ruling class over the apparatus of intellectual production means that there cannot be any subordinate culture, for all classes are incorporated within the same intellectual universe, that of the ruling class (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1980:8).

The dominant class thus has political, economic, social and cultural power which it uses to run the affairs of the state and to engineer public consent as explained by Ralph Miliband (1983:60); "it is deeply and pervasively involved in every aspect of economic life. It is a permanent and active presence in class conflict and in every other kind of conflict. It plays a great and growing role in the manipulation of opinion and in the engineering of consent". This dominant group further uses the media to manipulate people's understanding of issues by manipulating the importance of information. This can be done by displaying some information more prominently in leads, headlines and photographs. Alternatively, if a media outlet does not want the public to pay attention to certain issues, such information would be given less time or space. The outlet may also choose to completely leave out such information (Van-Dijk, 1995:14). By so doing, they are able to engineer consent.

Miliband (1983:63-64) argued that throughout history, the people running the affairs of the state have engineered consent under the guise of 'national interest'. For example, as observed in Chapter Three of this thesis, the Ugandan government has often suppressed opposing views in the media under the disguise of 'national interest'. Miliband further explained that in the world

of capitalism, 'national interest' means capitalistic enterprises of the dominant group, which the state must protect:

The people in charge of the state have generally been strongly imbued with the belief that the 'national interest' was bound up with the well-being of capitalist enterprise, or at least that no conceivable alternative arrangement, least of all socialism, could possibly be more advantageous to the 'national interest'; and they have therefore been particularly attentive to the interests of capitalist enterprise, whatever view they might take of capitalists.... The dynamic of capitalism is the reproduction and accumulation of capital, and the maximization of long-term profit for each individual firm. This is the paramount aim, the all but exclusive concern of those who are in charge of the private sector of economic life: all else passes through this and must be subordinate to it (Miliband, 1983:64).

The mass manipulative theory observed that media outlets also legitimise hegemonic dominance in international relations between countries and the different regions of the world. The way reporters portray enemies in news during times of war influences the public to support wars they would not have supported. Images of dictators, evil empires, terrorists, and naked aggression have often been used in legitimising wars and aggression. Hyperbolic emphasis and comparisons have also been used to define some people as victims and others as aggressors. A good example was when western media compared Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler during the Gulf War. Such reporting legitimised the actions of the United States in the eyes of the public while ignoring the thousands of Iraqi civilians who were dying as a result of the United States' bombs (Van-Dijk, 1995:15-16). In 1979, due to the hatred the West had for Idi Amin, the western media especially the *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC) legitimised Tanzania's military offensive against Uganda in which thousands of people lost their lives. Western biases about the Third World are also still prevalent in the news. The perspectives of the western media prefer events that confirm their stereotypes about the Third World, for example wars, famine, coups, dictatorship, and violence. In their reporting, such problems are often blamed on backwardness of Third World policies and politicians, overlooking the role of international politics and trade, as well as the indirect impact of European colonialism (de Beer and Steyn, 1996:90-91; Van-Dijk, 1995:26).

The mass manipulative paradigm further observed that the interests of the media industry are increasingly getting intertwined with the interests of other big businesses. Peter Golding and Graham Murdock (1979:202) explained that this has been facilitated by the emergency of large media conglomerates with interests in different sectors of the economy. They further argued that

“the growing concentration of control in the hands of large communications corporations is the key defining characteristic of the emerging situation, and that as a result have penetrated more deeply into more and more areas” (Golding and Murdock, 1979: 202). This relationship between the media industry and capital has compelled many media outlets to embrace a pro-capitalist agenda. A good example is South Africa where the leading English language newspapers are associated with the interests of the hegemonic stockholders (Teer-Tomaselli, 1992:12).

The situation is not different in Uganda where the media industry is dominated by two media conglomerates. They include the government owned Vision Group and the Kenyan based Nation Media Group (NMG) (Lugalambi, 2010:15) where the biggest shareholder is Shah Karim Al Hussein, also known as the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismailis. The Aga Khan also holds controlling interests in a number of companies in Uganda such as manufacturing, banking, leisure and hospitality, development institutions, academic institutions and hydropower production companies. In such circumstances, the media find themselves obligated not to publish critical stories about parent companies.

A critique of the mass manipulative paradigm

While the preceding section has argued that media content enforces the views of the dominant classes, this section shows that this argument is not entirely accurate. The section discusses the various constraints that limit the media’s role in controlling the minds and actions of audiences. It also explores the difficulty in enforcing a single ideology in today’s capitalist world.

Stuart Hall (1985:97) rejected the argument that the mind of ruling class has one particular ideology which it enforces on the dominated class. He also rejected the Marxist view that the ruling ideas are symmetrical to the ideas of the dominant class. Hall explained that if this was the case, then history would not be replete with cases where ruling classes had several ideologies and often switched from ideology to another:

The difficulty is that this does not help us to understand why all ruling classes we actually know have actually advanced in real historical situations by a variety of different ideologies or by now playing one ideology and then another. Nor why there are internal struggles, within all major political formations, over the appropriate ‘ideas’ through which the interests of the dominant class are to be secured. Nor why to a significant

degree in many different historical social formations, the dominated classes have used ruling ideas to interpret and define their interests (Hall, 1985:97).

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner (1980:3) argued that while they do not reject the dominant ideology, they believe that its importance has been over exaggerated. They noted that the dominant ideology was only coherent during feudalism and early capitalism. They hastened to add that even then, it had little effect on the dominated classes because of the wide social divide between the classes. The culture of the peasants was quite different from the culture of the dominating class. Therefore, contrary to the Marxist view, the dominant ideology in feudalists' and early capitalists' societies had more effect on the dominant classes than the subordinate classes. Abercrombie et al. further argued that unlike feudal and early capitalist societies, contemporary capitalism is different in that dominant ideology is not well defined and dominant classes are not well incorporated yet the dominated classes are getting more incorporated.

Golding and Murdock (1979: 218-219) observed that "analyses which see news as necessarily a product of powerful groups in society, designed to provide a view of the world consonant with the interests of those groups, simplify the situation too far to be helpful". They noted that the occupational beliefs and routines of media practitioners cannot allow a simple channel between "the ruling ideas of the powerful and their distribution via the airwaves" (Golding and Murdock, 1979:218). Journalists follow a strict code of ethics which compels them to report facts objectively. Objectivity is a particular form of media practice and also a particular attitude to the task of information collection, processing and dissemination. The main features are adopting a position of detachment and neutrality towards the object of reporting (McQuail, 1994). It was this objectivity that enabled the South African English language press to resist the government's restrictions during the State of Emergency in the 1980s:

The English press' reaction to the restrictions accompanying the State of Emergency was more responsive to the professional values and ethics of the journalists, than they were to the interests of the government. This resistance, however partial and half-hearted at times, shows up the inadequacy of the paradigms internationally put forward to explain the selection and construction of news. I would argue that the ideology of objectivity enabled the South African press of the mid-1980s to resist the demands of the state. This was particularly true of the English-language press, although 'alternative' Afrikaans-language newspapers, such as *Die Vrye Weekblad*, were noticeable in their refusal to be intimidated (Teer-Tomaselli, 1992:13).

Many promoters of the mass manipulative paradigm do not also recognise that there are limitations on the influence of the news media on their audiences. The power of news media is largely persuasive and symbolic in that they have the potential to control the minds of the viewers, listeners and readers. However, they do not have direct control over the actions of their audiences (Van-Dijk, 1995:10-11). The media users also retain the power and autonomy to engage less or more actively in the use of the received information. In today's information society, there are various information sources and thus the recipients have the latitude to choose information which is not manipulative. To put it differently, "whatever the symbolic power of the news media, at least some media users will generally be able to resist such persuasion" (Van-Dijk, 1995:11). For example, during the 2016 presidential election in Uganda, opposition candidate Amama Mbabazi had an edge over the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni in terms of the "overall newspaper front-page coverage" (ACME, 2016:3) but the latter won the race. Mbabazi had 32% of the front-page news coverage while Museveni had 30% (ACME, 2016:3). Despite the favourable coverage for Mbabazi in the leading dailies, Museveni was re-elected President with 60.6% of the votes while Mbabazi was a distant third with a paltry 1.4% (Gibb, 2016:96). This reinforces the view that the news media have limited control over the actions of their audiences.

Finally, while the mass manipulative paradigm contended that media content is primarily produced to enforce the ideas of the dominant classes, this thesis has argued that this role has been over emphasised. It has been observed that dominant classes have always had different ideologies making it difficult for them to agree on a particular ideology to enforce. Media practitioners also follow strict beliefs and routines which do not allow unfettered flow of information from the ruling classes through the media. The thesis has also argued that in this information age audiences have the capacity to reject manipulative information.

Conclusion

The chapter has explored the political economy of the media which is the major theory underpinning this thesis. It examined the interrelationships between state power, ownership and the media. It has also discussed the concept of media concentration from the perspective of the political economy. This helped to set up a structure for examining the influence of media ownership on news content which is the major objective of this study. However, it has been

noted that some tenets of the theory do not apply to the Ugandan media. Despite this challenge, it remains the most appropriate theory in examining media influences in Uganda. The chapter also briefly explored the mass manipulative theory since it explains the relationship between the dominant ideology and the news media.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The study explored the influence of media ownership on news content in Uganda's television industry. This chapter thus presents the different methods that were employed in this exploration. Quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews were the main methods used in collecting the data. On the one hand, content analysis of news bulletins was carried out to ascertain the influence of the two ownership structures on the source, type, topic, geographic locus, length, format, campaign issue, lead dominance and overall story tone of each news story. On the other hand, in-depth interviews were employed to collect respondents' views on the influence of media ownership on editorial independence and the influence of external factors on news. In-depth interviews were also used to support results from the quantitative content analysis. In this chapter, the author further examines the strengths and weaknesses of the main methodological approaches in relation to the study. The chapter also presents the rationale of the selected samples, the research design, and the entire content analysis process. The reliability and validity concerns of the study are also addressed in this chapter. Operational definitions of the variables used are also highlighted here. The author concluded the chapter with the challenges faced and the limitations of the study.

The rationale for choosing WBS and NTV

WBS and NTV were chosen for this study because they both broadcast detailed news bulletins. The study explored ownership influence on news content and thus required stations that prioritised news in their programming formats. A study conducted by *GeoPoll* (2016)³³ further revealed that NTV and WBS were among the top ten leading national television stations in Uganda in terms of audience share and content diversity. Therefore, by the virtue of being market leaders, the selected data sources were able to provide appropriate information for the study.

The two stations also represent different types of ownership. WBS is an independent channel owned by a local businessman Gordon Wavamunno while NTV is owned by Nation Media

³³ <http://blog.geopoll.com/uganda-audience-measurement-q1-2016>

Group (NMG), the leading media conglomerate in East and Central Africa. NMG has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. By this difference in ownership, “one would anticipate noteworthy variations” in the news coverage of these stations (Lugalambi, 2006:174). Some scholars (Baker, 2006:16; Champlin and Knoedler, 2002:463) have argued that ownership influence on news content is more prevalent under concentrated media ownership. However, Nogara (2009:4) contended that in developing countries including Uganda, ownership influence is predominant even among independently-owned stations given that most of them are owned by ruling party politicians or their business associates who want their outlets to promote their political interests. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to establish the structure of media ownership where ownership influence on news content was more prevalent in Uganda. This was achieved by examining and contrasting the two sets of news bulletins on NTV and WBS.

The researcher selected the main news bulletins at 9:00pm since this is the only time major television stations in Uganda “carry elaborate news broadcasts” (Lugalambi, 2010:47). These bulletins run for approximately an hour from 9:00-10:00pm with each bulletin containing fifteen stories on average.

Research design

The researcher used a multiple-case study design. The design was appropriate because the study covered two cases of NTV and WBS television stations. This decision was partly informed by earlier studies which observed that multiple-case study designs are appropriate for studies containing more than one case (Baxter and Jack, 2008:550; Yin, 2014:18). The design was also relevant for this study since it can combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches as Zaidah Zainal (2007:4) observed; “variations in terms of intrinsic, instrumental and collective approaches to case studies allow for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data”.

The multiple-case design also allows the researcher to examine and understand the “similarities and differences between cases” (Baxter and Jack, 2008:550). It was thus used in the current study to compare and contrast ownership influence of news content at WBS television and NTV. The comparison was consequently used to examine events, individual journalists, news content and processes with the aim of ascertaining the similarities and differences at the two television stations (Ward, 2010). Two techniques of data collection were employed; in-depth interviews

and content analysis. The multiplicity of the techniques also helped to ensure reliability of the data collected by giving the researcher an opportunity to compare notes.

Methodological approach

The author used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative research is a positivist method situated in a branch of philosophy called logical positivism. “The positivist approach underlies the natural scientific method in human behavioural research and holds that research must be limited to what we can observe and measure objectively” (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005:6). Over the years, many scholars in the field of humanities have been sceptical about quantitative methods and in some instances hostile to statistics (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001:1). However, quantitative research cannot be ignored in today’s cultural world which is massively characterised by statistical accounts. Every time we turn on television or open a magazine, we observe a world routinely described in terms of statistics; from population figures to commodity markets. This clearly illustrates that there is no clear cut boundary between numbers and the lived cultures. Consequently, the numbering technologies have joined the long list of practices making up the ethos and values of modernity (Balnaves and Caputi, 2001:1). It is, however, important to note that quantitative approaches also have challenges. Welman et al. (2005:6) rejected the use of quantitative approaches in the study of human behaviours arguing that they are only applicable when one is studying molecules and organisms. They contended that it is incongruous to strictly follow scientific procedures during the collection and interpretation of data. This is partly the reason why the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to complement each other.

Qualitative research “begins with assumptions and the use of interpretative/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2013:44). Creswell argued that for a problem to be studied qualitatively, a researcher collects data in a natural environment which is then analysed both inductively and deductively. In terms of this method, data is collected in the field where respondents experience the issues under study. The researcher does not bring participants into a laboratory nor does he or she send them instruments such as questionnaires to fill. Creswell contended that qualitative researchers instead speak directly to the informants and

observe them act in their natural setting. This approach enabled the researcher to interview journalists as they went about their duties in the newsrooms.

In this approach, the researcher is also an instrument that collects data by observing people's actions and behaviours, examining documents, and conducting interviews. An interview guide (Appendix One) consisting of open ended questions was designed to guide the discussions (Creswell, 2013:45). The questions asked by the researcher and the techniques used were enriched by the knowledge, beliefs and worldviews of the researcher. Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative approach is so interactive in that it can be shaped by the personal history of the researcher (Heppner, Wampold and Kivligan, 2008:259).

A qualitative researcher also chooses a research tool basing on his or her research questions for a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied instead of just accepting or rejecting hypotheses through statistical measures and experiments. The approach was relevant for this study because the rich narrative description of the subjects under study was of great significance to the researcher (Heppner et al., 2008:259).

Qualitative approaches were further employed because of their effectiveness in a study like this one dealing with the complex relationships and interactions in media houses. The study sought to discover how interactions between media owners, managers and journalists affected the final news product on air. Data was further analysed for its qualities rather subjecting it to only numerical transformations. The two approaches were relevant to the study given that the researcher was interested in the entire phenomenon irrespective of its complexity (Keyton, 2011:59). The quantitative and qualitative data collected was integrated in the process of research to enhance the investigation of the relationship between media ownership and news content (Rubin and Babbie, 2013:43).

A case for mixed methods

The two methods are diverse but compatible. They differ in terms of nature and purpose but not quality. Therefore, the assumed conflict between quantitative and qualitative approaches is “without logical basis” (Sarantakos 2005:49). The two methodologies complement each other in such a way that when one approach fails to obtain the necessary data, then the other approach is utilised (Semujju, 2016:83). This can be done by using different types of paradigm triangulation.

In this study, a decision was taken to use the successive paradigm triangulation. Here, the researcher conducted a quantitative study with the aim of establishing the demographic context “within which the in-depth qualitative study” was to be conducted (Sarantakos 2005: 48). The data from in-depth interviews was then used to support conclusions from the quantitative content analysis (Semujju, 2016:82; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010:10-11).

Content analysis

Content analysis “is a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something [...] in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form” (Berger, 1998:23). For his part, Klaus Krippendorf (2004:18) defined content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”. Krippendorf noted that the technique is scientific and follows specialised procedures. He further explained that content analysis helps to give new insights as well as enhancing the researcher’s ability to comprehend a given phenomenon.

Content analysis in media research dates back to a study conducted in 1927 by Harold Lasswell on media propaganda during World War I. Later in the 1930s and 1940s, content analysis as a technique was increasingly used to examine content in the film production industry which was rapidly growing. The rise of television during the 1950s and 1960s further compelled many mass communications scholars to use content analysis to analyse television content. It thus became the primary method of research in the study of different television programmes and films (Macnamara, 2005:1-2).

In the last thirty years, content analysis has been one of the fastest growing methods in mass media research. This trend has been enhanced by the rising number of online databases and the development of content analysis computer software which make it easy for communication researchers to use this technique (Neuendorf, 2002:1). The method “integrates both data collection method and analytical technique as a research design to measure the occurrence of some identifiable element in a complete text or set of messages” (Keyton, 2011:244). In the present study, content analysis was used to classify news characteristics as well as counting them and constructing statistical models to explain what was observed. The technique was systematic and accurate in measuring what was contained in the news (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2014:2).

Arthur Berger (1998:23-24) noted that content analysis helps in learning the perceptions, behaviours and challenges of media practitioners by examining what they broadcast on television and what they print in newspapers. Berger argued that the patterns of behaviour and values observed in the produced content reflect the views and behaviours of the journalists who produce that material. The method was relevant for this study because by examining the news content at WBS and NTV, the researcher was able to ascertain the influence of ownership on news selection and coverage at the two stations. The selection of this method in this study was also based on its objectivity:

Content analysis is objective in a sense that the method permits multiple researchers to examine the same content and come to identical conclusions. This is possible because the method is systematic. That is, it specifies an unambiguous set of rules or procedures for coding the message content. Theoretically, any coder (a person who examines the content and classifies it into categories) who understands the rules or procedures will arrive at the same coding of the message content as any other coder. The data that result from content analysis are quantitative. That is, certain aspects of the content are coded and tallied in some quantitative way (Sparks, 2006:21).

Another important aspect of this method is that it offers researchers an opportunity to study current subjects. For example, in this study the researcher examined news bulletins in real time during Uganda's presidential election in 2016. This enabled him to study the development of the occurrences – news topics, types of stories, news sources, story stone, length of stories and overall story tone, among other key issues. Content analysis is also preferred in media studies because of its unobtrusive nature. Often times, researchers' presence affects what they discover. Human beings usually act in a different manner if it occurs to them that someone is observing their actions. Therefore, the method alleviates the challenge of researcher influence (Berger, 1998:26-27; Neuendorf, 2002:11).

In terms of the content analysis, the researcher ensures that his or her personal biases do not find their way into his or her findings. If another researcher repeats the study, the analysis ought to produce similar results. This means that the operationalisation of the variables and their classification should be comprehensive to the extent that when other scholars replicate the study they will be able to get similar findings (Gunter, 2000:57). However, unless the researcher sets clear procedures explaining how the sampling process was done as well as the categorisation methods, the results of the study cannot be objective and reliable. Nonetheless, it is not only

quantitative aspects which may be of importance to a researcher. Qualitative features can also tell more about the meaning of what is aired and printed in the media: “Ascertaining the frequency with which certain social groups or social behaviours appear can reveal important information at one level [...] But frequency of occurrence is not all. Sometimes, infrequent, but highly salient or significant, events can have the greatest impact” (Gunter, 2000:57).

Sampling for Content analysis

The researcher used consecutive-day sampling (consecutive-unit sampling) to choose the days for the study. This is a type of sampling technique “which involves taking a series of content produced during a certain time. Content analysing newscasts during a 2-week period is a consecutive-day sample” (Riffle, Lacy and Fico, 2014:102). Other authors such as April Lindgren (2014:6) argued that constructed-week sampling is a better technique since it reduces the risk of over representing any particular day or news cast. In this technique, the researcher considers one day per week for the entire period of the study. However, consecutive-day sampling was chosen for this study since it is the most appropriate technique “when studying a continuing news or feature story because connected events cannot be examined adequately otherwise. Such samples are often found in studies of elections and continuing controversies” (Riffle et al., 2014:102). Therefore, there was no better technique than consecutive day sampling given that the current study focussed on news coverage during the 2016 presidential election. The researcher focused on the election period because this is usually the time when ownership influence on news content is expected to be more prevalent (Wang, 2003:1). In total, twenty news bulletins were sampled – ten from each of the two television stations under study. Altogether, the twenty sampled bulletins consisted of 362 news stories which were analysed.

Ten bulletins from eleven consecutive days of the 2016 presidential election were recorded for the study (07th to 17th February) with the exception of the 14th. That day was excluded because major television and radio stations in Uganda did not broadcast news due to the presidential debate which was carried live from 8:00pm to midnight. The debate was so important to the television audience in Uganda since it was the first time a sitting head of state accepted to sit down with his political opponents to discuss matters of national importance during an election. An earlier attempt to have a presidential debate in Uganda had failed during the 2006 elections when the incumbent president Yoweri Kaguta Museveni shunned it and instead sent his political

aide to represent him. As a result of this incident, no one organised any presidential debate in the subsequent election of 2011. However, in the run up to the 2016 election, the Interreligious Council of Uganda, together with the Elders Forum, organised two presidential debates. Museveni once again shunned the first one held on January 15th, calling it a ‘competition for high school students’. He, however, made a surprise appearance in the final debate on 14th February, which compelled all major television networks to suspend normal programming in favour of the debate.

Unit of analysis

The author took a decision to use an individual news story as the unit of analysis in the current study. A unit in content analysis can be defined as an identifiable message component “on which variables are measured” (Neuendorf, 2002:71). Units vary depending on the purpose and nature of the study. In communication studies, a unit of analysis may include a theme, an entire programme, a character, a film or a news story (Prasad, 2008:13). In this particular study, a news story was chosen as the unit of analysis because coding complete units helps in studying communicated messages holistically (Lugalambi, 2006:176). All adverts in the news bulletins were excluded.

Development of a coding scheme and training of coders

A coding sheet (Appendix Two) was used to assess the news content structure and the stories were coded for the topic, format, type, geographic locus, story source, gender, lead dominance, overall story tone, length of stories, party coverage and campaign issues. The variables were defined basing on the theory of the political economy of the media and earlier studies on news selection (Alowo, 2010:26). For the lead dominance, only lead stories relating to the 2016 presidential election were selected because lead stories reflect how a television station prioritises a particular candidate or political party. Editors also position stories “in order of descending importance” (Wang, 2003:19).

The researcher trained two coders for this study. In order to gauge the effectiveness of the coding scheme, a pilot content analysis was carried out (Lugalambi, 2006:176). This also helped the coders to get used to the task of coding (Alowo, 2010:24). The results of the pilot coding were later “iteratively compared and used to train, revise, and refine the coding scheme before its final deployment” (Lugalambi, 2006:177). Consequently, by identifying the problems that would have

come up during the final coding at an early stage, the researcher was able to minimise delays (Alowo, 2010:24). For example, initially the researcher had created nine categories of topics. However, after the pilot study, it was realised that some stories could not be placed under any of the listed categories. He thus created a new category known as ‘other’ to accommodate such stories. On the format of the story, the researcher had also created only three categories including; anchor interview, live coverage and desk story. However, after the pilot study, it was realised that many stories fell outside those categories hence the creation of a fourth category which was named ‘reporter-filed story’. The process of developing the codebook and training coders followed the various steps outlined by Kimberly Neuendorf (2002:134):

- Write Codebook with variable selection and variable measurement.
- Coders training with discussion
- Coders practice code together, engaging in consensus-building discussion.
- Possible codebook revisions
- Coder training on revisions
- Coders practice code independently on a number of units representing the variety of the population
- Coders discuss results of independent practice coding
- Possible code book revisions
- Coder training on revisions
- Coders code pilot sub sample for reliability purposes
- Researcher checks reliabilities
- Possible code book revisions
- Coder training on revisions
- Final independent coding (including final reliability checks)
- Coder “debriefing,” which asks coders to analyse their experiences

The two coders were later each assigned to code bulletins from one television station. After collecting all the data, the findings were computed and statistical models constructed. Analysis was also done using statistics. The author used Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) in analysing and calculating percentages.

Inferential statistics were not used in the current study. The decision was partly informed by recent developments in research that discourage the use of inferential statistics in some quantitative studies (Namusoga, 2016:80; Trafimow and Marks, 2015:1). Scott Kern (2014:3) also explained that it was wrong to coerce every study of causal relationships “into the mould of

inferential process”. Kern contended that descriptive analysis was appropriate for many quantitative studies. For their part, David Trafimow and Michael Marks (2015:1) argued that “inferential statistics such as confidence intervals [...] do not provide a strong case for concluding that the population parameter of interest is likely to be within the stated interval”. They thus rejected the use of inferential statistics. In line with these arguments, many other scholars have successfully conducted quantitative studies on media content without employing inferential processes (Nassanga, 2007; Nwammwo, Edegoh and Iwok, 2015).

Inter-coder reliability

Inter-coder reliability measures are carried out to establish whether a coding scheme can be used as a measuring instrument by more than one person or coder to produce similar results (Neuendorf, 2002:141). There is no universal agreement on the exact subsample size to be used while assessing reliability (Lugalambi, 2006:178). Various scholars have proposed that the subsample size for measuring inter-coder reliability should be between 10% and 20% of the entire sample (Lugalambi, 2006:178; Neuendorf, 2002:158). The current study thus used a subsample size of 20% (Lugalambi, 2006:178) of all the news stories. In total, 72 stories were selected for inter-coder reliability tests (Napakol, 2017). The simple percent agreement was used to calculate inter-coder reliability. The levels of agreement were as follows; topic - 83%, format - 92%, type of news - 85%, geographic locus - 90%, source - 90%, gender focus - 94%, length - 97%, lead dominance - 100%, party coverage - 93%, story tone - 90%, campaign issue - 82%³⁴. The agreement levels were thus sufficient for the study since various scholars have contended that values ranging between 75% and 90% show an acceptable agreement level (Graham, Milanowski and Miller, 2012:9).

Defining variables

News types

News stories are divided into two major types. They include hard news and soft news or news features. Hard news dwells much on conflict (Hartley, 1982:38) and it makes up the biggest percentage of news reporting. Hard stories often embody “basic facts: who, what, when, where, how” (Dominick, 1999:354). It is important news about significant public officers, functions and events, including government decisions and actions, social welfare, education, international

³⁴ The presentation of the agreement results was inspired by a format used by Angella Napakol (2017).

activities, environment, among others. Such happenings have to be reported as quickly as possible, because of their direct impact and ripple effect on the general public. Front pages of newspapers and cover stories of magazines, as well as lead stories on television and radio are on many occasions filled with news in this category. Breaking and unanticipated events of great importance to the general public are also examples of hard news. It covers terror attacks, epidemic outbreaks, grisly murders, war outbreak, major accidents, and natural disasters, among others occurrences (Alowo, 2010:85; Dominick, 1999:354-356).

Conversely, soft news includes human interest stories. It “often occupies the tailpiece of news bulletins, where the newsreader settles more comfortably, smiles, softens, his or her tone and perhaps even goes so far as to make a joke” (Hartley, 1982:38). Soft news covers an extensive territory and it is always characterised by descriptive language. It is usually about people, animals, places, events and products. Examples of stories that can be categorised as features or soft news include the story of a crippled man in Kampala with eight wives, a town beggar winning US\$1 million lottery, a night watchman moonlighting as a comedian, among others. Due to the entertaining nature of soft news, the audience enjoys it so much. Consequently, there is an emergence of many television channels based on soft content (Dominick, 1999:356). Even main news bulletins on television and radio now have several segments of features or soft news. The methods for covering features are many and varied:

Features seldom follow the inverted pyramid pattern. The main point of features is often withheld to the end, much like the punch line to a joke. Some features are written in chronological order; others start with a shocking statement, such as “Your secrets just might kill you” and then go on with an explanation, “If you have a medical problem, you should wear a Medic-Alert bracelet.” Still other features are structured in the question and answer format varied (Dominick, 1999:357).

Topics

The study investigated whether media ownership influenced the news topics covered in Uganda’s television industry. This was an important variable since humans around the world do not have interest in similar news topics. Topics may vary from one media organisation to another depending on the type of ownership. There are no fast rules on the exact number of topics in news. John Hartley (1982:38) divided news topics into six major categories; politics/elections,

economy, domestic news, foreign news, occasional stories and sport. However, in the context of this study, topics were divided into nine categories (Alowo, 2010:85-86):

- Politics/elections. This refers to stories about government, parliament, judiciary and personalities involved in the country's decision making (Alowo, 2010:86; Hartley, 1982:38). It also includes stories about political philosophy, pre-campaign activities, voter-registration, civic education, campaigns, elections, election petitions, primaries, party conventions, election results, election predictions, election reports and election post-mortems (MacDougall, 1972:338).
- The economics. This category covers stories dealing with; "(a)companies and the City – their performance, their figures and management; (b) 'government figures out tonight' – the economy as a statistical model of trade figures, imports and exports, unemployment, wages, inflation, prices, etc" (Hartley, 1982:38).
- Defence. These are stories focusing on activities in the military such as war and reshuffle of military personnel (Alowo, 2010:86).
- Crime. This includes stories about crime statistics, juveniles, preliminary hearings, pleas and motions, criminal trials, verdicts, sentences, arraignment in court, grand jury and punishments (MacDougall, 1972:275).
- Disasters. This refers to both natural and man-made catastrophes such as motor accidents, plane crashes, tornadoes, hurricanes, typhoons, floods and earthquakes (Alowo, 2010:86).
- Health. This includes stories about the state of hospitals, medical insurance, health policies, epidemics and working conditions of health workers (Schwitzer, 2009:4).
- Education. This category includes stories about the education curriculum and policies, schools, universities, students and teachers (Alowo, 2010:86).
- Sports. The category covers stories focusing on sporting activities such as football, athletics, baseball, basketball, rugby, swimming, wood ball, board games, cricket and tennis (MacDougall, 1972:469).
- Entertainment. Stories relating to music, fashion, comedy and beauty shows were placed under this category (Alowo, 2010:86).

Sources

Sources can be defined as people observed or interviewed by journalists for news stories. They include personalities interviewed on air and those quoted in newspapers or magazines, as well as those who provide background information and story ideas. Sources are divided into two major categories; knowns and unknowns (Gans, 1979:80; Motjamela, 2005:37-40). Knowns are people who occupy prominent positions in society (Reese, 2009:286). They include presidents and their wives, presidential candidates, parliamentarians, local government officials, experts, heads of statutory organisations and business leaders, among others (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996:46). Conversely, unknowns are ordinary people in society. They include low ranking officials such as nurses, primary school teachers, police constables, prison warders, community members and students (Gans, 1979:8; Motjamela, 2005:41). “Unknowns must break into the news arena somehow, often sensationally: as protestors, rioters, strikers, victims, violators or participants in unusual activities” (Reese and Lee, 2012:756).

Length of stories

The length of the story is an important variable given that longer stories allow more detailed reports compared to shorter stories. Important stories are usually given more time than the less important ones. The length of television news stories varies from one station to another. “whereas some are rather short and only read by the news anchor, others are considerably longer and may include footage from the field, interviews with various sources and perhaps stand-ups by the reporters covering the events” (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:490).

Format

This consists of how news content is organised in a news bulletin (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:490). It is an important variable given that television news formats differ from one station to another depending on the way news material is organised. There are different formats of television news. However, this study focussed on only four; anchor interview, live coverage, desk story and reporter filed story. Anchor interview is where a newsreader interviews someone in a news bulletin while live coverage is where events are being relayed on television in real time. A desk story is where a news anchor reads the entire story while a reporter filed story is the one voiced by a reporter. A reporter filed story may also include sound-bites (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:493).

Geographic locus

In this study, the geographic locus was divided into three categories; domestic, international and hybrid. Stories focusing on foreign issues were classified as international (Hartley, 1982:38). This category also included stories dealing with relations between the government of Uganda and other governments. The stories which largely focussed on local issues were categorised as domestic. A hybrid story is the one that has both local and foreign elements (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:495).

Campaign issue

This variable was divided into four categories; legislative change, political scandal, service delivery and economic issue. For purposes of this study, legislative change means stories dealing with proposed laws and policies, while political scandal refers to stories focusing on personal attacks and questionable behaviour. Service delivery was defined to include stories focusing on the improvement of social services while economic issue refers to stories focusing on economic empowerment.

Lead dominance

This is the variable that identifies the candidate who appears in the lead story of the news bulletin. News stories are usually arranged in order of significance with the most important stories coming first (Wang, 2003:19). This variable also helps to evaluate which candidate or political party was prioritised by the two television stations.

Story tone

This variable examines whether the tone of a story is fashioned “in a way, via use of quotes, assertions, or innuendo, which results in positive, neutral, or negative coverage for the primary figure” (Pew Research Center, 2012:37). For purposes of this study, a story that describes a candidate from the ruling party in a positive way was designated pro-ruling party while the one that favoured the opposition candidates was labelled pro-opposition. Stories that never favoured any of the candidates were designated neutral (Wang, 2003:19-20).

Party coverage

This variable was used to establish the political affiliation of the sources. In the current study, political affiliation was not judged basing on the views expressed by the sources, but rather on

their known political inclination (Lugalambi, 2006:179). Stories that heavily focussed on ruling party candidates were coded as ‘pro-ruling party’, those that focussed on opposition candidates were coded ‘pro-opposition’ while those that did not favour any candidate were coded ‘balanced’.

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were also used to collect data for this study. Kelly Rosetto (2014:483) defined in-depth interviews as data gathering techniques which involve learning about experiences, meanings and relationships which the researcher cannot easily observe. “Interviewers engage in active, supportive listening that involves paraphrasing and probing to develop rapport and encourage in-depth discussion” (Rosetto, 2014:483). In-depth interviews are indeed extended conversations only that they serve a different purpose from that of ordinary conversations. In ordinary conversations, people talk about work related problems, their families, and issues making news, among others. Such typical conversations often ramble and can take different directions. However, in-depth interviews are usually focused (Berger, 1998:55). They are conducted to examine particular issues. They can be very useful in prompting hidden feelings and beliefs that are faintly in the respondents’ consciousness. A well trained interviewer can use this technique “to penetrate the defences people often put up to prevent their hidden beliefs from coming to light – defences that they frequently are not conscious of and do not recognise in their behaviour” (Berger, 1998:55). The technique was relevant to the study since the investigator was also interested in examining the perceptions of editors and reporters in relation to the influence of owners on news gathering and production (Berg and Lune, 2014). It is also important to note that every individual has got some aspects of his or her social life that are unique and cannot simply be observed. Therefore to understand one’s thoughts, the researcher has to use qualitative techniques such as interviews and not quantitative designs. For example, you cannot adequately carry out an experiment to establish the extent to which journalists in Uganda engage in self-censorship nor can you sufficiently use quantitative content analysis to find out the effect of the existing media laws on the practice of journalism in any particular country (Priest, 1996:26). This is why in-depth interviews were employed in the current study.

Unlike other techniques where a rigid structure is set, in-depth interviews allow the investigator to rephrase and ask follow up questions as Sussana Priest (1996:26) put it: “He or she is entirely

free to ask follow-up questions in response to the informant's answers and interests, to rephrase a question to get a more complete answer, or to ask for clarification of interesting points". In this process the researcher is able to get a lot of information since people reveal more about themselves when they speak for a longer time (Berger, 1998:57). The technique can also allow researchers to tightly manage the process of selecting participants, and once the informants are recruited the response is usually 100 percent. However, the interviews should not be over extended because informants do not like intrusion into their lives by researchers (Gunter, 2000:26).

Interview Sample

Purposive sampling was used in choosing key informants such as news editors and reporters at WBS and NTV who were knowledgeable on the subject matter. Purposive sampling "may be defined as selecting units based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions" (Teddlie and Yu, 2007: 80). The sample consisted of six participants; one news editor and two news reporters from WBS, as well as one news editor and two news reporters from NTV. Each interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes. The idea of in-depth interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to guide the discussion through further probing, and redirecting the interview whenever the respondents went off-track. It was the work of the interviewer to ensure that the respondents are steered away from giving information which was not relevant to the interview objectives (Phiri, 2001:37).

The news editors and reporters were asked questions relating to the editorial policies, editorial independence, newsroom organisation and management, the role of management in the recruitment of editors and reporters, the relationship between organisational structures and the coverage of news, as well self-censorship. The researcher also sought explanations on how the existing regulatory framework in Uganda affected news gathering and publication (Motjamela, 2005:48). Respondents were also asked to give their views on the effect of concentrated media ownership which is a new phenomenon in Uganda. Here emphasis was put on respondents from NTV since their station is owned by a regional media conglomerate, Nation Media Group (NMG). The reporters from the two stations were further asked about the degree of freedom in choosing stories to cover.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected using in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis can be described “as a process of interpretation of data in order to find patterns of meaning across the data” (Crowe, Inder and Porter, 2015:2). Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006:79) argued that it is the best method for identifying and analysing patterns or themes in a data set. They added that the method describes the data in detail and allows the investigator to interpret different aspects of the topic being studied. The patterns identified in this investigation were similar to the key issues explored in the literature and theory chapters, and were also related to the main research questions outlined in the first chapter of the thesis (Nakiwala, 2015:101). The major classifications from in-depth interviews were editorial independence, self-censorship, concentrated media ownership, political interference, corruption in the media and media training.

After identifying and analysing the patterns (themes), data from WBS television was compared and contrasted with the data from NTV. “The similarity principle involves looking for units of information with similar content, symbols, or meanings, while the contrast principle guides efforts to find out how content or symbols differ from one another and what is distinctive about emerging themes” (Polit and Beck, 2012:562). The author followed the six-step thematic analysis process developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006:79). The figure on the next page illustrates the data analysis process.

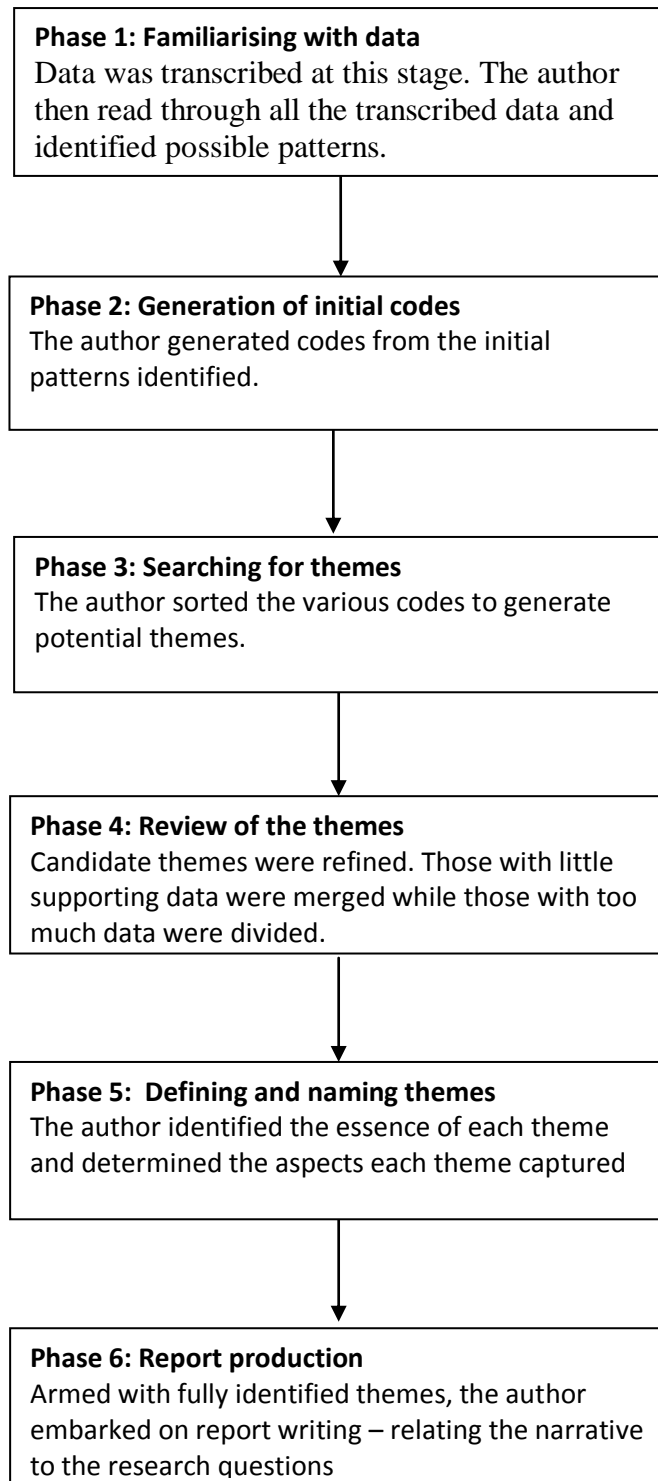


Figure 5.1: The figure illustrates the six steps which the author followed in analysing data.
Source: Braun and Clarke, 2006:87

Ethical considerations

The author initially obtained consent letters from the two participating institutions – WBS and NTV (Appendix Three and Appendix Four respectively). While in the field, the author provided informed consent forms (Appendix Five) to the participants for signing before the interviews were conducted. “Informed consent means subjects are made adequately aware of the type of information the author wants from them, why the information is being sought and how it will directly or indirectly affect them” (Kumar, 2011:244). This information was provided to ensure that participants who were uncomfortable with the subject matter and procedures were able to withdraw at early stage (Keyton, 2011:81-82). Fortunately, no single respondent withdrew from the exercise. However, it is important to note that the process of conducting research started after the author had received the ethics approval letter from the Ethics Committee of the university (Appendix Six).

The interviews were organised in a way that put the respondents at ease (Motjamela, 2005:48). Some respondents preferred to be interviewed at the premises of their stations while others chose nearby recreation centres and hotels. For example, one reporter from NTV chose to be interviewed in the waiting lounge of the nearby Serena Hotel instead of her company’s premises while her colleague preferred to be interviewed in the NTV common room area. At WBS, the editor and reporters preferred to be interviewed in their station’s auditorium.

All interviews were recorded (after obtaining respondents’ permission) and later on transcribed. Recording was necessary because it offered the researcher an opportunity to focus on the interview and the non-verbal expressions instead of writing down notes. Although rapid advances in technology have provided a computer mechanism that can transcribe spoken words directly into text, the researcher decided to transcribe the interviews himself which made him more familiar with the data. The author also ensured that the transcripts were “a verbatim account of what was said by both the interviewer and the respondent and the interaction captured as given, not corrected or standardised” (Keyton, 2011:291). After transcribing, the researcher verified the transcript against the audio recording.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability can be achieved when “repeated measurement of the same material results in similar decisions or conclusions” (Peter and Lauf, 2002:815), while validity can be defined as “the

ability of a particular measurement technique or research method to capture the actual meaning of the concept under investigation” (Dallimore, 2000:162). When validity and reliability are achieved, the collected data will be free of errors. In terms of the content analysis, an inter-coder test was conducted to establish inter-coder reliability (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:495). Inter-coder reliability tests were necessary to ensure that all the people coding data understand categories in a similar manner (Berger, 2011:215; Priest, 2010:85).

The researcher, in liaison with the supervisor, also made sure that the interview questions met the objectives of the study. This enabled the researcher to make appropriate inferences. The researcher also used triangulation to enhance the credibility and dependability of the findings. Wendy Olsen (2004:1) defined triangulation “as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse view points or standpoints cast light upon a topic”. She noted that mixing methodologies was the most insightful type of triangulation. Therefore, the author decided to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyse data. In the current study, in-depth interviews with reporters and editors were employed to support quantitative content analysis of the news bulletins.

The author further employed member checking or member validation to validate the data. This is where the collected data “is played back to the informant to check for perceived accuracy and reactions” (Cho and Trent, 2006:322). This was done throughout the investigations and it helped to ensure that the data collected was a perfect mirror of the reality.

Limitations

Quantitative content analysis consumes a lot of time and it misses the contextual detail (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2014:2). Frequencies and statistics do not give explanations as to why certain decisions are taken. They do not explain why some stories are given prominence, why some news sources are preferred over others and why some stories are given more time than others. Therefore, the researcher had to complement content analysis with other techniques such as interviews to understand how news is collected, written, produced and the criteria used by editors to assign reporters to cover events and personalities (Alowo, 2010:23).

The study was also limited to only two television stations which made it a little difficult for the researcher to make generalisations. The two channels represent only two types of ownership in

Uganda, namely; independent ownership and concentrated ownership. Yet, there are many more ownership structures in Uganda such as those owned by religious organisations, government and non-governmental organisations. Future research should investigate how these other ownership structures influence television news content in Uganda.

Media concentration being a new phenomenon in Uganda, the available information on the subject was not enough for literature review. The researcher ended up relying more on literature from other countries. Moreover, most studies on the influence of media ownership in Uganda have focused more on newspapers than television. This is because newspaper data is easily accessible in Uganda unlike television content. Most television stations have poor archiving systems which makes it difficult for media scholars to access such data. Therefore, the researcher also borrowed literature from newspaper studies.

Content analysis and in-depth interviews may also fail reveal the exact ways through which media ownership influences news content. For example, some interviewees may not be honest in their responses. Therefore, ethnographic studies are needed in future. Here, the researcher would live the life of a journalist for a longer period, probably a year, to study the extent of this influence.

In all, the chapter has presented the main methods employed in collecting and analysing data. Quantitative content analysis and in-depth interviews were the main methods used by the researcher. Content analysis was mainly used to examine the influence of ownership structures on news content while in-depth interviews were used to collect respondents' views on editorial independence and external influences on news. Data from in-depth interviews was also used to complement results from quantitative content analysis. The chapter also presented the rationale for choosing the two data sets – NTV and WBS. The researcher concluded the chapter with the limitations of the methods.

CHAPTER SIX

RESULTS: OWNERSHIP INFLUENCE ON NEWS CONTENT

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study. The presented data is further analysed in relation to the reviewed literature and the theory underpinning this thesis. The major theory of the study was the political economy of the media. The analysis was directly related to the research questions (Napakol, 2017) outlined in the Introduction chapter of this study. This chapter addresses the first research question³⁵:

- How do media ownership structures influence news content in Uganda?

The research question was answered using a combination of quantitative data from content analysis and qualitative data from in-depth interviews. The aspects examined here include news topic, format, news type, geographic locus, news source, gender, story length, lead dominance, party coverage, campaign issue and overall story tone (Namusoga, 2016: Semujju 2016).

Topic	Television station		Total
	NTV	WBS	
Politics/Elections	133 (61%)	80 (56%)	213
Economics	17 (8%)	14 (10%)	31
Defence	3 (1%)	9 (6%)	12
Crime/ Law	10 (5%)	7 (7%)	17
Accidents/disasters	0 (0%)	4 (3%)	4
Public health	6 (3%)	6 (4%)	12
Education	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	5
Sports	38 (18%)	16 (11%)	54
Entertainment/Human interest	5 (2%)	0 (0%)	5
Other	3 (1%)	6 (4%)	9
Total	218	144	362

Table 6.1: A table showing stories covered by WBS and NTV

Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

³⁵ It is important to note that the style of presenting quantitative data and the development of some headings in this chapter was inspired by the work of Nwammuo, Edegoh and Iwok (2015).

A total of 362 stories were analysed during the period under review. Of all these stories, NTV aired 218 while WBS aired 144. This corresponded with Shoemaker and Reese's (1987:15) observation that television stations under concentrated media ownership broadcast more news stories than independent networks. This trend of events was attributed mainly to the limited resources in independent networks. A respondent at WBS argued that they did not have enough resources which would have enabled them to cover all the stories they wanted (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2017). The collected data also revealed that NTV had more resources than WBS which were devoted to news coverage during the period under study.

Ownership influence on the topics covered by NTV and WBS

The topics covered by NTV and WBS were divided into ten categories; politics/elections, economics, defence, crime/law, accidents/disasters, public health, education, sports, entertainment/human interest and other.

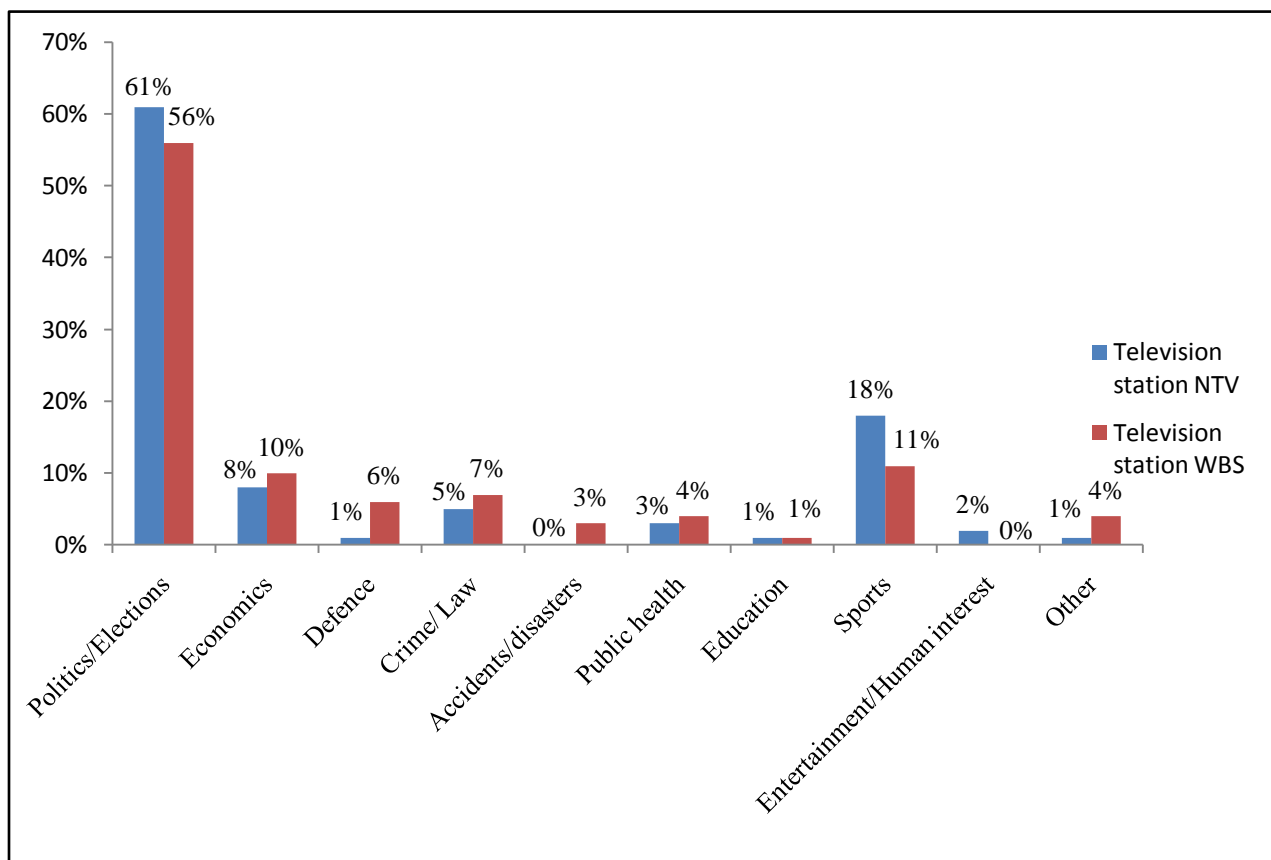


Figure 6.1: A bar graph showing how NTV and WBS covered the different topics.
Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

The bar graph above indicates that of all the stories broadcast by NTV, political stories took the biggest share of 61%. The situation was not much different at WBS where politically inclined stories made up 56%. Each of the remaining categories got less than 10% on the two stations with the exception of sports which had 18% on NTV and 11% on WBS. It was discovered that Ugandan television stations give more coverage to politics basically because it is more dramatic and appealing to the viewers as explained by one editor: “TV also has that melodramatic appeal and you do not want to give your audiences mundane stories. I mean sometimes it could be petty but politics comes with a lot of drama and exciting footage which is good for our audience (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016). He added that you cannot avoid politically inclined stories in a country like Uganda where everything rotates around politics: “[l]argely, everything plays out around politics and then trickles down to these other issues”.

The study further discovered that political stories were favoured because they were cheaper to produce compared to other stories given that politicians and political institutions are located closer to media houses. The two television stations under study are located in Kampala which is the administrative capital of the country. It was therefore much easier for reporters at NTV and WBS to collect news from parliament and other administrative offices which are located within the city as noted by an NTV reporter:

Considering that politics is concentrated within Kampala which is the area where we operate, it is hard to ignore it. We are less than 30 meters away from the parliament of Uganda; less than 50 meters away from the Prime Minister’s office, President’s office and the Kampala Capital City Authority. [...] All those places are in walk-able distances. You do not need to waste fuel. Somebody will jump on a commercial motorbike at a price of a dollar or less. So that is how cheap it is. It also has a money ingredient in it (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

Therefore, economic factors still played an important role in compelling news editors and reporters to prioritise politics in their news coverage. It can thus be argued that the amount of airtime given to different topics in news bulletins was influenced by economics irrespective of the structure of ownership. The data corresponded with the findings of an earlier study conducted

by John Khamalwa (2006:18) on the state of Uganda’s media in which he discovered that news reporting in Uganda “concentrated on inner-city news (where the cost of collection is cheaper)”.

There was also consensus among editors and reporters that most television viewers in Uganda preferred politics. It appeared therefore that in the economic struggle to have more viewers, editors ended up giving politics more time as noted by an NTV reporter: “Politics is still the dominant content in our bulletins because that is what Ugandans want to watch on TV” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

Ownership structure and its influence on the format of news

Another important element in examining the influence of ownership structures on news content was the format of news broadcast by the two television stations. Television format is not constant and it varies from one station to another depending on a number of factors including ownership (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:488). For purposes of this study, format was divided into four categories including anchor interview, live coverage, desk story and reporter-filed story. A detailed discussion of these categories is presented in Chapter Five.

Format		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Anchor interview	15 (7%)	5 (4%)	20
	Live coverage	8 (4%)	0 (0%)	8
	Desk story	53 (24%)	52 (36%)	105
	Reporter filed story	142 (65%)	87 (60%)	229
Total		218	144	362

Table 6.2: A table showing the format of news on WBS and NTV

Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

The table above shows that reporter filed stories took the biggest share of the stories aired by both WBS and NTV. Of all the stories covered by NTV, reporter filed stories took up 65%. The situation was not much different at WBS where reporter filed stories made up 60% of the stories run. It is also interesting to note that WBS carried more desk stories at 36% compared to NTV where desk stories had a share of 24%. Further analysis also revealed that during the period under study, WBS did not carry any live story while NTV had eight live stories making up 4%. NTV also had more anchor interviews with a score of 15 (7%) while WBS had 5 (4%) anchor

interviews. This implies that the ownership structure influenced the format of news at the two television stations.

It was discovered that WBS carried more desk stories than NTV mainly because the former did not have enough reporters to produce more fully packaged reporter-filed stories. This was because the station was experiencing financial challenges which compelled many WBS reporters to run to other stations as noted by one respondent: “This was the time when other media houses took most of our reporters. About nine were taken including an editor” (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016).

The data also revealed that WBS did not run any live story because it lacked the latest technology necessary for live coverage unlike NTV which had acquired the latest live broadcasting equipment as observed by the WBS editor: “We did not have the necessary technology for live coverage. So we could not do much” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). Therefore, the ownership structure was directly responsible for this disparity given that WBS is owned by a local businessman whose resources were limited while NTV is owned by the biggest regional media conglomerate, Nation Media Group, with the resources to buy all the necessary technology. Without this latest technology, it was difficult to broadcast live yet acquiring such equipment was an expensive venture as noted by one respondent: “Live coverage comes with a particular cost because you have to buy the latest equipment such as OB³⁶ vans and the latest technical gadgets to be able to broadcast” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

The evidence further revealed that the owner of WBS television was directly involved in making decisions in the newsroom which influenced the format of the news. For example, it was discovered that the owner was directly responsible for the fewer number of anchor interviews in WBS news bulletins. The WBS editor explained that initially the proprietor of the station was not interested in seeing interviews in news bulletins: “The owner was not into it. He thought we were turning news into interviews. We had to convince him by showing him that this can be done. We tried it without his consent and then eventually he came to realise that it was the way to go”

³⁶ OB van is an outside broadcasting vehicle used for live coverage of events. It is a mobile television studio which journalists use to broadcast on location. In the past, the operation of OB vans required a big number of professionals to have pictures running live on television. However, due to the improvements in technology, an OB van today can be operated by a crew of two or three journalists to transmit live pictures from anywhere in the world (Boyd, 2001:318).

(Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). On the contrary, decisions on news format at NTV were made by the newsroom without any influence from the owners or management:

No one orders, these processes are reached at by consensus and by the newsroom and the editorial team agreeing that this is what we think is good for the TV station in terms of enriching our bulletin. For instance, if we have had on a particular day a certain very contentious or controversial story, then we definitely pick it out of the docket after the normal story has run for about two minutes and perhaps bring in an expert to further give it perspective and analysis (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

This view was supported by another NTV reporter who said that managers had no influence on the format of news because their policy was strictly against that kind of interference. He argued that “managers only sponsor ideas which can either be taken or rejected by the editorial team” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016). This explains why NTV had more anchor interviews than WBS in its news bulletins. While the editorial team at NTV had the liberty to do whatever they wanted to make their bulletins more appealing to the audience, their counterparts at WBS had little room to manoeuvre due to the direct influence of the owner. Therefore, the ownership structure influenced news format on the two television stations.

The structure of ownership and its influence on the type of news

As presented in Chapter Four of this thesis, the structure of ownership greatly affects the type of news covered by television stations. In the current study, news was divided into two major types including hard news and soft news. Hard news dwells much on conflict and focuses on significant public officers and events while soft news covers human interest stories (Dominick, 1999:354-357; Hartley, 1982:38). In this study, soft news also included feature stories (a detailed discussion of these categories is provided in the previous chapter). Some scholars including Dell Champlin and Janet Knoedler (2002:463) have argued that media concentrations have resulted in more coverage of soft news than hard news. Therefore, this study sought to establish the structure of ownership which prioritised soft news in Uganda.

Type of news	Television station		Total
	NTV	WBS	
Hard news	189 (87%)	143 (99%)	332
Soft news	29 (13%)	1 (1%)	30
Total	218	144	362

Table 6.3: The types of news covered by WBS and NTV

Source: Derived from data collected by the author

The results from table 6.3 revealed that both WBS and NTV gave more coverage to hard news than soft news. Of all the news stories aired on NTV, 87% were hard news. The situation was not much different at WBS where 99% of the stories were also hard news. Analysis of the data illustrated that irrespective of the type of ownership, both stations prioritised hard news mainly because hard stories were easier to report and they required less time compared to soft stories as noted by an NTV reporter: “Feature stories need time. You cannot produce a feature in one day or two days yet other stories break all the time. That is why it is easier to report a breaking story than a feature story because with features you take a lot of time” (Interviewee 4, 18 June 2016). This argument was backed by a reporter from WBS who noted that there were few reporters at his station and they could not find ample time to focus on features:

We were thin on the ground and nobody would be left to dedicate time to a feature story. Every day you are expected to file more than two or three stories. This leaves you with no time to concentrate on features (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016).

Therefore, journalists especially freelance reporters, who are paid per story published, found it difficult to concentrate on feature stories which required more time. Focusing on features for such reporters meant loss of income given that the number of stories one submits on a daily basis determines the amount of money he or she earns.

The study also revealed that NTV carried more soft news than WBS. Of all the stories aired on NTV, soft news made up 13% while at WBS soft news had a score of 1%. This was attributed to the high number of skilled journalists at NTV who deliberately planned for soft news stories in their editorial meetings: “This is deliberate and in the course of our planning in the week we go out there to look for these kinds of stories. Stories that speak to the ordinary people, they may not necessarily be hard news politics, graft and the usual things. It could be a story about a woman who is caring for orphans and things of that sort” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

However, apart from the issue of professionalism, NTV was also able to give soft news more coverage because it had the resources at its disposal unlike WBS. An NTV reporter explained that they had the resources to go to all corners of the country. He added that the resources needed

to cover one feature story may be enough to pay off three or more employees in a local television station which dissuades news managers from assigning their reporters to cover such expensive stories. Referring to my question on why there was more soft news on NTV than WBS, the NTV reporter responded:

We do that, first of all, with resources. The other people find it rather hard and that is our cutting edge. You can think of spending US\$2000 for a story and that can be a salary for three employees. So the usual choice is to keep that money as part of the wage bill instead of spending it on a story. Competition has also accepted that these are the guys who have the resources to run to Karamoja when there is something burning (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

This view was supported by the WBS' news editor who admitted that they did not have the necessary funds to cover soft news:

Finance was our major challenge. During those two to three months of campaigns we were severely underfunded as newsroom. We did not have a sponsor for news and the owner was not willing to put money into that type of content. We had ideas about features but we could not implement them because we did not have funds to do that (Interview 2, 24 March 2016).

This showed that the ownership structure influenced the type of news covered by the different television stations. NTV which is owned by a regional media conglomerate, Nation Media Group, gave more time to soft news than WBS which is an independent channel and owned by a local businessman.

The influence of ownership structure on the geographic locus

The geographic locus of news was also essential in examining the influence of ownership structures on news content. Some scholars such as Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1996:160) observed that concentrations have led to a decline in the coverage of domestic news. This study thus sought to find out whether it was the same situation in Uganda. For purposes of this study, geographic locus was divided into three categories. The categories were domestic, international and hybrid. 'Domestic' meant stories focussing on local affairs while 'international' covered stories concerning foreign events. The stories that had both local and foreign elements were categorised as 'hybrid'.

Geographic Locus		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Domestic	150 (69%)	107 (74%)	257
	International	12 (5%)	19 (13%)	31
	Hybrid	56 (26%)	18 (13%)	74
Total		218	144	362

Table 6.4: The geographic locus of stories on NTV and WBS

Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

The table above reveals that both NTV and WBS heavily focused on domestic stories in their news bulletins. Of all the 218 stories ran by NTV, 150 (69%) were domestic. Similarly at WBS, domestic stories took the biggest share. Out of the 144 stories aired by WBS, 107 (74%) were domestic. However, the differences between the two channels were more pronounced when it came to international and hybrid stories. WBS had many more international stories than NTV. International stories had a score of only 5% at NTV while at WBS they represented 13%. NTV also had much more hybrid stories than WBS. On the one hand, out of the 218 stories aired by NTV, 56 (26%) were hybrid. On the other hand, of all the 144 stories aired by WBS only 18 (13%) were hybrid.

Analysis of the data revealed that both NTV and WBS prioritised domestic stories in their coverage mainly because editors and reporters believe that viewers were more interested in issues and events that are closer to them. Additionally, respondents noted that in many journalism schools in Uganda proximity is emphasised as a very important news value. Therefore, it was not surprising that Ugandan editors and reporters heavily focused on domestic stories given that they were mentored that way as expressed in the opinion of the NTV news editor: “Definitely in journalism you know one of the important news values is the issue of proximity. So first and foremost, our stories are largely tailor made for the Uganda audience” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

The results further revealed that WBS had more international stories than NTV. It is however surprising to note that the higher number of international stories on WBS was not out of choice but rather due to the limited resources and number of reporters to sufficiently cover existing local

stories. In order to fill the space allocated for news, the editors at WBS were compelled to go to international news wires and pick stories to fill the gap: “When you do not have money to fund your reporters to go out, you have to rely much on wire news. NTV had enough resources to do local. Our resources could not allow us to do that much and at times international stories were used as filler stories” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). This argument was supported by another WBS journalist:

When you find somebody dedicating more time to international stories, it means he lacks local stories and the only way to fill the gap is by going to international wires. There is always a running order where you are expected to have like twelve stories to fill that time. So if you do not have the local stories you go to the wires. That is what happened (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016).

It can therefore be argued that the ownership structure in Uganda influenced the geographic locus of news. The above quotation clearly demonstrates that independent networks in Uganda tend to have limited resources compelling them to rely more on wire news which they can easily access without paying much money. The study also revealed that television channels under concentrated media ownership tend to have more resources which enable them to have more local content. It was also discovered that because of the availability of resources and more professional journalists at NTV, the station was able to have more hybrid stories with a score of 26%. This was because editors and reporters at NTV used their skills to give would-be international stories local angles thus turning them into hybrid stories.

Ownership influence and news sources

News sources were divided into two including known sources and unknown sources. Known sources in this study included senior government officials such ministers, members of parliament, district leaders, city mayors, high ranking military and police officers, judges, state prosecutors and heads of statutory bodies. Business leaders, political party leaders and representatives of various lobbies and interest groups were all categorised as known sources (Mwesige, 2004:103-104). The unknowns in this study were ordinary citizens and low ranking government officials such as nurses and midwives, teachers, police constables and prison warders.

Source of the story	Television station		Total
	NTV	WBS	
Known	164 (75%)	90 (63%)	254
Un-known	32 (15%)	18 (12%)	50
Other	22 (10%)	36 (25%)	58
Total	218	144	362

Table 6.5: A table showing the distribution of news sources at WBS and NTV

Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

The table above indicates that known sources were dominant in all news bulletins on WBS and NTV. Of all the 218 stories that ran on NTV, 164 (75%) were from known sources while 32 (15%) were from unknown sources. The situation was not much different on WBS where out of 144 stories, 90 (63%) were from known sources while only 18 (12%) were from unknown sources. Analysis of the data revealed that both WBS and NTV prioritised known sources partly because they are generally believed to be authoritative and competent: “Many times we have specific news sources. He is the guy on TV, he is the guy on radio and he is the guy in the newspaper because at the end of the day you need a comment and there is this someone who is very competent” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016). Nearly all respondents agreed that known sources were preferred because of being authoritative. Another NTV reporter argued that apart from being authoritative, known sources are believable which makes them irresistible: “A viewer will believe more in that authority than the unknown source” (Interviewee 4, 18 June 2016). This argument was also supported by the WBS news editor who noted that known sources are usually popular and viewers are more willing to listen to what they say: “If a popular person makes a statement, chances are high that he will be listened to unlike some unpopular fellow. So you find that if you want a comment about environmental degradation, you go to NEMA³⁷ or a known politician like [John Ken] Lukyamuzi³⁸” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). This reinforces Peter Mwesige’s (2004) findings in his study on Uganda’s broadcast media that ordinary citizens constituted a marginal voice:

³⁷ NEMA stands for the National Environmental Management Authority. It is the body charged with the responsibility of protecting Uganda’s environment.

³⁸ John Ken Lukyamuzi is a former Member of Parliament in Uganda for Lubaga South constituency in Kampala. He is also a known environmental activist.

The combined frequency of appearance by representatives of official state power (cabinet ministers, central and local government officials, members of parliament, the military and law enforcement officials) was 50%. Political society (opposition political parties and the ruling movement officials and activists) constituted 19.4%, while civil society (defined broadly to include representatives of public interest groups, professional and occupational associations, religious leaders as well as journalists and other experts) made up 22.9%. [...] Still, “average” citizens constituted only a marginal voice (Mwesige, 2004:103-104).

However, while known sources dominated the bulletins on the two television channels, NTV journalists made deliberate efforts to include more unknown sources in their stories:

But many times as you can see in our bulletins we also try to go and seek views from the sources of ordinary people. If you watched our election news, whenever we would go to cover these candidates we would ensure that at almost every place that we visit we go to the ordinary village folks and ask them what they think a particular leader should address in their area. It is work in progress definitely and like I said before it is because most of our story sourcing is through officialdom channels (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

It was also established that journalists at the two stations preferred known sources because they were more accessible and closer to them unlike unknown sources. Respondents argued that on many occasions unknown sources fear to speak to journalists for fear that they could be targeted by overzealous state agents. This compelled reporters to focus on known sources such as politicians, celebrities, civil society leaders and experts who were always willing to speak to them. The analysis also revealed that many journalists in Uganda preferred to take the easier route in collecting news as noted by an NTV reporter: “We go to where we will find it easy” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

Ownership structure and gender focus

For purposes of this study, the gender focus was divided into three categories. The categories were male, female and ‘other’. Here the gender of the first identifiable source in the story was coded. However, there were stories whose source could not be identified. Such stories were coded as ‘other’.

Gender focus		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Male	164 (75%)	93 (64%)	257
	Female	32 (15%)	17 (12%)	49
	Other	22 (10%)	34 (24%)	56
Total		218	144	362

Table 6.6: The distribution of gender focus in WBS and NTV news bulletins

Source: Derived from data collected by the author.

The data in the table above shows that both WBS and NTV prioritised male sources in their news bulletins. Of all the 218 stories on NTV, male sources contributed 164 (75%) while female sources contributed 32 (15%). The situation was similar on WBS where out of 144 stories aired, 93 (64%) were from male sources, while 17 (12%) were from female sources.

Analysis of the data revealed that journalists focused more on male sources than female sources mainly because the former were more accessible than the latter. It was discovered that even female politicians shunned press interviews as noted by the WBS editor: “I do not know what is wrong with women especially politicians! They are not accessible. They tend to sit back especially when it comes to hard political moments. They shun our interviews” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). Consequently, news editors and reporters end up focusing more on male sources in their news bulletins since they are more accessible. Commenting on the dominance of males in news, a respondent from NTV also agreed that there were few women who were willing to speak to reporters. He added that this did not affect news content alone but also talk shows:

We continue to grapple with that not only in our news but also in talk shows. It is a very big challenge because it is hard to find women who want to comment on issues be it politics, be it governance, be it taxation. We still have few women who are interested in this and I am not trying to underestimate their abilities. There are many competent women who have shattered the glass ceiling who enrich our discussions, our bulletins, our talk shows, but we still face challenges. Men are much eager. [...] Definitely every media house including NTV would be very keen to have much more sources who are women [...] But we face challenges (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

The study also revealed that female sources were marginalised in news bulletins because of the patriarchal nature of the Ugandan society where many women still believe that it is the men who

are supposed to speak for them. The data indicated that some women found it uncouth to critique leaders and national policies yet it is from such discussions that news is reported. An NTV reporter explained that every Thursday they have a live segment in their news called *Yogera Naffe*³⁹ in which they go to the streets to get the opinions of the common man. He added that, however, every time they set up their equipment to start the live discussion it is mostly men who turn up to face the camera: “We never say we want women or men but we usually have a 90% concentration of men” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016). Other respondents argued that many women do not want to take part in such discussions because they may be harassed by their husbands for appearing on television.

It was also noted that men dominate most of the institutions that make news in Uganda which partly explains the dominance of males. The president, vice president, prime minister, army commander, police chief, commissioner of prisons, and all traditional leaders, among others, are all men. Even in the national assembly men make up 66% of the entire population despite the affirmative action policy which provides special seats for women from each district (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017).⁴⁰ As a result, journalists find themselves running mostly to male sources as they pursue their stories. This is because by virtue of their positions and offices, male sources are always closer to the media and, as observed before, journalists prefer closer sources: “Most often you run to someone who is closer to you” (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016).

Ownership structure and the length of stories

The length of stories was also an important element in examining the influence of ownership on news content. This is because the length of news stories varies from one television station to another depending on the ownership structure. Therefore, the differences in the length of stories “present in TV news can consequently provide valuable insights” into the influence of ownership structures on news content (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:490). In the current study, stories below 60 seconds were categorised as ‘extremely brief’, those between 60 and 120 seconds were categorised as ‘brief’, while those above 120 seconds were categorised as ‘long’.

³⁹ It is a Luganda phrase meaning speak to us.

⁴⁰ http://archive.ipu.org/Parline/reports/2329_E.htm

Length		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Extremely brief	10 (5%)	7 (5%)	17
	Brief	47 (21%)	32 (22%)	79
	Long	161 (74%)	105 (73%)	266
Total		218	144	362

Table 6.7: The length of stories on NTV and WBS

Source: Derived from data collected by the author

The results revealed that both WBS and NTV carried mostly long stories in their bulletins. Long stories on NTV contributed 74% while on WBS they contributed 73%. Brief stories covered 21% of the bulletin on NTV while on WBS they covered 22%. Extremely brief stories took the smallest percentage of 5% on each of the two television channels. The difference in the category of long stories and brief stories was not more than one percentage point yet there was a tie on extremely brief stories.

Analysis of the data revealed that irrespective of the type of ownership, the two television stations had more long stories which were approximately three minutes. An editor at WBS argued that their stories were long because of an internal policy that compelled reporters and editors to produce longer stories. The policy was premised on a misconception that a brief story could not exhaustively explore any subject at hand: “It is a policy that you have to cover something quite exhaustively. If you are doing news for one hour and you are doing just bits of it then you are doing a disservice to the viewer. We need to make it quite detailed for them to appreciate the story” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). This statement showed that the WBS editor did not believe that a brief story could have all the necessary facts to satisfy a viewer. However, the NTV editor admitted that while they also had a big percentage of long stories, it was not the ideal situation in broadcasting. He blamed this on reporters who often get immersed in a story and keep going on and on instead of summing up the facts of the story:

A typical TV story should not go beyond two and a half minutes. We try so much to teach the principles of brevity like Shakespeare said brevity is the soul of mankind. And that is perhaps one of the things that distinguishes broadcast from print. Whereas print can give you a lot of detail, broadcast is quick, punchy and gives you a picture. The

videos are there, it is emotive and all that stuff. So it is a work in progress especially with our reporters who sometimes get immersed in a story and want to go on and on without simply giving us the material facts and summing up the story (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

However, one respondent from NTV disagreed with his editor. He argued that the length of the stories is sometimes extended purposely to cover the air time provided for news but not because reporters want their stories to be long. He noted that the length of their stories is usually determined by the news producers and editors who make these decisions depending on the number of stories they have on a particular day: “We have to fit within the time and that is preset by our producers on the desk” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

Ownership influence on political party coverage

In this section, the author was interested in establishing how the two sides of the political divide (ruling party and opposition) were covered in each individual story. Various scholars including James Curran (2002:220-221) have argued that television stations owned by conglomerates tend to favour ruling parties in their news stories in order to protect the vast economic interests of their owners. This study thus sought to find out whether this view is applicable in Uganda. Political party coverage was divided into three categories including ‘pro-ruling party’, ‘pro-opposition’ and ‘balanced’. A detailed discussion of the three categories is presented in Chapter Five.

Party coverage		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Pro-ruling party	19 (14%)	18 (25%)	37
	Pro-opposition	35 (26%)	23 (32%)	58
	Balanced	79 (60%)	31 (43%)	110
Total		133	72	205

Table 6.8: Party coverage on WBS and NTV

Source: Derived from data collected by the author

For political party coverage, the study focused on 205 stories which were related to elections. The table above shows that NTV had more balanced stories than WBS. Of the 133 election related stories on NTV, 79 (60%) were balanced yet out of the 72 election related stories on

WBS only 31 (43%) were balanced. This means that WBS carried more stories that heavily focused on individual political parties than NTV. It was discovered that NTV was able to give a fair share of coverage to different political parties mainly because of the availability of resources and the professionalism of its reporters and editors. The NTV editor argued that for purposes of balance and fairness, they agreed as a team at the beginning of the campaign period to cover all the candidates in a fair and balanced manner. He, however, noted that it was a costly affair to traverse every part of the country with the candidates something that small media houses could not afford to do: “To cover all the candidates in an election campaign requires a lot of resources because you have to give an allowance to your reporter, to your cameraman [and] to your drivers as well” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016). This argument was supported by an NTV reporter who explained in detail how they were facilitated during the elections:

We had five teams. Those teams had a car fully fuelled. Not every media house could do that. Sometimes the media houses have the resources but do not want to invest in that direction. So, each team is given a laptop, stable internet, a car [and] an IT person. When you compare on a daily basis they are at least spending three or four million Uganda shillings and that is over US\$1000 on a daily basis per team. So if you are following the eight candidates, you are spending over US\$10,000 on a daily basis. So those resources have a great connotation on the fairness (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

While the foregoing discussion suggests that the scarcity of resources was the major cause of unbalanced stories, this study discovered that lack of professionalism among some news reporters and editors was also a serious catalyst. The WBS editor noted that some of his reporters were ignorant about professional standards and believed that it was fine to run a one sided story. He added that in other instances, reporters that were bribed by sources found it difficult to seek divergent views for fear of annoying those that had given them some money: “When a source facilitates a reporter he convinces him not to speak to the opponent” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016).

The study further revealed that WBS carried more stories that heavily focused on the ruling party than NTV. Pro-ruling party stories on WBS represented 25% while on NTV they scored 14%. This was also attributed to the scarcity of resources at WBS. Respondents from WBS explained that due to the limited resources, they ended up spending more time with the ruling party candidate who facilitated their movements across the country. The WBS editor admitted that

they only covered the opposition leader Dr Kiiza Besigye while in some parts of Buganda region: “We could not finance our team. We covered Besigye only in parts of Buganda yet for [Yoweri] Museveni⁴¹ the government funded our team throughout the country” (Interviewee, 24 March 2016). Therefore, the difference in ownership structures influenced the way WBS and NTV covered different political parties.

Ownership structure and story tone

Story tone was also important in examining the influence of ownership structure on news content. Scholars such as Johanna Dunaway (2013:24) and Xinkun Wang (2003:22) have observed that ownership structures have an influence on the tone of news stories during election campaigns. It was further noted that the influence exists in all ownership structures; “corporate, chain, and nonlocal ownership all have consequences for campaign news tone” (Dunaway, 2013:24). Therefore, this study was interested in finding out the extent of ownership influence on story tone in Ugandan television stations. In this study, story tone was divided into three; ‘pro-ruling party’, ‘pro-opposition’ and ‘neutral’ tones. Stories that positively describe the ruling party candidates were coded ‘pro-ruling party’ while those that positively describe the opposition candidates were coded ‘pro-opposition’. The stories that never favoured both the ruling party candidates and the opposition candidates were coded neutral (Wang, 2003:19). Neutral stories focussed on facts without showing any kind of favouritism.

Story tone		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Pro-ruling party	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1
	Pro Opposition	3 (2%)	0 (0%)	3
	Neutral	129 (97%)	72 (100%)	201
Total		133	72	205

Table 6.9: The distribution of story tone on NTV and WBS

Source: Derived from data collected by the author

The table above shows that both NTV and WBS overwhelmingly carried neutral stories whose tone did not favour any particular political party or candidate. Neutral stories on NTV

⁴¹ Yoweri Museveni is the president of Uganda since 1986. He was the ruling party candidate in the 2016 general elections.

contributed 97% while on WBS they contributed 100%. Stories that positively described opposition candidates represented 3% while those that favoured the ruling party and its candidates contributed only 1%. On its part, WBS did not run any single story whose tone favoured any of the competing political parties and their candidates.

Analysis of the data revealed that most stories on NTV and WBS were neutral mainly because journalists across board were cautious not to offend their politically divided audiences with a tone that favoured any particular political party or candidate. They chose to present facts as they were instead of positively describing candidates and their proposed policies. The WBS editor noted that they were broadcasting for both ruling party supporters and those opposed to the regime. Therefore, being neutral helped the stations to maintain their audiences which were equally divided along political lines. He further emphasised that they had no option other than toeing “the middle line” on the issue of the story tone (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). The NTV editor argued that having mostly neutral stories on their station was not an accident but rather by design. He noted that a decision was taken on this matter before the election period and all reporters were directed to ensure that the language of their stories was neutral. He, however, hastened to add that despite this decision, some political actors still complained:

This was also definitely a decision that we took. [...] It is an everyday DNA that we are objective; that we are neutral; that we do not favour. And this also comes with a number of challenges because even when you do that, I will tell you, there are a number of times when people who serve the interests of the state called and complained and as well the opposition. [But] when you have people complaining at that level across board, I think it means you are doing a good job (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

This argument was supported by a reporter from NTV who noted that apart from getting guidelines on election reporting, they also had refresher training just before the campaign period which sharpened their reporting skills. He added that the rigorous gate keeping at NTV also helped them to eliminate overly biased stories from reporters. Two news producers had to go through a story before it could be cleared to go on air: “So, at least we had that fine gate keeping” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

Ownership influence on campaign issues

For purposes of this study, campaign issues were divided into five categories including awareness/education, service delivery, economic empowerment, political scandal/sensationalism and ‘other’ (see previous chapter for definitions of these categories). It was crucial to establish the amount of coverage given to each campaign issue by NTV and WBS. This helped the author in ascertaining the campaign issues preferred by the two ownership structures.

Campaign issue		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Awareness/ Education	74 (56%)	24 (34%)	98
	Service delivery	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	4
	Economic empowerment	3 (2%)	1 (1%)	4
	Political scandal/ sensationalism	47 (35%)	41 (57%)	88
	Other	6 (5%)	5 (7%)	11
Total		133	72	205

Table 6.10: The distribution of campaign issues on NTV and WBS

Source: Derived from data collected by the author

The results revealed that of all the election related stories which were aired on NTV, awareness/ education contributed 56%, while on WBS this category had a score of 34%. The table above also shows that on WBS, stories about political scandal/sensationalism took the biggest percentage of air time with a score of 57%. The situation was much different at NTV where stories about political scandal/sensationalism contributed only 35%.

It was established that WBS preferred political scandal/sensationalism in its reporting largely because its news editors believed that the audience was more interested in scandals and controversies. Respondents argued that scandals sell more than issues of service delivery and economic empowerment: “They are a strong selling point. Controversies give you interesting news and they hook your viewers” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). A WBS reporter also admitted that they were influenced by their editors to prioritise political scandals in their news reports. He explained that often times editors trashed their stories about service delivery and would instead direct them to give those stories controversial angles: “You would write about

service delivery and the editor asks you so what?” (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016). This situation compelled many reporters at WBS to focus on sensational stories and controversies.

The study also revealed that NTV focused more on awareness and education partly because this was a highly contentious election and there were fears that it could turn violent. The NTV news reporters and editors thus took it upon themselves to use their coverage to sensitise politicians and the masses against violence: “Definitely we could not run away from signs of violence for instance the fighting in Ntungamo⁴². [...] It was also very important to raise awareness that this was happening and those concerned must take steps to ensure that violence does not occur elsewhere” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016). This argument was supported by a reporter from NTV who argued that as journalists they also had an obligation to educate. He explained that the civic competence among the electorate was low and thus the need for their coverage to focus on that: “We really had very low civic competence [...] especially in the rural areas. [...] We were alive to it and we wanted to serve” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

Ownership influence on news dominance

Another important aspect in establishing the influence of ownership structures on news content was lead dominance. In the current study, lead dominance means the candidate who is the main subject of the first story of the news bulletin. Lead dominance was ascertained by examining only those lead stories in the two weeks which focused on the election. The dominance of candidates in lead stories is important in establishing ownership influence on news coverage because editors position stories according to importance (Wang, 2003:19). To put it differently, the most important stories usually come first.

Lead dominance		Television station		Total
		NTV	WBS	
	Pro-ruling party	2	2	4
	Pro-opposition	4	2	6
	Balanced	3	5	8
Total		9	9	18

⁴² Ntungamo is a small town located in south western Uganda. At the peak of the 2016 campaigns, ruling party supporters and opposition loyalists fought on the streets of this town leaving many injured.

Table 6.11: Ownership type and lead dominance

Source: Derived from data collected by the author

On each of the two stations, nine lead stories focused on the election. Out of the nine lead stories on NTV, the opposition got the biggest share with a score of four stories. The balanced stories on NTV were three, while the ruling party had only two stories. The situation was different on WBS where balanced stories had the biggest score of five while the ruling party and the opposition each had two. This therefore shows that the ownership structures influenced the prominence given to particular candidates during the election period.

The table above also shows that NTV gave more prominence to the opposition than the ruling party in its coverage. However, the NTV editor explained that it was not the company's policy to promote the opposition but rather because those individual stories from the opposition had all the necessary ingredients for being leads. He further noted that they held editorial meetings every afternoon where lead stories would be chosen objectively following the news values: "Every day after 3:00pm we have an editorial meeting where we sit as producers, as editors and we brainstorm about these stories and deliberately choose what is going to be story one purely basing on news values and the strength of that particular story" (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016). However, a discussion with one NTV reporter revealed that some reporters were biased against the ruling party's candidate Yoweri Museveni: "Even if Museveni would want and has been in power for over three decades, we would not give him a lead every day" (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016). The reporter was not also bothered by claims that NTV was sympathetic to the opposition hence giving it more prominence in the news: "That accusation has come, served its purpose and gone away at a time it had to. So we were not worried". This assertion supported the view by Pamela Shoemaker and Elizabeth Mayfield (1987:11) that "journalists' personalities, personal opinions, and lifestyles may affect the stories they write".

Discussion of results

This chapter aimed at exploring ownership influence on the news content of WBS and NTV. The former represented independently-owned stations while the latter represented stations owned by media concentrations. The author sought to establish how ownership structures influenced the way the two television stations covered news. The news stories were analysed in terms of topic,

format, type, geographic locus, source, gender focus, length, party coverage, tone, campaign issue and lead dominance. The analysis merged the quantitative data with the views of the respondents generated during the interviews.

The study revealed that the two ownership structures prioritised politically inclined stories in their coverage. This confirms the view in the political economy of the media that leading television stations broadcast highly duplicated content irrespective of the type of ownership (Herman and Chomsky, 2002:21; McChesney, 2008:70). There are mainly two economic reasons that explain why editors and reporters were more interested in political stories. One, political stories are dramatic and appealing to viewers. This compelled editors to focus on such stories which help to widen their audience base since advertisers are more interested in big audiences: “Advertisers pay for the size and quality (propensity to consume) of an audience that a newspaper, magazine, website, radio, or television program can deliver” (Mosco, 2009:12). In this case, viewers are transformed into “marketable products that are valued for what they can bring in exchange” (Mosco, 2009:2). This finding is also consistent with a study conducted on Uganda’s media by Maryian Alowo (2010:67) which discovered that the audience’s interest in political issues was the main reason why media houses gave it prominence in news. Two, politically inclined stories were cheaper compared to other stories. Most political offices are located in city centres where most media houses are based. This made it cheaper for reporters to collect news from such offices. This observation supports Pamela Shoemaker and Elizabeth Mayfield’s (1987:8) finding that journalists prefer news sources that are closer and readily available to them. Shoemaker and her colleague further noted that consequently, government spokespersons and ranking politicians end up having more access to electronic media.

Data analysis revealed huge differences in the format of news on the two television stations. While live stories had a score of 4% on NTV, WBS did not have any single live story. As observed earlier, this was because WBS did not have the funds to buy the latest equipment necessary for live coverage. This confirms the observation in the political economy of the media that technological limitations can affect news content (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: xvi; Shoemaker and Mayfield, 1987:9). It was also observed that WBS had more desk stories than NTV mainly because the former lacked sufficient funds and reporters to adequately cover news events. Thus, the ownership structures influenced the format of news on the two stations.

It was further discovered that WBS had less anchor interviews just because the owner of the station was not interested in them. On the contrary, at NTV where there was less ownership influence, more anchor interviews were ran in their news contributing 7%. This confirms earlier findings by political economists of the media including Chris Hanretty (2014:348) that there is usually more ownership influence in stations owned by individuals than those owned by companies. However, despite the fact that the WBS owner was against interviews in the news, the editors at the station did not reject them completely. They made sure that once in a while they would spice their news with short anchor interviews contributing 4%. The action by the editors at WBS contradicted the view in the political economy of the media that journalists are merely vassals and tools of wealthy men who pull the strings behind the scenes (Baker, 2006:18-19; McChesney, 2008:89). Therefore, it can be argued that sometimes editors and reporters defy the directives of media proprietors and do what they believe is professionally correct.

The study also revealed that irrespective of the differences in the type of ownership, both NTV and WBS gave more coverage to hard news. This was in conformity with the political economy of the media which posited that hard news stories were preferred in television (Shoemaker and Mayfield, 1987:8). It was further noted that hard news stories were easier to write and less expensive to produce. The data revealed that all commercial television stations, whether independently-owned or under media concentrations, had a primary goal of maximising profits. It is therefore not surprising that both NTV and WBS preferred hard news stories which required minimal resources to produce as McChesney (2008:70) eloquently argued: “Free-market governance of the media system tends to produce fewer and fewer voices over time as competition is eliminated to increase profits. Diversity gives way to homogenisation as each competitor races to the bottom to find the least costly, most saleable stories”.

Further analysis also revealed that NTV had more soft news stories contributing 13% while WBS had a paltry 1%. This is because media concentrations in Uganda have plenty of resources necessary for producing soft news unlike independent networks whose resources are limited. This finding is contrary to Mosco’s (2009:159) view that media concentration limits “the diversity of information and entertainment available to the society”. It can thus be argued that while in the developed world media concentrations may have limited the diversity of information, in Uganda it is not the case. This study revealed that NTV which is owned by a

media conglomerate performed better than WBS in terms of news diversity and variety. NTV editors laboured to include at least one feature story in every news bulletin unlike WBS where it happened occasionally.

The study further discovered that both NTV and WBS gave more coverage to domestic news. This was particularly because television viewers were much more interested in events closer to them (Harcup and O'Neil, 2001:273; McGregor, 2002:2-3). This finding was also consistent with the findings of Angela Nwammwo, Leonard Edegoh and Uduot Iwok (2015:86) that commercial media houses in Africa “provide an appropriate amount of local coverage of issues” irrespective of the differences in ownership structures. This means that media concentrations in Africa can also prioritise domestic content contrary to the views of Ben Bagdikian (2006:201) that concentrated media has led to a decline in the coverage of domestic issues. However, the study revealed a considerable variation when it came to international stories. International stories on NTV had a score of 5% while on WBS they had a share of 13%.

Sources of news were also explored in this study and it emerged that known sources dominated the news on both NTV and WBS. The study discovered that editors and reporters on both stations preferred known sources because they were more accessible and available compared to the unknowns. This confirms the views of Hebert Gans (1979:80) who argued that individuals with political and economic power have easy access to media houses and journalists unlike those without power. He added that because of this easy access, known sources end up dominating the news. Gans was later supported by Shoemaker and Mayfield (1987:8) who observed that “institutional sources are more readily available to the journalist than individual and special interest groups, making it difficult for non institutional sources to get their ideas transmitted”. Unfortunately, official pronouncements do not reflect the views and concerns of the entire population. As a result, many pressing challenges remain muted as Ben Bagdikian aptly put it:

Official pronouncements are only a fraction of the realities within the population. Complete news requires more. Leaders, whether in public or private life and whatever their personal ethical standards, like most human beings, seldom wish to publicize information that discloses their mistakes or issues they wish to keep in the background or with which they disagree. Officials do not always say the whole truth. Citizen groups issuing serious contrary studies and proposals for mending gaps in the social fabric get only sporadic and minimal attention in the major media. Consequently, some of the country's most pressing problems remain muted (Bagdikian, 2006:19).

It was further observed that the views of the unknowns were only covered when their actions resulted in social mayhem, and analysing important issues of the day remained a preserve of the known sources as explained by Murdock (1992:31): “The right to analyse, judge and extrapolate is monopolised by experts, public figures, and broadcasting professionals. [...] These unequal power relations have continued down to the present.” It is however important to note that while both stations preferred known sources, NTV had more known sources than WBS. Known sources on NTV had a score of 75% while on WBS they scored 63%. This confirms the views of Golding and Murdock (1979: 202) that “the growing concentration of control in the hands of large communications corporations is the key defining characteristic of the emerging situation” where journalism aims to satisfy the interests of the middle and upper classes.

The study also examined the gender focus of the news on the two television stations. It was observed that the news bulletins on both channels were dominated by male sources. Surprisingly, even female journalists on NTV and WBS preferred males as sources of news. The data revealed that male chauvinism is still prevalent in Uganda’s news media irrespective of the ownership structures. Many women still feel uncomfortable to discuss issues of national importance. Even when reporters go on the streets to record vox pops, many women run away leaving men to dominate the discussions in the media. However, in some instances reporters also deliberately chose to interview only men even when there were competent women willing to be interviewed just because they were brought up to believe that men were more credible as sources. This observation is consistent with the views of Teun Van-Dijk (1995:24-25) who argued that even when women make special contributions, they are often ignored in the media especially in male dominated domains like politics, sports, security, science and technology. He added that:

As sources they are less credible, and hence less quoted, and as news actors they are less newsworthy. Virtually all major news topics are as male-oriented as the social and political domains they define. Gender issues have low newsworthiness, unless they can be framed as open forms of conflict or as amusing fait divers. The women’s movement may, up to a point, be benevolently covered, as long as it is not radical and as long as male positions are not seriously threatened. [...] Thus, news content and style continue to contribute to stereotypical attitudes about women. [...] Journalists and the media are hardly different from other elite groups and institutions, and that male elite power is hardly challenged by the media (Van-Dijk, 1995:24-25).

The dominance of male sources in television news can also be attributed to the underrepresentation of women in key government positions in Uganda. In spite of the modest gains in women emancipation, there are still few women who occupy powerful positions in the country. A report produced by Action for Development (2014:13) showed that only six of the twenty-nine permanent secretaries in Uganda were women. The report further revealed that out of the 112 Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) in the country, only 17 were female. Consequently, reporters found themselves running into men most of the times. This observation is consistent with Lineo Motjamela's (2005:85) finding that male voices dominated television news mainly because men occupied most key positions in areas of governance, sports, science and technology.

Another important aspect of this study was the length of the news stories. Long stories took the lion's share on both stations scoring 74% on NTV and 73% on WBS. For purposes of this study, stories that took more than two minutes were categorised as long stories. This showed that both stations preferred long stories despite the differences in ownership structures. The observation contradicted the finding of Daniela Dimitrova and Jesper Strömbäck (2010:490) that the average length of television news stories is between one minute and two minutes. In Uganda, the average length is between two minutes and three minutes. This was attributed to some editors who confuse length with detail. They believed that you cannot have a detailed story with all the necessary facts in just one minute. It was also blamed on some sloppy reporters who get immersed in the stories they are telling and end up prolonging them instead of presenting the facts. These challenges were prevalent in both WBS and NTV. This implies that the ownership structures did not influence the length of stories on the two television channels.

The study also revealed a considerable variation in the way different political parties were covered on the two television channels. NTV had more balanced stories contributing 60% while on WBS balanced stories scored 43%. Therefore, the ownership structures influenced the way political parties were covered on the two television stations. It was discovered that NTV had more balanced stories mainly because it had more professional reporters and editors who strived to ensure that all opposing viewpoints were accommodated in stories. The finding invalidated Ben Bagdikian's (2006:198) view that media concentrations tend to employ less qualified journalists. It also contradicted the finding of Tome Simiyu (2014:114) that media concentrations

have “led to the constriction of diversity of viewpoints”. This is because NTV, which is owned by a media conglomerate, performed better than WBS, which is an independently-owned network, in terms of accommodating different viewpoints. The study also revealed that NTV allowed more diversity because there was less ownership influence which gave editors freedom to exercise their professionalism. This confirmed the observations in an earlier study which discovered that “groups which spread their ownership across titles in different countries” do not exercise a lot influence on newsrooms (Hanretty, 2014:24).

The study further examined the tone of the stories on the two television channels. It was observed that there was a marginal variation in the tone of the stories on the two stations. Neutral stories were 100% on WBS and 97% on NTV. It emerged that neutral stories were preferred mainly because the two television stations never wanted to offend their audiences which were equally divided along political lines. This contradicted an earlier finding that concentrated media was responsible for negative tone in campaign news (Dunway, 2013:26).

The study also explored the campaign issues covered by the two stations. It revealed that NTV prioritised stories on electoral awareness and education contributing 56% while WBS prioritised sensational stories and political scandals contributing 57%. It can thus be concluded that ownership influenced campaign issues in the 2016 general elections. The finding invalidates the view by political economists of the media (Champlin and Knoedler, 2002:465; McChesney, 2008:40) that media concentrations are responsible for the rise of scandalised news on television. This is because in this study, NTV which is owned by a media conglomerate had less scandalised news than the independently-owned WBS. This fits well with an earlier finding that media concentrations do not essentially diminish a station’s performance. Concentrations can actually “bring acquisitions more in line with industry standards” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996:160).

The prominence given to stories during the elections was also examined. It revealed that most lead stories on NTV were opposition leaning while on WBS most leads were balanced. This showed that ownership influenced the prominence given to the election stories. The finding contradicted the view in the political economy of the media that concentrations tend to favour establishment candidates and the status quo in their news coverage (Curran, 2002:220-221; Herman and Chomsky, 2002:144). In the terms of this view, NTV was expected to favour the

incumbent president Yoweri Museveni who had been in power for over thirty years and had all the state machinery at his disposal. However, this study revealed that NTV chose to give prominence to the opposition in its lead stories despite the associated risks. It is also important to note that NTV may have been able to take that stand mainly because its owner, Aga Khan, was based far away in France which gave editors freedom to make their own choices. This observation is also in conformity with the political economy of the media which posited that absentee owners who run stations across different countries were less likely to influence editorial decisions in news departments (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996:159; Hanrety, 2014:347).

Conclusion

The chapter has presented results from the quantitative content analysis of news bulletins on NTV and WBS. The results from the content analysis were complemented by data collected using in-depth interviews. The two approaches were used to examine the influence of ownership structures on news content on the two stations. The analysis of the presented data has clearly demonstrated that the ownership structures influenced news content on television during the period under study. However, the presented data contradicts the view in the political economy of the media that concentrations diminish the performance of television stations. As the data above indicates, NTV performed better than the independently-owned WBS in terms of campaign issues, news format, number of stories, type of news, party coverage, and lead dominance. Therefore, the news on NTV was more diverse than the news on WBS.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON NEWS CONTENT

Introduction

This chapter presents respondents' views on editorial independence. It also examines how factors outside of media organisations influence television news content in Uganda. The external factors investigated include political interference, corruption and advertising.

Editorial independence

The second research question examined how media owners influence editorial decisions in newsrooms. To answer this question, the author investigated the aspect of editorial independence at NTV and WBS. Respondents acknowledged that editorial independence in television was affected by both internal and external factors. The data also revealed that editorial independence was compromised in all television stations irrespective of the type of ownership. One respondent from NTV explained how editorial independence was undermined in Uganda's television stations:

It happens here and I think even in very elite democracies that many times [...] powerful people [...] want in a very subtle manner to protect their interests through having a stake in the media and be able to use the media as a kind of leverage to gain a certain pedestal and be able to exert influence in business and politics just like [Silvio] Berlusconi in Italy. Here we have seen it happen, it is sometimes quite subtle. I mean the Aga Khan has vast interests, I do not think he would be happy if you went against his interests in your reportage. The same I think with Gordon Wavamunno. [...] And the process of journalism and news gathering is definitely affected as a result of this overbearing influence (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

While the foregoing discussion suggests that editorial decisions are influenced in all types of ownership, it is important to note that stations under concentrated media ownership in Uganda have less ownership interference than independent stations. The NTV editor explained that he makes his editorial decisions without interference most of the times:

Honestly, I have had very less interference from management in the way I conduct my business here. However, definitely there are incidents that often emerge or spring out especially during the high octane period of elections. [...] Sometimes they have a way they communicate through the powers that be and then the message trickles down to the

newsroom. This definitely has a chilling effect and people start watching over their backs. [It] does not augur well with the independence of journalism (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

The situation was different at the independently owned WBS where editorial decisions were regularly influenced by the ownership throughout the year. Respondents argued that in some instances they were given instructions that particular stories must run irrespective of their newsworthiness while on other occasions editors and reporters were instructed on how to angle these stories. It was also acknowledged that the owner of WBS was a board member in several organisations which indirectly affected editorial independence. News editors and producers often found themselves compelled to prioritise positive stories about those organisations. Respondents argued that the situation was worse in independent stations owned by one individual or family:

When you have a media house which is owned by a number of individuals, perhaps that variance in opinion gives it some bit of leverage to conduct its affairs from a very independent perspective. I have had an experience to work for a media house where the owner wanted to exert his influence to the point that he wanted to even interfere with how that particular media house goes about its business yet he was professionally limited in understanding the pros and cons of the function of a media house. So, definitely when you have ownership which is in many hands there is a likelihood that you may have a voice out there that is going to stand for independence. (Interviewee 6, 23 March 2016).

This view was supported by the WBS editor who noted that it was very challenging to work as an editor in a station owned by one individual because it was always a “one-man show”. He revealed that the proprietor’s views always reigned supreme and were never challenged. The editor further noted that they had lost many good presenters and journalists at WBS just because the owner was not so fond of them. He believed that there was more editorial independence in stations under concentrated media ownership since no single individual made unilateral decisions in such organisations:

I have worked in both institutions. Under concentrated ownership no one would have direct control over content. But here there is one man who decides what to put on air. It has happened many times (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016).

It was also discovered that local proprietors were more likely to influence editorial decisions than foreign based proprietors. Respondents argued that local owners usually have strong attachments to politicians and often discourage running stories that would antagonise such relationships. Respondents noted that because such proprietors are closer to the stations geographically, it is

much easier for them to interfere with the daily operations of the stations. A reporter at WBS explained that local proprietors closely monitor news bulletins and sometimes even call the newsroom directly to stop the broadcast of some stories. Resultantly, some stories which are supposed to be run twice end being run once and then dropped: “It happened to me one time. I covered a strike of workers at the Civil Aviation Authority. The story ran at 5 [pm] and we later received a call terminating it. I even had to answer some questions” (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016). This particular story was supposed to be aired again at 9:00pm since it was one of the big stories of the day. However, the managers at Civil Aviation Authority were not happy with it and thus called the WBS proprietor to stop it. It can therefore be concluded that while editorial decisions can be influenced in all ownership structures, television stations under concentrated media ownership have a higher degree of editorial independence.

While this section has presented the respondents’ views on editorial independence in Ugandan newsrooms, the following sections answer the third research question which sought explanations on how the process of news gathering and production was influenced by factors outside of media organisations. The factors examined were political interference, corruption and advertising.

Political interference

There was a general consensus among respondents that politicians and other overzealous state agents often interfered with the process of news gathering which eventually affected the final product on air. The interference was usually in form of intimidation, banning of particular broadcasts, physical violence and torture, suspension of some journalists by government, and forcing media houses to sack some broadcasters. It was acknowledged that this interference affected all media houses in Uganda irrespective of the type of ownership. The data revealed that the intolerance was usually at its peak during and immediately after elections. For example, respondents noted that shortly after the bitterly fought February 2016 presidential election, government decided to ban live broadcasts of all opposition activities. The loser in the election Dr Kiiza Besigye had refused to accept defeat and instead organised a civil disobedience campaign dubbed “defiance”. The campaign included walk-to-work protests as well as weekly prayers which were aimed at bringing down Yoweri Museveni’s government. In response, government banned all television stations from covering those activities and even threatened to revoke operating licenses of some stations. “The reporters who insisted on covering these

activities were beaten while others were arrested and later released without charges” (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016). This sent a clear message to all media houses that government was determined to keep all opposition activities out of the press.

Evidence from the field also showed that the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party and the Presidential Press Unit (PPU) further influenced television news content directly during the 2016 presidential elections by forcing all reporters who were covering president Yoweri Museveni’s campaign rallies to use video footage produced by PPU. All television stations in Uganda except NTV complied and started using video footage produced by PPU in their news. The WBS editor noted that they knew that it was wrong to use video footage produced by state agents in a campaign but they had no choice given that their reporters were being transported and fed by the government. He acknowledged that their station did not have the funds to facilitate reporters across the country: “It was about finances. The government was helping us to finance our team. So it was difficult for us to offend them” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016).

On the contrary, NTV editors defied the directive arguing that it was unprofessional to use pictures produced by someone else yet they had their own trusted cameramen and reporters on the ground. Consequently, the Presidential Press Unit (PPU) and Museveni’s campaign task force suspended the NTV news crew from covering their campaign activities. The suspension took ten days to be lifted. During this time, NTV kept running stories about other candidates except Museveni. The news anchors would mention it in every bulletin that they were not able to carry any story from Museveni’s campaign activities because of the suspension. This state of affairs compelled NTV management and the government to sit down and solve the impasse amicably. It was later agreed that NTV should run Museveni’s video footage in their bulletins but with a clear disclaimer that the pictures were produced by PPU. All the other stations including WBS would run the same pictures from PPU but without any disclaimer thus hoodwinking the audience to believe that they were professional pictures taken by objective journalists.



Figure 7.1: A photograph showing a disclaimer in the top-left corner (reading PPU FOOTAGE) indicating that the video footage was produced by PPU and not NTV journalists.

Source: Retrieved from the news bulletins examined by the author during the study.

Although the NTV management was able to convince government to let them use a disclaimer on the PPU pictures, the NTV editor still believed that their bosses let them down by conceding too much. He argued that using video footage produced by government agents greatly affected their objectivity and impartiality as a television station despite the disclaimer:

The consequence perhaps is what I am much more concerned about. Why should an independent media house rely on drone pictures or footage from the state⁴³ yet we have our own cameramen who can be able to go and film the crowds, the president speaking and campaigning? The threat and fear is that the drone images can be manipulated to serve a certain purpose. Definitely that affects our objectivity and impartiality in this entire media coverage. That was for me the key concern (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

Additionally, the NRM campaign team turned down a request by NTV to reshuffle reporters and cameramen who were covering them. During this campaign period, NTV had a practice of reallocating reporters who were covering the eight presidential candidates. The editors at NTV had a belief that when reporters stay for too long with candidates, they tend to develop a close relationship with them which affects their objectivity in reporting. They therefore decided to

⁴³ The word “state” in Uganda’s political parlance is often used to mean government and the ruling party. They are fused into one. The state apparatus like the police, army, and the judiciary are often times seen fighting to protect the interests of the ruling party.

reallocate them every after a given period. However, the NTV editor explained that the ruling party refused to accept any new reporter arguing that the president's security team was too engaged to screen any other journalist. The station had nominated several names of reporters to replace the existing ones but they were all rejected by the NRM party (Aine, 2016).⁴⁴ The station was thus left with no choice but to maintain the reporters that had covered the president from the start of the campaigns.

Much later after the campaigns, NTV was once again embroiled in a row with the state over one of the panellists it regularly hosted to discuss topical issues of the day in the news. The source of the tension was one Frank Gashumba, a social critic who often criticised government in his appearances on NTV. Respondents noted that government supporters had on several occasions advised NTV to stop hosting Gashumba in their evening news bulletins but the station did not find it necessary. At the height of the conflict, Uganda Communications Commission⁴⁵ (UCC) issued a directive on 10th October 2016 instructing NTV to stop running all programmes involving Gashumba lest it faced closure. In its letter to NTV, UCC argued that it had conducted investigations and found out that Gashumba used profane and abusive language while on air. It further noted that such behaviour breached the stipulated minimum broadcasting standards as clearly defined in the UCC Act (Mulema, 2016). However, while UCC is mandated by law to supervise the broadcasting industry and to reprimand errant players, it was wrong for the regulatory body to violate Gashumba's right to a fair hearing. He was never summoned for questioning yet UCC's purported investigations touched on a matter that affected him directly. In this case, UCC turned its self into the complainant, prosecutor and judge. Such actions by state institutions directly influenced news content and denied the audience the opportunity to hear divergent views.

Evidence from the field reveals that UCC has also banned several panellists from appearing on WBS under circumstances similar to those of NTV. The collected data shows that during the 2016 presidential election, WBS received an order from UCC directing management to stop hosting renowned security analyst Charles Rwomushana in their current affairs programme called *Face Off*. Rwomushana is a former head of political intelligence in the office of the

⁴⁴ <http://www.chimpreports.com/ntv-agrees-to-air-museveni-rally-drone-footage>

⁴⁵ Uganda Communications Commission is the regulatory body charged with the responsibility of overseeing the broadcasting industry.

president who has since become a government critic. “We were told to either stop Rwomushana or the entire show. However, Rwomushana’s ban was lifted after the election” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). Much earlier in 2009, another political researcher and analyst Robert Kalundi Serumaga was also banned by UCC from appearing on WBS and all other television and radio stations. Serumaga had appeared on an evening current affairs show on WBS called *Kibazo on Friday* where he accused government of killing “innocent” civilians during the Buganda riots⁴⁶ that broke out that year. He was arrested by security agents immediately after the show and later banned by UCC from appearing in any electronic media because of his comments on WBS. Although Serumaga went to court that year to challenge UCC’s decision, this author has discovered that until today the case has not been heard.

The data further revealed that the overzealous state agents continually interfered with the process of collecting news by harassing and intimidating reporters while in the field which ultimately affected the final product. These state agents include police officers, Resident District Commissioners (RDCs⁴⁷) and operatives from the Internal Security Office (ISO). A reporter at WBS television revealed that he had been beaten and arrested on several occasions by security operatives for pursuing stories that government agents perceived to be negative. The WBS reporter explained how he was once arrested together with other journalists while covering the arrest of two opposition leaders, Erias Lukwago and Dr Kiiza Besigye, at the Kampala constitutional square. Lukwago was the then Kampala Central Member of Parliament (MP) while Besigye was the leader of the biggest opposition party called Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). At the time, government had banned all gatherings at the constitutional square yet Lukwago insisted that as area MP he was free to meet his constituents in that place. So, when he turned up for his planned rally in the company of Dr Besigye, Police swiftly arrested the duo and their supporters. In the process, journalists who were covering the event were also arrested. The WBS reporter further explained how he was once again beaten by security operatives while covering court proceedings: “I was among the journalists who were affected when the *Black Mamba* invaded the High Court. I was beaten and my gadgets were confiscated” (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016). The *Black Mamba* was a paramilitary organ that government used in March 2006

⁴⁶ In September 2009 violent riots broke out in central Uganda after government stopped the king of Buganda from visiting one of his principalities.

⁴⁷ RDCs are representatives of the central government in the different districts of Uganda.

to invade the High court in Kampala with the aim of re-arresting treason suspects bailed by court. Journalists were beaten and their gadgets confiscated because the security operatives never wanted anyone to film the fiasco. During the scuffle, a defence lawyer was also beaten and left bleeding. The incident angered many officials in the judiciary and even compelled the then Principal Judge⁴⁸ James Munange Ogoola to write a critical poem in which he launched a thinly veiled attack on government for invading court premises. In his poem, Ogoola likened the High Court invasion to the abduction and eventual murder of Uganda's Chief Justice Ben Kiwanuka during Idi Amin's rule in 1972. The following is an extract from Ogoola's poem:

There, in broad daylight; there under the wide open skies
with high heaven looking on –
The Black Mambas commit abominable iniquity.
[...] There, in spite of the Congregation of an august
Assembly of visiting
Ambassadors; learned Advocates; the Accused; their
Accomplices; the Temple's own Administrators; and
the Elect Members of the Tribe's
Supreme Council of Meditation –
there, under the very eye of the High Priest himself,
duly seated on the Judgment Seat –
the Black mambas commit the vile deed:
the abomination of desolation!
Such unutterable trespass, such unrequited transgression
had not been seen before –
not since the sacrilegious execution
of the Chief Priest, Kiwanuka.
He was snatched, hauled and carted away
[...] Like a common thief.
[...] From the sanctum of the shrine,
to the place of the skull, they led him.
[...] In no other shrine: anywhere, anytime –
was ever so callous a calamity committed.
Not on this side of the Equator; nor on the other.
Not in these times; nor in earlier ones –
indeed, not since the Age of Darkness.
The more the pity, to see horrific history re-enacted! (Ogoola, 2009:127-128)

The data further revealed that state agents intimidated and harassed journalists mostly during presidential elections: “During election time security organs are hard on us because the regime is fighting for survival” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). Respondents further noted that after

⁴⁸ The Principal Judge is the head of the High Court in Uganda. He is also in charge of all Magistrates' courts.

elections, state agents usually become a little more tolerant to critical reporting. The situation is usually worse in the countryside where security operatives wield a lot of power. They can even detain reporters without producing them before court. An NTV reporter who is based in an upcountry town of Luwero revealed how she was once arrested for taking pictures of police officers beating a pregnant woman. The reporter was later released after six hours in detention without any charge. Her camera was also destroyed by the police officers who never wanted their colleagues to be exposed: “They do not want you to expose the crimes committed by [...] their colleagues” (Interviewee 4, 18 June 2016). She also narrated another ordeal where policemen threatened her not to broadcast video footage containing defaced campaign posters of the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni. The policemen had seen her filming the defaced posters. This time around she feared for her life and never sent the pictures to her editors in Kampala.

Another area where journalists are supposed to exercise restraint in Uganda is the army. Respondents consented that critical stories about the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) and its operations routinely attract hostile response from government. Journalists that have dared to write such stories have been arrested while in other instances their media houses have been arbitrarily shut down. One respondent explained why government does not tolerate critical reporting about the army yet it can be tolerated in other government departments:

The army we know in the political apparatus of the country kind of holds quasi powers in the superstructure. I would even place it above the known organs of the state because it holds the levers of power and many times the president has warned that if you dare write about the army and sensitive things that can cause rancour within the military establishment, he will send you six feet under. We know many times newspapers have been closed, *Monitor* newspaper I think twice. The first instance was a story written by Frank Nyakairu⁴⁹ about a chopper – a claim that a chopper had been shot down by the LRA rebels and more recently the Gen David Sejusa⁵⁰ letter which jolted the military

⁴⁹ Frank Nyakairu was a *Monitor* correspondent who was covering the war in northern Uganda which pitted government forces against the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebels led by Joseph Kony. He was arrested in October 2002 for writing a story which alleged that the rebels had shot down a Uganda government fighter helicopter. Court later dismissed the case against Nyakairu after government prosecutors lost interest in the case.

⁵⁰ Gen David Sejusa is a serving military officer who wrote a controversial letter in 2013 claiming that president Yoweri Museveni had hatched a plan to assassinate all military officers who were opposed to the idea of having his son succeed him. This leaked letter was published in the *Daily Monitor* and *Redpepper* newspapers. As expected, government responded by closing the two newspapers as well as banning this discussion in all electronic media.

establishment and led to the closure of at least two newspapers (Interviewee 6, 23 March 2016).

The quotation above was consistent with the earlier findings of Maja Janmyr (2013:93) in her study on media, refugees and military operations in the war ravaged northern Uganda. Janmyr observed that there was no extensive media coverage on the war in northern Uganda because journalists feared being arrested and tried in the military court known as Court Martial. Those that tried to cover the subject exercised a great deal of editorial circumspection:

Moreover, an overview of Ugandan media coverage concerning the military and the northern Uganda camps was impeded by censorship. The practice of self censorship by journalists has been aggravated since 2003, when the Ugandan government cited national security as grounds for suppressing media reporting of the government's efforts to fight the LRA. In March 2003, the army spokesman warned media houses and journalists not to publish or broadcast military information that was restricted, confidential or classified. If this occurred, the court martial could be invoked. Moreover, there is a data ban on all army records since the 1980s, making it difficult to verify information obtained regarding the Ugandan army (Janmyr, 2013: 93).

Government has also influenced the sacking or transfer of some editors in private media houses it deems critical of the regime. Notable among these is Conrad Nkutu who was the managing editor of *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala. He was transferred to the Nation Media Group headquarters in Nairobi and offered a junior position. Gerald Walulya (2008:92) revealed that Nkutu's crime was giving extensive coverage to a story which implicated government in the gruesome murder of former energy minister Dr Andrew Lutakome Kayiira. With this story, government was concerned that Nkutu was gradually tilting *Daily Monitor* in favour of the opposition. Walulya added that Nkutu's predecessor Charles Onyango Obbo had also been transferred to Nairobi earlier on similar grounds.

The data from the field further revealed that government has on several occasions forced WBS management to sack some reporters and editors that it deems antagonistic. A respondent from WBS cited an example where government forced them to sack two journalists for producing a critical story about a neighbouring country:

We lost two good journalists at WBS for allegedly offending a friendly state. The two journalists produced an investigative story about the human rights violations in one of the neighbouring countries. [...] The story angered the Uganda government which accused

WBS of unfairly attacking a friendly state. Consequently, the government ordered the managers at WBS to sack the two journalists. That is how we lost them. [...] Moreover, even the current affairs programme in which the story aired was scrapped on the orders of government (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016).

The above quotation corresponded with the observations of Dr Martin Alier, the former chairman of Nation Media Group in East Africa, who noted that during his tenure as chairman he received several orders from government officials to sack particular journalists (Alier, 2017:15). Alier argued that such pressure from government officials makes the work of media managers in Uganda very exhausting and taxing:

In the business world, I have sat on many boards and headed quite a few. Of those I have headed, none was more taxing and exhausting as heading the Nation Media Group of East Africa; which includes *Daily Monitor* newspaper and NTV. [...] One day I got a telephone call from government demanding to know why NTV was showing a gruesome picture of a person shot by the police in a riot. I was told to fire the journalists who had taken that photograph and the person airing the pictures. I strode into the studio every bit the Big Chairman. Soon all the employees in the studio at the time were seated in front of me. I told them why I was there and what I was going to do. One courageous member of staff stood up and addressed me directly. He said: “Sir, before you sack us, we would like to show you what we have not shown the public”. When they rolled the reel and I saw the woman holding her intestines, I almost threw up. I stopped the reel and waved off the staff (Alier, 2017:15).

Although Alier never sacked the journalists at NTV, his narration speaks volumes about the pressure government mounts on media managers. However, Alier cautioned that in some instances government officials invoke the name of the president when they are issuing these orders yet in actual sense he may not be aware. He cited the example of a senior government official who once called him claiming that the president wanted a certain journalist to be sacked. However, when he inquired from the president he realised that it was a lie; “the president told me that if he wants me to do something for him, he will tell me directly, not through a third party” (Alier, 2017:15).

Corruption and its influence on news content

The study discovered that corruption within the media greatly affected the process of news gathering. This scourge affected all television stations irrespective of the type of ownership. Respondents noted that in some instances reporters were bribed to drop the story ideas they are pursuing while in other cases they were paid to write positively about the news sources. The

news editors explained that it is usually difficult to detect these stories because of two main reasons. One, the news source and the reporter are all beneficiaries and thus keep this as a tightly guarded secret. Two, the reporters have mastered the art of crafting the stories so nicely to the extent of looking normal and professional. Such stories could only be detected if the source felt that the reporter had not delivered as agreed. In such cases, the sources usually call the editors or news managers to find out why their stories were never published yet they paid for them. It is often at this point that editors get to know the reporters who engage in corruption. The WBS editor revealed that one time his reporter took about three million Uganda shillings (about US\$1000) from a Chinese trader to write a positive story about his products. However, the editor dropped the story since he did not find it newsworthy. The following day the Chinese trader called the editor directly complaining and that is when he learned that his reporter had solicited for money from a news source. He however noted that extortion by reporters is usually at its peak during campaign seasons when every candidate is struggling to appear in the news. He added that he received many reports of candidates bribing his reporters during the 2016 general elections: “We had political aspirants giving reporters money to run stories” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). Unfortunately, in many of these cases at WBS the errant reporters never received any serious reprimand. However, while WBS management was a little lenient on corrupt reporters, the situation at NTV was different. NTV had very few cases of extortion and whenever they manifested the consequences were dire. The NTV editor explained that while it is impossible to completely eradicate corruption in newsrooms, it is important for television stations to have tough sanctions for staff members who engage in such acts. He argued that this would help to reduce the incidences of extortion and bribery in the media. The editor further noted that at NTV they have had their fair share of these cases but the reporters know full well that the penalty is always expulsion:

In newsrooms it is difficult to employ only angels. Graft has permeated every fabric of this country and it has not also spared our very own journalists. However, when someone is found to have tried to ask for a favour, whatever kind it is, in exchange for writing positively about a news source, definitely we take tough measures and the penalty is very well defined and that is expulsion (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

Corruption in Uganda’s media has also been exacerbated by the poor remuneration of news reporters and editors. Many journalists in Uganda are poorly paid earning about US\$100 per

month on average as earlier presented in Chapter Two. Others are employed on a freelance basis which means that they are only paid for stories published. Stations rely on these freelancers partly because they spend less money on them. For example, a quarter of the reporters at WBS were on freelance basis: “I have a team of sixteen [reporters] who are on full time basis and then a team of seven who are freelancers” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). NTV also relies on freelancers especially in the countryside⁵¹. Sometimes the amount of money paid per story does not even cover the transport costs involved making the reporters vulnerable to corruption. What some journalists do is to cover only those events where the news sources provide transport facilitation. The situation worsens during elections where reporters only cover wealthy candidates who can facilitate their movements. This definitely compromises the reporters and ultimately affects the final news product on air. This is so because a reporter cannot write a critical story about a person who literally pays him or her. WBS television had another category of reporters called ‘trainee journalists’. These are usually reporters who stay at WBS after completing their internship to work for free due to the scarcity of jobs in the country. They are, for all intents and purposes, qualified reporters but the station cannot regularise them because of financial challenges. They usually end up reporting for the station for up to two years or more without payment yet they also have basic needs. Such reporters are so vulnerable and would seize on any opportunity to make money in the field as observed by Monica Nogara (2009:6): “The low pay of journalists often discourages the best qualified professionals to stay in the media or tempts some journalists to accept bribes to supplement their extremely meagre salaries, significantly affecting the quality of their reporting”. In his study on Uganda’s media, Gerald Walulya (2008:75) also explained how poor remuneration of journalists affected the process of news gathering:

In Uganda, most freelance journalists earn about US\$100 per month. Most media houses have less staff reporters compared to freelance journalists because of the costs involved. Even then, staff reporters are also still poorly paid taking a salary ranging from US\$200-700 per month. For freelancers, the situation is more complex because they cannot afford to spend a lot of time investigating a complex story because their pay is based on how many stories they publish. Given that background, it is indeed a temptation to entrust a poorly paid journalist to watch-over people who have millions of dollars at their disposal (Walulya, 2008:75).

⁵¹ It is important to note that unlike WBS, NTV gives some of its freelance reporters transport facilitation and a retainer pay on a monthly basis.

The data also showed that corruption in the media has been fuelled by the limited number of professional and experienced journalists in the industry. Due to poor remuneration, journalists do not stay in the industry for long leaving television stations to survive on novices who can easily be compromised⁵². Many aggressive journalists end up joining government agencies as information officers while others cross over to corporate organisations to work as public relations officers. Respondents acknowledged that media houses in Uganda do not have deliberate policies to retain talented and experienced journalists with institutional memory. On the contrary, media managers are eager to let the senior journalists go so that they can employ fresh graduates whom they would pay less as observed by one respondent from WBS:

The challenge is that management does not appreciate the importance of having veteran journalists in the newsroom. For example, if they demand for better remuneration, management will tell them to go yet they are still needed. That is why currently we have very few journalists who have worked here since the establishment of this station in 1999 (Interviewee 5, 15 June 2016).

Respondents noted that this reduces the number of people in the industry that can provide stewardship and guidance in newsrooms: “Many good journalists who should still have remained in these media houses leave. We still needed people like Peter Mwesige and Bernard Tabaire who are at the African Centre of Media Excellence to continue giving stewardship and guidance to reporters in newsrooms (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016). Mwesige and Tabaire were senior editors at the *Daily Monitor* newspaper, a sister company to NTV. They quit active journalism and established their own media training school called African Centre for Media Excellence.

The study further revealed that in some stations journalists rarely undergo refresher trainings. It was discovered that WBS had had only one refresher training in the last two years despite the fact that most of their reporters were new in the field and thus needed such trainings to be reminded of their professional obligations. The WBS editor noted that despite having a policy on training staff, “it was not being followed due to financial challenges” (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016). However, unlike WBS, NTV took the issue of training seriously. It was noted that NTV organises refresher trainings for all its news reporters and editors every after three months. On some occasions, they hire media experts to conduct the trainings while in other instances they invite veteran journalists from their headquarters in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. Apart from

⁵² The average lifespan of a Ugandan journalist in the media industry is five years.

refresher trainings, NTV also encourages its journalists to apply for professional training in international media organisations such as Radio Netherland Training Centre (RNTC), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Thomson Foundation. Respondents at NTV explained that these trainings have helped them a lot to enhance their skills and learn the latest media practices across the globe. They also believe that it is these skills which have given them an edge over their colleagues in other television stations in the country.

Advertising and its influence on news content

The study revealed that advertising has had a great influence on the process of news gathering and ultimately the news product itself. It was acknowledged that television stations under concentrated media ownership and those under independent ownership have all been affected by advertising in equal measure. A reporter from NTV noted that there is no way her station would publish a story which is critical of a big advertiser: “If a company [...] sponsors more than five shows on a station, any critical story about it will not run because these [media houses] at the end of the day are after money (Interviewee 4, 18 June 2016). This is so because advertising income has become very vital to the survival of commercial media houses⁵³. This corresponded with the observation of Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1996:186) that big multinational corporations and advertising conglomerates, which are the leading advertisers, have acquired immense power to suppress information they do not want to get to the public domain. In her study on the nature and origin of advertisements on WBS television, Emily Saxe (2014:10) discovered that 90% of the leading advertisers on Ugandan television were multinationals. She argued that this gave these companies the power to influence what was aired on television: “This puts power into the hands of the companies that advertise, as they influence the messages that are either shown to or hidden from the public on television” (Saxe, 2014:10). The WBS editor explained that on a regular basis editors have to negotiate with big advertisers on stories that portray them negatively. The negotiations usually result in either dropping or toning down the stories:

On several occasions we have to negotiate with advertisers over stories. One time our reporter in the eastern town of Jinja brought a story about a soap producing company which was polluting the environment. The story was good with all the elements of news

⁵³ One respondent even argued that “advertising is the lifeline of television” (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

but the company happened to be one of our big advertisers. When the company officials learnt that we were working on that story, they immediately called management to complain. We subsequently had a meeting with them in which we were compelled to drop the story (Interviewee 2, 24 March 2016).

Respondents further revealed that many times big advertisers threaten to withdraw their adverts in reaction to news stories they find antagonistic. It was also discovered that advertising companies in Uganda use the 'stick and carrot' approach to influence news coverage. These companies often increase their advertising expenditure on stations that favour them in their reporting while at the same time pulling back on their spending commitments on stations deemed hostile because of objective and critical reporting: "Those kinds of threats sometimes affect the process of news gathering and, you know, the final product that goes on air" (Interviewee 1, 18 June 2016).

Consistent with the findings of Shoemaker and Reese (1996:186), the study further revealed that while there is evidence to show that advertising agencies make attempts to censor news content, sometimes the censorship is self-imposed by the news channels themselves. Evidence from interviews showed that on several occasions editors and news producers dropped stories even before advertisers said anything. A reporter from NTV noted that in 2016 a very good story about a multimillion dollar scandal in the ministry of works and transport was dropped simply because it involved a construction company which sponsored news features on NTV. The company in question was being investigated by the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA) over shoddy work on some roads in eastern Uganda. Other television stations aired the story except NTV which felt obligated to protect a big advertiser. Surprisingly, the other media houses that published the story also had adverts from the same construction company. This reinforced the theory by Shoemaker and Reese (1996:186) that censorship in newsrooms is sometimes self-imposed.

The study also discovered that on several occasions television stations designed particular news segments with the primary aim of attracting advertisers. It was also acknowledged that news channels covered advertisers' events and activities not because they were newsworthy but rather because they felt obligated to promote those companies in the news. In these cases, journalists were compelled to sacrifice the journalistic principle of objectivity in the bid to produce colourful stories about advertisers. One reporter revealed that in 2016 she was assigned to cover

sensitisation activities by the ministry of gender, labour and social development in the far flung district of Nakasongola with clear instructions from the news producer to write the story in a way that would appease the ministry officials given that they were sponsoring documentaries on the television station: “The producer clearly told me [that we were covering the event] just to please the ministry officials because they were running some documentaries on the television” (Interviewee 4, 18 June 2016). Corporate promotions were also dominant in the news bulletins as Lugalambi (2010:48) rightly observed earlier: “These advertisers, especially mobile phone service providers, banks, and soft drinks and beer companies, generally manage to have their corporate promotions as dominant features of the news not only on radio and TV but in the media generally”.

Despite the importance of advertising revenue to the survival of media companies, some respondents argued that there is still a way through which television stations could withstand pressure from advertisers and broadcast objectively. Respondents explained that news channels that are objective, fair and balanced always attract big audiences that advertisers clamour for. This means that television stations can still attract advertising revenue without compromising the quality of their news bulletins. It was further argued that the relationship between the media and advertisers is mutually beneficial because they both need each other. Therefore, the media ought not to succumb to the pressure from advertisers:

I think the priority for the newsroom and journalists is to do a quality bulletin which holds those in power to account [...] which holds corporate tyranny to account. Then the audience is able to judge that this is a very objective and impartial media house. Consequently, advertisers would come on board because they want to advertise where there is a good audience and across the world this has worked (Interviewee 3, 18 June 2016).

This view reinforced Vincent Mosco’s (2009:137) argument in his examination of the *commodification*⁵⁴ process. He observed that the *commodification* process of the media “brought together a triad that linked media companies, audiences, and advertisers in a set of reciprocal relationships. Media firms use their programming to construct audiences; advertisers pay media companies for access to these audiences; audiences are thereby delivered to advertisers” (Mosco,

⁵⁴ *Commodification* “is the process of transforming things valued for their use into marketable products that are valued for what they can bring in exchange. A good example is the process of turning a story that friends enjoy into a film or novel to be sold in the marketplace” (Mosco, 2009:127).

2009:137). This means that advertisers do not create audiences but instead have to rely on the media to access them. Therefore, in a capitalist economy, media organisations are not supposed to be subservient to advertising agencies since they also produce a “good” that advertisers need.

In all, evidence from the study indicated that advertising remained one of the greatest influences on news content in Uganda. The influence took many forms including direct threats from advertising agencies, self censorship by the news channels in the bid to protect their clients, and coverage of advertisers’ events as an additional benefit for the adverts placed on the television stations. The study revealed that this affected all media houses irrespective of the type of ownership. Therefore, as James Tumusiime⁵⁵ (2016:3) argued, the political economy of the media in Uganda requires a paradigm shift in the way media are funded. He noted that when news media are left to be run like other businesses, journalists become vulnerable to the market forces leading to low quality journalism. The evidence suggests that there is need for the establishment of more non-profit media organisations in Uganda where journalists would be shielded from commercial interests. This approach has been successful in the United States where journalists in organisations such as *National Public Radio (NPR)* do not have to worry about advertising. Currently, *Uganda Radio Network (URN)* is the most successful non-profit media organisation in Uganda. Since its establishment in 2005, *URN*⁵⁶ has produced news content for radio, television and print media (Tumusiime, 2016:6-7).

Discussion of findings

This chapter sought to examine ownership influence on editorial decisions. It also explored how factors outside of media houses affected the process of news gathering and production at NTV and WBS. The factors examined were political interference, corruption, and the influence of advertisers. Therefore, this section discusses these three factors as well as editorial independence.

The study revealed that while media owners influenced editorial decisions at the two television channels, ownership interference was more predominant at WBS than NTV. This contradicted

⁵⁵ James Tumusiime is a veteran journalist and media entrepreneur. He is a co-founder of *The Observer* newspaper in Uganda.

⁵⁶ However, *URN* is purely funded by the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and runs a risk of collapsing if the donor pulls out. There is therefore a need for a national fund that would protect such organisations from over reliance on donors and advertisers (Tumusiime, 2016:6).

the view in the political economy of the media that concentration has led to a decline in the level of editorial independence (Donhanyi, 2003:32; Hanretty, 2014:335). In this study, it was clear that news editors and producers at NTV (which is owned by a media conglomerate) had more freedom to make editorial decisions than their counterparts at the independently-owned WBS. For instance, there was no day when management asked newsroom to drop any story from the bulletin at NTV yet this was a common occurrence at WBS. The data also revealed that there were particular cases when the WBS proprietor would directly call the station to stop coverage of certain events something that could not happen at NTV where the major shareholder stayed far away in France and had little knowledge about Uganda's current events. This corresponded with the view in the political economy of the media that absentee owners were less inclined to influence news content (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996:159).

Evidence from the study showed that apart from ownership, the relationships between the media and state power also played a big role in influencing the process of news gathering. This, as Wasko (2005:39) argued, dispelled the "common myths about our economic and political system, especially the notions of pluralism, free enterprise [and] competition". As the data suggested, in Uganda media freedom can only be guaranteed if the government's interests are not at stake. Whenever government felt threatened during the period under study it used its might to influence media operations. A good example was when journalists were beaten and their recording gadgets confiscated while covering the invasion of the High Court in Kampala by security forces as they rearrested treason suspects bailed by court. By so doing, the state was able to manipulate news coverage since television stations were deprived of the best video footage that captured the dramatic events at court.

It was also established that despite the incessant threats from government, NTV was more resilient than WBS in withstanding the pressure from government. For example, when the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party ordered television stations to use video footage produced by the Presidential Protection Unit (PPU), all the other television stations complied except NTV. The station also produced news about gross human rights violations committed by security agencies during the campaigns. For instance, NTV aired a story about an opposition campaign agent who was abducted, beaten and his car burnt in the remote district of Sembabule

as he mobilised support for opposition presidential candidate Amama Mbabazi⁵⁷. This contradicted the view in the political economy of the media that television stations under concentrations often support less democratic regimes in the developing world in order to protect the vast economic interests of their stockholders (Baker, 2006:18-19; Kleinstauber and Peters, 1991:185). James Curran (2002:221) further argued that media conglomerates can also support repressive governments by either rationalising their excesses or deliberately refusing to investigate human rights violations. However, evidence from this study revealed that this was not the case with NTV. Despite its major shareholder having a big stake in Uganda's mining, aviation, agro-processing, tourism and other sectors, NTV tried its best to broadcast objectively and without favour during the 2016 presidential election.

Consistent with the observations of Mosco (2009:162), it was also discovered that media organisations owned by conglomerates often drew “on the resources of the parent” companies for “financing and political power lobbying”. The collected data showed that NTV occasionally got resources from its parent company, Nation Media Group (NMG), to finance its operations unlike WBS. It was because of these resources that NTV was able to acquire the latest technology that was used in the live coverage of the elections (see preceding chapter for details). WBS which lacked such resources did not carry any live story during the period under study. The latter station also lacked financial resources to hire enough reporters to cover the entire country during the campaign period.

In conformity with the political economy of the media (Mosco, 2009:162), NTV was also able to tap into the enormous human resources of its parent company. For example, in some of the refresher trainings organised for reporters and editors, NTV invited veteran journalists from the NMG headquarters in Nairobi to work as facilitators instead of hiring external people who would have been more expensive. It was also noted that NMG had a regional media lab at its headquarters in Kenya where NTV often sent its journalists for skills training. The trainings helped NTV to have more professional and skilled journalists than WBS. This, however, contradicted the views of some political economists of the media who posited that when

⁵⁷ Amama Mbabazi is the immediate former Prime minister in Yoweri Museveni's government. Of all the six Prime Ministers Museveni has had in his 31 year rule, Mbabazi was the most powerful. However, in a dramatic twist, Mbabazi broke ranks with his former boss last year and decided to run against him. He came a distant third in the general election after Museveni and Dr Kiiza Besigye of the leading opposition party, Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).

concentrations take over media houses, they scale down serious news and recruit less qualified reporters in the attempt to reduce costs of production (Bagdikian, 2006:198; McChesney, 2008:40-42). Evidence from the study showed that NMG assisted journalists from its subsidiary companies to acquire more professional skills instead of laying them off.

Related to the above, the lobbying power of parent companies also manifested itself during the presidential campaigns when the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party suspended NTV reporters from covering the president's campaign activities over their refusal to broadcast drone pictures taken by government agents. As noted previously, after the suspension, NMG managers in Nairobi engaged the Ugandan government and the suspension was lifted after ten days. The news editors at NTV were never involved in the discussions and only received instructions from their headquarters to resume covering the president. This consolidated the view in the political economy of the media that concentrations can also have overbearing influence on governments (Mazzoleni, 1991:168; Turnstall and Palmer, 1991:100). It therefore appears that the concentrated influence of media conglomerates "exercises political and cultural forces" (Badgikian, 2006:10).

Further analysis of the presented data revealed that profit maximisation was the primary goal of both media concentrations and independently-owned news channels. As Shoemaker and Reese (1996:139) observed, "other goals are built into this overarching objective, such as to produce a quality product, serve the public, and achieve professional recognition". It was evident that these economic considerations ended up indirectly influencing editorial decisions on the two television stations. Stories were often judged on the basis of whether they would increase or reduce the inflow of advertising revenue. A WBS reporter explained how his story on the plight of casual labourers on a flower farm, close to Lake Victoria⁵⁸, was dropped after the farm owner promised to buy advertising time on the television. This contradicted Leon Sigal's (1973:8) earlier observation that the media are different from other businesses in the way they operate. He argued that professional objectives took precedence over profits as long as news media had sufficient revenues to guarantee organisational survival. However, from this study, it appears that Sigal's view has become less accurate (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996:140).

⁵⁸ Lake Victoria is the largest lake in Africa. It is shared by three East African countries including Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

Lastly, it was established that both NTV and WBS did not engage in ferocious competition because each had a lot to lose in such unnecessary rivalry. The two television stations maintained ‘cartel-like’ connections with just minor differences. These relationships left the media organisations alive while at the same time leaving most Ugandans with narrowed choices on television. The major media in Uganda convened meetings to lobby and decide prices in a ‘cartel-like’ manner just like the organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Bagdikian, 2006:5). NTV and WBS were also found to be members of the two leading media lobbies in the country. They were all members of National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) and Uganda Media Owners Association (UMOA). This was consistent with the view that the dominant media members joined lobbies to “achieve the laws and regulations that increase their collective power” over advertisers and consumers (Bagdikian, 2006:9). For example, in 2014 UMOA threatened to sue government for failing to pay its members for mobilising Ugandans to register for national identity cards⁵⁹. Following the joint threat, government paid the respective media houses for the air time used during the campaign. Later, over 20 UMOA members also signed a memorandum of understanding in which they agreed on the pricing of adverts in the different time zones. This clearly showed that leading television stations in Uganda operated like cartels with no need for fierce competition.

Conclusion

This chapter presented respondents’ views on the extent to which media owners influenced key decisions in newsrooms. It appeared that to a great extent owners influenced editorial decisions in all stations irrespective of the type of ownership. However, it was observed that ownership interference was more common at WBS than at NTV. The editors at NTV had more freedom to make editorial decisions than their counterparts at WBS.

The chapter also examined the external factors that influenced the process of news gathering and production in Ugandan television stations. The most pressing factors were political interference, corruption and advertising. The political interference was in form of intimidation, physical harassment and suspension of journalists from covering some political events by state actors. Despite the fact that the two stations were affected, NTV appeared to be more resilient than

⁵⁹ This was the first time in history that Ugandans were registered for national identity cards. It was a massive campaign in which government used the media for mobilization. However, payment for the airtime used took long to be effected forcing media owners to threaten government with legal action.

WBS in withstanding the threats from government. Corruption and advertising were also found to be strong influences on news content in the two ownership structures. However, analysis of the data showed that NTV was committed to “zero tolerance” of corruption among editors and reporters unlike WBS where some culprits would easily get away with corruption offences.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The chapter starts with a review of the study's purpose and strategies. It further summarises the results from the quantitative content analysis and findings from in-depth interviews. Recommendations for media owners and policy makers are also presented in this chapter. It finally ends with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

The study explored the influence of media ownership on television news content during the 2016 presidential election in Uganda. The focus was on NTV and WBS televisions. The former represented concentrated ownership while the latter represented independently-owned television channels. The main theory underpinning this thesis was the political economy of the media which posited that ownership structures have varying effects on the news content available to the public (Baker, 2006:105; Murdock, 1992:23). However, as indicated in Chapter One, most studies on the influence of media ownership on news content in Uganda have focused on newspapers. Therefore, it was necessary for this study to explore how ownership influenced television news in Uganda. It was also vital to investigate ownership influence in media concentrations that have taken control over the broadcasting industry in Uganda.

In order to accomplish this study, the following research objectives were set by the author:

- To examine how different ownership structures influence news content in Uganda.
- To analyse how media owners influence editorial decisions.
- To examine how factors outside of media houses influence news gathering and production.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in collecting and analysing data. The two approaches complemented each other especially in cases where one approach failed to obtain the required data (Semujju, 2016:83). For example, due to the systematic nature of quantitative content analysis in measuring elements, it was employed in counting and classifying news characteristics (McCusker and Gunaydin, 2014:2) while in-depth interviews were used in examining experiences and challenges of journalists which the author could not easily observe (Rossetto, 2014:483).

Summary of the findings

The data revealed that ownership structures influenced news content on NTV and WBS during the 2016 presidential election. However, the level of influence varied from one variable to another. For example, the analysis showed huge differences in the number of stories, campaign issues, news prominence, political party coverage, news format and geographic locus of the news on NTV and WBS. Yet, for the topic, type, length, source, and story tone, there were marginal variations on the two television stations.

The findings revealed that media owners influenced editorial decisions in both media concentrations and independently-owned channels. There was overwhelming evidence to show that both NTV and WBS could not broadcast news stories that went against the interests of their respective owners. In some instances the ownership influence was direct while in other cases it was subtle. For example, the previous chapter provides various cases where proprietors directly stopped the broadcast of particular stories because of their personal interests. The study also revealed that absentee owners were less likely to interfere with editorial decisions than their local counterparts.

Apart from ownership influence, political interference also affected television news content. As shown in the previous chapter, several journalists at NTV and WBS were intimidated while others were physically harassed by state operatives. This had both a direct and indirect effect on news content. For instance, the incessant arrests of journalists forced some of them to engage in self-censorship especially when producing stories that were likely to offend those in government. Consequently, this affected the news content since some good stories had to be dropped to avoid the wrath of the state. State organs such as Uganda Communications Commission also influenced news directly by stopping some government critics from appearing on television and banning the coverage of certain political activities. However, as earlier discussed in this thesis, NTV appeared to be stronger than WBS in withstanding this political pressure.

Advertising also influenced news content on the two television stations in equal measure. The study revealed that both NTV and WBS had a primary objective of maximising profits. Therefore, there was no way journalists at the two stations would publish any story that would antagonise a major advertiser. The findings revealed that the multinational corporations have gained immense influence over local television stations in Uganda by increasing their

expenditure on stations that favour them in their reporting. This compelled the two channels to avoid running stories that were critical of such organisations. The presented data also showed that corporate promotions were dominant in the news since media houses were competing to appease big advertisers. However, this thesis has argued that it is specious and flawed for journalists to make editorial decisions basing on the interests of advertisers. It is the view of this thesis that objectively produced news bulletins can still attract big audiences which would in turn attract advertisers.

Recommendations of the study

Media owners

The media owners should desist from interfering with the process of collecting, producing and broadcasting news. Editorial decisions ought to be left in the hands of news editors and news managers. In the worst case scenario, media proprietors should only sponsor ideas which can either be taken or rejected. This study has shown that when owners influence editorial decisions, the quality of news tends to go down since many media proprietors do not have the necessary professional competence to determine stories. For example, it is revealed in this thesis that NTV which had less ownership interference produced more objective and balanced news bulletins than WBS whose owner exercised a lot of control over news stories. This consequently helped NTV to get more viewers and advertisers which enabled the owners to make even more profits. Therefore, this thesis argues that exercising editorial independence can also benefit media owners.

Media owners should also set aside resources for periodic training of their reporters and editors. This is important for two main reasons. One, journalism is a very dynamic profession which requires regular refresher training. Two, Ugandan journalists are generally young between the ages of 25 and 35. As such, they need to be constantly reminded of the professional standards of their trade. It is evident from this study that the average lifespan of a Ugandan journalist is five years. As presented in this thesis, they usually cross over to more lucrative jobs after a short stint in journalism. This leaves the industry with novices who need regular guidance. It is clear from this study that NTV journalists were able to improve their skills because of regular training. However, it is important to note that such training cannot be conducted without the necessary resources. For instance, WBS which lacked the financial resources never conducted any refresher

training in the last two years before the election. This probably explains why on several occasions WBS aired stories which were professionally wanting.

Media owners should also ensure that their employees are well motivated to enable them perform better. This study has revealed that most journalists in Uganda are poorly paid by their employers. For example, an average Ugandan reporter earns between US\$100 - \$200 per month (Tabaire and Bussiek, 2010:68; Walulya, 2008:75). Yet, even by Ugandan standards this money is not enough to meet the basic necessities of life. Additionally, many of these reporters are not well facilitated to go out and collect news. They thus end up covering mostly those activities where the source has provided transport allowance which affects the quality of journalism. A good example is that of the WBS reporters who were facilitated by the NRM party throughout the presidential campaigns. The reporters were given transport, food and lodging allowances by the ruling party. It was therefore not surprising that WBS favoured the NRM candidate in its election coverage. So, to alleviate this problem, media owners should ensure that they facilitate their reporters while on duty.

Government

There is a need for government to make a law that would protect media diversity and pluralism from the effects of concentration. As presented earlier, the government had in the mid 1990s proposed to limit media concentration in its initial draft of broadcasting guidelines. However, this proposal was later dropped from the final draft which was passed (Lugalambi, 2010:51). This state of affairs has enabled many conglomerates to take over local media outlets without any limitation. As shown in Chapter Two, most television stations in Uganda are currently owned by media conglomerates. Consequently, the diversity of content on the newly acquired stations has been affected. For example, some of these newly absorbed media outlets in Uganda devote more time on syndicated programmes hence subjecting the audience to duplicated content. Therefore, there is a need for a law that would limit the number of television or radio stations a company or an individual can own in the same market. The European Union and the United States have in the past made such laws to limit the effects of media concentration on content. Even when the United States relaxed this rule in 1999, it allowed a company or an individual to own only two television stations in the same market (Dohnanyi, 2003:30; Smith, 2008:405).

The government should also reign in on its overzealous officials who overstep their mandate by interfering with the process of collecting and producing news. This study has revealed several cases where government officials stopped journalists from doing their work without any legal basis. Such officials ought to be educated that a vibrant and free media is beneficial to everyone and necessary for a country to develop. This is because free media creates a public sphere within which the citizens collectively decide how they want to advance their societies. It is only a vibrant media that can facilitate this exercise (Curran, 2002:225).

Study limitations and suggestions for future research

The study covered only two television stations yet there are many other ownership structures in Uganda. Although WBS and NTV were the leading television stations at the time of the study, they do not represent the entire television ownership structure in the country (Namusoga, 2016). For example, there are stations owned by the government, religious organisations, civil society organisations and traditional/cultural institutions. Future researchers could therefore examine how these other structures influence news content in television. This study did not also focus on the organisational size and nature of media concentrations yet the reviewed literature revealed that ownership influence may vary from one type of concentration to another. Other researchers may thus conduct a comparative study of ownership influence on news content in big and small media concentrations.

While interviews and content analysis are vital in establishing why and how certain decisions are made in newsrooms, they may not reveal some details of ownership influence on news content. This is because respondents may not be honest during the interviewing process. In future, ethnographic studies should be conducted to overcome this challenge. In this method of inquiry, the researcher would have to live the life of a journalist in the field and the newsroom to establish how owners influence the process of news gathering and production in the different ownership structures.

Although this study explored how media ownership influenced news content during the 2016 presidential election, the author did not examine whether the produced content influenced the decisions of the voters in any way. This was mainly because the scope of this thesis focussed on ownership influence on content. However, it could be necessary to investigate this in another study given that owners manipulate news content to serve a particular purpose. In future research

some members of the audience ought to be interviewed to establish whether the positioning and angling of stories in the news influence the voting decisions of the electorate.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One

Interview guide for news editors

1. When was this television started?
2. What were the aims of its establishment?
3. Are your reporters on a permanent basis or freelancers?
4. How often do you take your staff for refresher training?
5. What is the size of your news team?
6. How would you describe the rate at which journalists leave your station?
7. What degree of editorial independence do you enjoy from management?
8. Do you have an active editorial policy?
9. How does the existing legal regime affect your work as an editor?
10. Can you describe the recruitment process for staff?
11. How are reporters assigned to cover particular stories?
12. How would you assess the extent to which journalists and media outlets have been subject to intimidation and physical violence by state agents and other political actors?
13. Do you think ownership influence on content is more prevalent in stations under concentrated media ownership than single channel networks?
14. Does the organizational structure affect news coverage and how?

Interview guide for reporters

1. How long have you worked for this television?
2. How were you recruited?
3. Do you have an active editorial policy?
4. How do reporters learn the editorial policy?
5. Would you report news differently if this television was under a different type of ownership?
6. How does the existing legal regime affect your work as a reporter?
7. Can you explain how your day looks like?
8. How free are you in selecting your own stories?
9. Do you think ownership influence on content is more prevalent in televisions under concentrated media ownership than single channel networks?
10. Have you ever engaged in self-censorship and why?
11. How would you assess the extent to which journalists and media outlets have been subject to intimidation and physical violence by state agents?
12. Have you ever been arrested, tortured, or intimidated in the course of your duties and how?
13. Do you have any other comments related to the topic of discussion?

Appendix Two

Coding Sheet for News Content⁶⁰

Number	Item	Category	Code
1	Name of Television	1. NTV 2. WBS	
2	Type of ownership	1. Concentrated media ownership 2. Independent ownership	
3	Date of story publication	day/month/year	
4	Topic of the story	1.Politics/Elections 2.Economics 3.Defence 4.Crime/Law 5.Accidents/Disasters 6.Public Health 7.Education 8.Sports 9.Entertainment/human interest 10.Other (Alowo, 2010:85-86)	
5	Format	1.Anchor interview 2.Live coverage 3.Desk story 4.Reporter filed story	
6	Type of news	1.Hard news 2.Soft news	
7	Geographic locus	1.Domestic 2.International 3.Hybrid	
8	Source of story	1.Known 2.Un-known	
9	Gender	1.Male 2.Female 3.Other	
10	Length	1.Extremely brief 2.Brief 3.Long	
11	Lead dominance	1.N/A	

⁶⁰ The structure and content of this coding instrument was inspired by a coding sheet used by Gerald Walulya (In prep.) in his examination of newspaper coverage of elections in Uganda and Tanzania. However, most of the categories and their definitions differ from those used by Walulya.

		2.Pro-ruling party 3.Pro-opposition 4.Balanced	
12	Party coverage	1.N/A 2.Pro-ruling party 3.Pro-opposition 4.Balanced	
13	Overall story tone	1.N/A 2.Pro-ruling party 3.Pro-opposition 4.Neutral	

Codebook

Coding instructions

Objective: To explore the influence of media ownership on news content structure in Uganda.

1. Name of Television

This is the official name of the television station being reviewed.

2. Type of ownership

Identify the nature of television ownership (Concentrated media ownership or independent ownership)

3. Date of story publication

This is the day when the news bulletin is read.

4. Topic of the story (Alowo, 2010:85-86):

- (a) *Politics/elections*. These are stories about government, political institutions and key personalities in decision making positions (Alowo, 2010:86; Hartley, 1982:38). Stories about campaign related activities also fall under this category (MacDougall, 1972:338).
- (b) The economics. This category covers stories dealing with companies and their performance, figures as well as management. Government figures about trade, unemployment, wages, prices and inflation are also included here (Hartley, 1982:38).
- (c) Defence. This is concerned with stories about military affairs. (Alowo, 2010:86).
- (d) Crime. This includes stories about crime statistics, juveniles, preliminary hearings, pleas and motions, criminal trials, verdicts, sentences, arraignment in court, grand jury and punishments (MacDougall, 1972:275).

- (e) Disasters. This refers to both natural and man-made catastrophes such as motor accidents, plane crashes, tornadoes, hurricanes, typhoons, floods and earthquakes (Alowo, 2010:86).
- (f) Health. This refers to news stories concerning hospitals and other health centres, medical insurance, health laws and policies, disease outbreak and working conditions of health workers (Schwitzer, 2009:4).
- (g) Education. This includes news stories covering education statistics, education curriculum, laws and policies, schools, universities, etc (Alowo, 2010:86).
- (h) Sports. The category includes news stories about all sporting activities (MacDougall, 1972:469).
- (i) Entertainment. Stories relating to music, fashion, comedy and beauty shows were placed under this category (Alowo, 2010:86).

5. Format

Anchor interview refers to a situation where a news anchor interviews a journalist or an expert in a news bulletin. Live coverage is broadcasting of an event in real time, while a desk story is the one read only by a news anchor without field footage and interviews. A reporter filed story is the one voiced by the reporter (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:493).

6. Type of news

News stories can be divided into two major categories; soft news and hard news. Hard news characteristically embodies four or three of the traditional news elements including timeliness, proximity, prominence and consequence. Soft news refers to light news stories which do not have to be reported instantaneously. They are usually interesting to the audience and they make people curious, sympathetic, sceptical, happy or unhappy, as well as amazing them (Dominick, 1999:356).

7. Geographic locus

If a story is overwhelmingly focussed on local issues it will be considered domestic while one focussing on foreign issues will be considered international. A hybrid story is one with both local and foreign elements (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2010:495).

8. Source of story

Sources are the people who give journalists the information. They are classified as known and unknown sources. Known sources include appointed or elected government officers at national, regional or local levels. Unknown sources, on the other hand, include private citizens (Gans,

1979:80; Motjamela, 2005:37-41). The first identifiable individual in the story is designated as the source (Lugalambi, 2006).

9. Gender

The gender of the first identifiable source is coded. Sources that cannot be identified are designated 'other'.

10. Length

Stories below 60 minutes are categorized as 'extremely brief', those between 60-120 seconds are categorized as 'brief', while those above 120 seconds are categorized as 'long'.

11. Lead dominance

Indicate N/A if the story is neither a lead nor about the election. Identify which candidate is the main subject in the lead story (Ruling-party or opposition candidate). If the story does not favour any of the candidates indicate balanced (Wang, 2003:19).

12. Party coverage

N/A: For stories that are not about the election.

Pro-ruling party: Stories that heavily focused on ruling party candidates.

Pro-opposition: Stories that heavily focused on opposition candidates.

Balanced: Stories that did not favour any political party.

13. Overall story tone (Wang, 2003:19)

Pro-ruling party: Stories that positively describe the ruling party candidate.

Neutral: Stories that neither favour ruling party candidate nor opposition candidate.

Pro-opposition: Stories that positively describe the opposition candidate.

Appendix Three



PROF. RUTH TEER-TOMASELLI
The Center for Communication and Media Studies,
School of Applied Human Sciences,
College of Humanities, Howard Campus,
University of Kwazulu-Natal,
Durban 4041, South Africa.

25th May, 2015

Dear Prof,

**RE: PERMISSION GRANTED TO SAMUEL KAZIBWE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
AT WBS TV-UGANDA**

I wish to confirm that Samuel Kazibwe wrote to us and expressed interest to conduct research at our station under a topic titled- " A television study on the impact of media ownership on news content in Uganda."

I therefore confirm that we have offered Kazibwe an opportunity to carry out his research at our esteemed television station.

We thank you to allowing him to choose our station for his study.

Thank you,

Yours sincerely

TIMOTHY SIBASI
Chief News Editor WBS TV, UGANDA

Mob: +256753-397-761
Email: sibasitimo@yahoo.com
Skype: timothy.sibasi1

WBS House Plot 13, Summit View Road, Naguru, P.O.BOX 5914, Kampala - Uganda
Tel: 256 414 344314/289508/0751 888 181 Website: www.wbs.ug Email: email@wbs.ug

   wbs tv Uganda



29th May 2015

The Center for Communication and Media Studies,
School of Applied Human Sciences,
College of Humanities, Howard Campus,
University of Kwazulu-Natal,
Durban 4041, South Africa.

Dear Sir,

RE: Academic Research at NTV

Samuel Kazibwe, we confirm receipt of your letter dated 25th May 2015.

Therefore this is to grant you permission to conduct research at NTV with our team for your paper.

Maurice Mugisha
News Manager
NTV UGANDA
Cell: 0750467978
mmugisha@ntv.co.ug

Appendix Five

Confirmation of Informed Consent

	address	Phone Number	Email address
Researcher	Samuel Kazibwe	+27-76-714- 0686 +256-752- 633405	kazibwesamuel@yahoo.com
Department	Centre for Culture and Media in Society (CCMS)	+27-31-260- 2505	http://ccms.ukzn.ac.za/Homepage.aspx
Institution	University of KwaZulu- Natal (UKZN) Howard College Campus, Masizi Kunene Ave, Glenwood, Durban, South Africa.	+27-31-260- 1813	www.ukzn.ac.za
Supervisor	Prof. Ruth Teer- Tomaselli	+27-31260- 1813	teertoma@ukzn.ac.za
Chair, UKZN Human Sciences Research Committee	Dr.Shenuka Singh	+27-31-260- 8591	singshen@ukzn.ac.za
Committee Clerk, UKZN Human Sciences	Mr. PremMohun	+27-31-260- 4557	hssrechumanities@ukzn.ac.za

Research Committee				
<p><i>Please do not hesitate to contact any of the above persons, should you want further information on this research, or should you want to discuss any aspect of the interview process.</i></p>				
<p>Research consent statement</p> <p>I, Samuel Kazibwe, invite you to take part in this research titled; “A television study on the influence of media ownership on news content in Uganda: a comparison of WBS and NTV.” Data will be collected through in-depth interviews and content analysis of television news bulletins. Study participants will include news editors and selected news reporters.</p> <p>The objective of this research is to explore how media ownership influences news content in television. The research will help to highlight the value of a free and independent media in a democratic society. All the data collected from in-depth interviews will be solely for the purpose of above mentioned research and will be kept confidential. Your name and position will not be used at any stage while organising and presenting the results. The data will be kept securely for five years for purposes of verification. A copy of the research thesis will be made available to you, if you ask for it.</p> <p>Thanks</p> <p>Your willingness to take part in this study will be highly appreciated.</p>				
Signed consent				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that the purpose of this interview is for solely academic purpose. The findings will be published as a thesis, and may be published in academic journals. 			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand I may choose to remain anonymous. (Please choose whether or not you would like to remain anonymous.) 			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that I may choose whether or not my name will be quoted in remarks and or information attributed to yourself in the final research documents. I choose to use a pseudonym, not my real name. 			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand that I will not be paid for participating but a small, non-monetary souvenir will be given. 			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that I reserve the right to discontinue and withdraw my participation any time. 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I consent to be frank to give the information. 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand I will not be coerced into commenting on issues against my will, and that I may decline to answer specific questions. 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I consent to be recorded in this interview. 	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
I understand I reserve the right to schedule the <i>time</i> and <i>location</i> of the interview.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
* By signing this form, I consent that I have duly read and understood its content.		
<hr/> Name of Participant	<hr/> Signature	<hr/> Date
<hr/> Name of Researcher	<hr/> Signature	<hr/> Date



4 August 2015

Mr Samuel Kazibwe 215080835
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Kazibwe

Protocol reference number: HSS/0902/015D

Project title: A television study on the influence of media ownership on news content in Uganda: A comparison of Wavah Broadcasting Services (WBS) and Nation Television (NTV)

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 13 July 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Prof Ruth Teer-Tomaselli
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Dr Jean Steyn
Cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville