THE MANNER IN WHICH KENYAN NEWSPAPERS REPORT MICROFINANCE ISSUES: A CASE STUDY OF NATION AND THE STANDARD NEWSPAPERS.

by

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ABSTRACT

Newspaper coverage can have a positive or negative impact on the image of an individual or institution. Newspapers both reflect and reinforce dominant societal norms and cultural beliefs. The way newspapers portray activities of an institution impacts on the public’s understanding of their values. This study’s purpose was to determine the trends of reporting microfinance issues by Kenyan newspapers Nation and The Standard, specifically; frequency of stories, page placement and type of content reported on microfinance.

Informed by agenda setting and news framing theories, the study analyzed newspaper coverage of microfinance issues, focusing on the types of stories and themes that were carried in a period of 15 months, that is, between January 2012 and March 2013. A total of 38 newspaper articles from Nation and The Standard were reviewed, while 12 people from both sectors (media and microfinance) were interviewed. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to explore the narratives that newspapers construct about microfinance. This content analysis was designed to examine trends in the quantity and kinds of stories published by the two newspapers, with the sampling method matching MFI pattern of activities in quarters.

The results indicate that the sector receives poor coverage from media as compared to mainstream banks. It is important to increase public awareness on what microfinance has to offer in order to ensure a better uptake of their financial and non-
financial products because they target millions of unbanked Kenyans, who have been left out by mainstream banks thereby continuing to languish in poverty.

Comparatively, the results also showed that Nation newspapers gave the sector better, all rounded coverage as compared to The Standard. Reporters and editors confirmed these trends from their responses to the interview conducted by the researcher.

The study sought to give a detailed description of the current media environment and an analysis of the context within which the media is currently working. It also examined the values that guide the practice of news reporting and attitudes, tone, opinions of the journalists to determine their biases towards the sector.

A synthesis of the views of various respondents enabled the researcher to structure a vision of the media that Kenya needs in future, an impartial media. A media that gives importance to all sectors of the economy, while constantly seeking knowledge on emerging trends in the economy, as Kenya is an entrepreneurial society.