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**ASSESSING NEWS COVERAGE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATIVE
LAWS**

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**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of Masters (MSocSc) in Political Communication**

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work, each significant contribution to, and quotation, in this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people have been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

Date

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Dedication

My First and foremost thanks to the Almighty God for seeing me throughout this journey and affording me the opportunity to attain a Masters degree. I dedicate this thesis to my sister Kuhle Ndyondya who is currently in matric, and hope this encourages her to become a better person and make her see that dreams do come through.

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to examine the news coverage of South Africa's legislative laws passed by the Parliament, by looking at the coverage of print media using qualitative content analysis. The thesis aims to understand the dominant messages being conveyed within the news texts and reader comments, specifically whose voice was represented, who was the intended audience and what the overall tone was. The researcher argues that taking editorial positions, the control of content and toning down of the issues is determined by journalists which they consider doing such as national interest.

In this geo-political context of South Africa, the engagement of media in covering the issue of legislative laws places an important area of study. It is the media that reports events, responses, criticisms etc. in relation to the legislative laws, on the basis of which various actors and concerned people make their views about the event. As well, how reporting is done, shaped, framed; what sources have been used in news; what roles journalists play in the news coverage; and how ownership of media differs in news reporting and coverage very much reflects on whether or not and to what extent the newspapers respects legislative laws are interesting questions to be answered.

This study is based on the case study of the coverage of New Age and The Times. Despite journalists being expected to serve the national interest of the state, differences can be observed in coverage, reporting and providing spaces to news and articles related to New Age and The Times. This hypothesis also supports the argument projected in the thesis that there are real ideological reasons why the media do not oppose the status quo, based on ideological lens grounded by the state and reporting system could rarely go against the establishments implying to the commitment to patriotism and to the nation which the government represents (Wicker, p. 19 cited in Malek and Wiegand).

Keywords: agenda-setting; news framing; gatekeeping; episodic frames; thematic frames; legislative laws.

CHAPTER ONE- RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis looks at news coverage of laws that are passed by the South African Parliament and the effect thereof on citizens. The thesis will focus on laws that are passed by Parliament in order to improve the lives of ordinary South Africans. It is the argument of this research that for citizens to be able to fully participate in the law-making processes of its country, the media has to provide the information in which citizens can empower themselves.

Prior to 1994, South Africa operated under the apartheid regime and thus did not take into consideration the needs of the poor when passing legislation. After the onset of democracy in 1994, government committed to provide “a better life for all” (www.anc.org.za). To attain this objective, the South African Parliament had to repeal some of the laws that were passed pre -1994. Calland (1999) argues that “a review of Parliament’s law-making between 1994 and 1999 shows significant progress in many areas of socio-economic rights”. The question is whether this progress was adequately recorded in the news coverage of Parliament? Calland (1995) points out that no South African newspaper has a page or section that is dedicated to news about Parliament, and that, when there is coverage of Parliament in newspapers it is often “unhelpful, poor and superficial”. Such marginalization of news makes most of the media coverage is unhelpful in the sense that it does not go in depth in the coverage of legislation and often there is no attempt to explain the legislation that Parliament passes to help citizens understand its importance and effect that it might have on their lives. Opuamie-Ngoa (2010) argues that, for a nation to realise its full democratic potential, the citizens of that nation must be informed of political decision making, and the channel to ensure that information is shared is the media. This is why it is important to look at the news coverage of laws passed by Parliament in particular within the current rigorous debates that South Africa is currently experiencing after almost twenty years of democracy.

Considering the many concerns related to the coverage, makes it crucial time in history to assess the coverage of the laws that were passed by the post-apartheid government. For the purpose of this, the thesis looks into the laws that are passed in

the Fourth Parliament (2009-2014) with particular focus on laws that are processed by the National Assembly House. Parliament has two houses, namely, the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). The NA has 400 members and represents national interests, whilst the National Council of Provinces is composed of permanent delegates from different provinces. The NA is also commonly known as the first house of Parliament. "The National Assembly is elected to ensure government by the people and its Members are responsible for passing legislation and scrutinising the actions of the Executive" (Venter and Landsberg 2006).

The motivation behind selecting the NA is due to the fact that the NA House represents a larger segment of society through its large composition of MPs. Even though most work done by MPs is discussed through Committees, it is the NA which has a final say on which legislation to pass, which is why it's important to look at the laws that this House passes.

Members of Parliament are not directly elected to Parliament by citizens, which makes it crucial that citizens know what kind of work their members are doing in Parliament and which laws the Members are passing. It is here where the media is important as it is one of the key means to pass information about laws passed by Parliament to the public. Amongst the many roles that the media plays, is to bridge the gap between politicians and citizens (Tresch 2008). The role of the media can be seen either through the liberal or radical view. Steenveld (2004) argues that from the liberal view the media is seen as an independent mirror to society, simply reflecting all that occurs in society, whilst the radical view sees the media as the "means by which powerful social classes maintain their control of society". From a liberal view of the South African media, it is one of the most important vehicles that Parliaments can use to inform the electorate of the work that they are doing. Parliament is also tasked with the facilitation of public participation as it states in its objectives that its aim is to, "ensure public participation in our processes", (www.parliament.gov.za). To this end, Abidin (2009:114) argues that the Press and Parliament have inter-linking roles. Parliament's role is to pass legislation and the press's role is to inform the public about the laws that are passed. She argues that "both institutions perform a function as spokesperson for the people in fulfilling the people's mandate that they

bear.” The media and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group on Parliament conducted research in 2003 that concluded the role of Parliament and the media in communicating parliamentary activities to citizens is important in enfranchising the public, as the media becomes the channel in which public opinion is communicated to MPs (Bouchet, 2003).

Citizens need to be fully informed of the laws that are passed by MPs through their Parliament, and Swant (2000) says, “Without such information, citizens will neither be able to comprehend the day-to-day workings of the government nor will they be able to participate”. Abidin (2009) states “without the press, the voice of MPs would not be heard. And without information from the MPs, the press would have problems presenting accurate, complete and in-depth news reports on matters of state of politics and Parliament”. Citizens get their understanding of what politics are and the importance of democracy through the media. McCombs (2011) however, argues that “news media can do a far better job of supplying people with the type of information they need to be more engaged citizens”. This proves the pivotal role that the media plays in a democracy. Opuamie-Ngoa states, “unless citizens have adequate and at the least close enough accurate information on all, if not most of the issues and problems confronting them, they will be unable to take enlightened decisions” (2010). However, the Parliament struggles to maintain and ensure public participation. Calland (1999) argues that one of the inhibitors of this is access to media, as he states that “difficulties of accessing information are extremely high” as only 14% of African households had access to a telephone line, as compared to 85% of white households in 1999. Even in its fourth (2009-2014) Parliament strategic plan, Parliament says, “the access to the institution and its members and information provided to the public remain a vital focus of Parliament”, (www.parliament.gov.za). Negrine (1999) draws on a study of media coverage of Parliamentary institutions in Britain and Germany and argues that “the nature of parliamentary coverage has been undergoing continual change for well over a century.” Coverage of Parliament has been dwindling and South Africa is not unique as Calland (1995) argues, that “even in the so-called established democracies, coverage of Parliament has become thinner and thinner”. News coverage of Parliament is important as Jack Straw quoted in Riddel (2002) says “the decline in press coverage of Parliament must have a serious affect on the public’s understanding of our democratic system”.

In reference to the above, this thesis poses the question, is the media neglecting its duty of educating citizens and engaging them in what is happening in the Parliament? It is the objective of this research to find out whether this is the case.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Research has shown that in recent years, coverage of work done by Parliaments, including the laws that it passes has actually decreased. Riddel (2002) states that the decline of news content that focuses on laws passed by the legislature began in the 1980s and has continued ever since. Jack Straw quoted in Riddel (2002) that in the UK newspaper The Times, “the daily coverage of Parliament varied between 40 and 1,050 lines between the early 1932 and late 1980s. However by 1992 this had fallen to fewer than 100 lines a day.

This could be due to a variety of factors. Authors such as Abidin (2009) state that some journalists allege that the hostility of the MPs towards the media in countries like Indonesia make it difficult for the media to report on the activities and laws passed by Parliament. Others like Bennet quoted in Van Aelst, Sehata & Van Dalen (2010) have argued that politicians with executive power are in a better position to negotiate with the media, thus taking out of the equation those MPs who are not Ministers. In addition, Parliament competes with other spheres of government for space in the media.

This research is timely and important in the media studies, in particular in political communication field, not to mention the political arena. This study comes at a time when the media's role in society is being questioned, particularly when it comes to covering laws that are passed by Legislatures. This is because, as most theorists agree that for a democracy to be described as functioning its citizens have to participate in the decisions made and the media need to encourage and be part of this participation process. The media are seen as a mirror of society as well as being a representative of the public, they are the ‘voice of the voiceless’. As a result of the current delinquent media coverage of South African legislation and in dealing with the Parliament fully, efficiently and comprehensively, there has been a gap between the media expectations and performances. This is indicated by the rise in protests in South Africa with citizens claiming that they have not been afforded an opportunity to

participate and voice their views in the passing of certain laws by Parliaments. An example is the protest of the 'Right to Know' campaign over the Protection of State Information Bill, which has just been passed by both Parliament houses; the NCOP and the NA and has now been sent to the President for assent. The laws that are passed by Parliament are important in ensuring that the country's democracy is protected, and the media has a key role to play in informing and including democratic participation in decision making. As a developing country, it is crucial that we study the media's coverage of Parliament to analyse the factors explaining the lack of public participation in political decision making. This begs the question, how significant is the topic that will be researched? This question is answered below.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC

The post-democracy Parliament is now in its fourth term which makes the monitoring of these laws indicative of whether the country is going in the right direction and is fulfilling its mandate of looking after the segment of society which was neglected pre-1994. The media is part of the fourth estate and has a role in scrutinising the work that is done by Parliament and becoming a voice of the voiceless in the decision making process. Abidin (2009) describes the press as a symbol of an efficient democracy arguing that it strengthens democracy. This study aims to investigate the increasing role of mediatisation of society, where media can play a role in empathy and a platform that can emphasize more deliberation and disseminate political knowledge among the South African society.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to look at the news coverage of the South African developmental legislative laws passed by Parliament, over a specified period of time. In analysing the content of the news articles published by the New Age and The Times Newspapers for a period of three months (01 March 2011-01 June 2011) in an attempt to assess the nature of news coverage of laws passed by Parliament at the current point post-democracy. In doing so, the research will look at news articles that are about legislative laws, and the impact these laws have on citizens. The study will not only look into the number of articles published in both newspapers about passed

laws, but will further divulge into how these articles are framed by the media. The research will now review the literature that exists around Parliaments and the media.

CHAPTER TWO- LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the thesis will cover the history of the topic and previous studies related to the topic. It will start by looking at the news coverage that Parliaments worldwide have received, and the relations between Parliament and the media. This section will also examine the current state of research of South African media coverage of parliament as well as the landscape in which the South African print media operates.

2.1 THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

To understand why it is important for the public to participate in and be informed of the passing of legislative laws, this thesis looks at Siebert's Libertarian theory of the press role, which was developed in the 1960s (Siebert et al, 1963). This is the theory that pioneered media freedom and supported the role of the media as the watchdog. What makes this theory resonate with the research topic is that it sees the press as a crucial source of information, thus making it important and necessary to assess the news coverage of the legislative laws that are passed by Parliament.

If one of the roles of the media under the libertarian theory is "to inform and entertain" (Siebert et al, 1963) then the media should be assessed on the news coverage of the laws that are passed by Parliament. Herman and Chomsky (1988) also agree with this role of the media as entertainers and informers as they define "the mass media as a system for communication messages and symbols to the general populace", (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). They further argue that, "it is the media's function to amuse, entertain and inform, and inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society".

The print media industry is an important public sphere which allows the citizens of the country to receive unbiased objective coverage of the laws that are passed by Parliament. Steenveld (2004: 93) states that "the importance of the media both from a liberal and radical perspective is the role that they play in enabling a public space (public sphere) of discussion or dissent". This is the place where citizens can engage

and discuss issues affecting them without the possibility of being rebuked by government.

Habermas states that democracy would not be possible without public participation and critique and this participation has to occur in public for democracy to be truly effective. For democracy to be effective and fully realised there has to be a functioning public sphere and the media is central to the creation of that public sphere. The participation of all the role players is a determining factor in the success or non-success of a public sphere. However, before citizenry and all the role players can participate in the public sphere, they have to be properly informed as to enable them to participate fully. The role of informing all the role players about their duties in the public sphere can only be effectively implemented by the media.

According to Curan quoted in Berger (2006) there exists the organised public sphere which involves associations as well as the general public sphere which involves individuals. The research is concerned with the political public sphere. Many theorists argue that the media is also a public sphere which a view is taken by this research as well. They carry the messages which can be deliberated about in the public square. Hence, there is a constant struggle by the actors which are the politicians to influence the agenda of the media. The messages carried by the media do not only come from the politicians as Fourie (2007:30) states that “these messages and opinions come from a variety of actors in the civil society such as politicians, political parties, journalists, lobbyists, experts, moral entrepreneurs and intellectuals”. Fourie (2007:33) further argues that there is a constant struggle by these actors to influence the media. He states that “the groups of actors are joined by journalists to construct “public opinion”.

2.2 NEWS COVERAGE OF PARLIAMENTS

Competing for space in the media by Parliament has a long history. It is further complicated by the fact that Parliament has to compete with other spheres of government and as Garber et al (1998) states “the chances of achieving media attention depend on the role of the position of the actors, their resources, and their objectives”. They further concede that “compared with parties, interest groups, and the parliamentary opposition, the government has better chances for its messages to pass the media filter”, Garber et al, (1998) Thus Parliament has to compete with

other players, including government when it comes to whether they will be featured in the media. Numerous studies have been done on the lack of coverage of Parliament, but most of these have not focused on the South African context and the reasons for this decrease in press coverage and ways in which this can be remedied.

To get an understanding of why the press are seemingly uninterested in publishing work about Parliament it is important to look at studies that have been done worldwide focusing on the coverage of Parliament. It is important to point out that the researcher struggled with finding information on the news coverage of laws that are passed by Parliaments, as most research was focused on news coverage of Parliament in general as an institution. Most studies allude that worldwide Parliament's coverage has gone down over the years, with Bouchet and Kariithi (2003:12) stating that "newspapers have tried to remain attractive to the public in the face of competition from other media by cutting down on 'serious' political and parliamentary reporting".

Most research argues that Parliament and its work are not receiving sufficient news coverage. Norton (2007:5) argues that "coverage of Parliamentary proceedings by the serious press has shifted from the parliamentary reporter to the sketch writer, with humorous coverage of the behaviour of Parliamentarians taking precedence over discussion of the issues under debate". This details how low the Parliamentary agenda has fallen on the media radar. After doing a study on the media coverage of Parliament institutions in Britain and Germany, Negrine (1999:325) found that "the nature of parliamentary coverage has been undergoing continual change for over a century". He further argues that there had been a gradual decrease in the coverage of Parliament, "Between 1933 & 1988, coverage of Parliamentary debates took between 400 and 800 lines in The Times & between 300 & 700 lines in the Guardian. By 1992, coverage had declined to fewer than 100 lines in both papers", Stark (1993:2) quoted in Negrine (1999).

Riddell (2002) traces the decline of publishing of news about Parliament to the 1980s and states that it has continued to decline ever since. This is due to many reasons, including some commentators stating that journalists simply do not find the work of Parliament important or exciting enough to report about. This argues Riddell (2002)

leads to coverage about Parliament lacking depth. "Stories about policy development, procedural changes and parliamentary reform, the activities of backbench groups, the work of think tanks and new initiatives from backbenchers seldom appear", (Riddell, 2002:5). In their study of the parliamentary press and the European Parliament, McLeod and Anderson (2004) provide numerous reasons for the lack of coverage of Parliament. They state that "these include the complex nature of the Parliament's own decision-making procedures and the fact that it lacks any single interest-focusing individual with the power of a head of government within it". Norton (2007) states that with the media determining the political agenda, Parliament has been put at the back of media coverage, with government taking centre stage as the media is concerned with covering ministers. Studies argue that it is difficult for work done by Parliament to be prioritised over that of the executive. Van Aelst, Sehata & Van Dalen (2008:310) to this end argues that, "the academic debate on the power relations between media and politics has widely acknowledged that politicians with executive power are in a better position to negotiate with the media," (Gans, 2003; Bennett, 1990).

There is a plethora of studies done on news coverage of the European Parliaments, but there is a lack of information of news coverage of the laws passed by African Parliaments. Many factors have been blamed for Parliament's laws being under-covered. Street (2001) blames "packaging of politics" for the erosion of news coverage in the media. He argues that politics get packaged by actors such as 'spin doctors' for the media and this hampers the capacity of citizens to make well-informed decisions. He states that "Packaged politics fits into the agenda of media who are acutely conscious of the chill winds of the market", Street (2001). This phenomenon is only concerned with making profit, thus framing the news in a way that makes it attractive to the consumers and not publishing what may possibly be in their interest. Could this 'packaging of politics' be behind the decline of news coverage of legislative laws worldwide? 'Packaging of politics' is largely influenced by who owns the media and whether they agree with packaging politics. Thus whether developmental laws get published in the South African media largely depends on who owns the media.

This research has mentioned elsewhere that another reason that can be attributed to the lack of news coverage around laws could be the fact that some theorists argue that by its nature, Parliament is an uninteresting institution and is thus difficult to cover from a news angle perspective. Amongst its key roles, Parliament's objective is to pass laws and contrary to what other theorists argue, Tresch (2008:68) argues that "Parliamentarians who participate in legislative debates have a good chance to get media coverage". This view is supported by Walgrave; Soroka & Nuytemans (2008) who also argue that opposition MPs are prone to get more coverage.

Most theorists agree on the fact that news coverage surrounding Parliament and its laws has declined, but does Parliament matter and why should its laws get media coverage? In attempting to answer this question, Norton (2007:3) argues that Parliament matters not only because of its ability to link the citizens with government through the encouragement of public participation, but because "a good government needs an effective Parliament". As one of Parliament's objectives is to scrutinise and oversee the implementation of programmes developed by government, government may also benefit from the scrutiny of the laws they pass as to assess the direction they are undertaking. This paper argues that the lack of news about Parliament is detrimental to the citizenry's understanding of their importance of participating in the law-making processes, amongst other things. The importance of the media covering laws passed by Parliament is further highlighted by Straw in Riddell (2002:30) who argues that "The decline in press coverage of Parliament must have a serious effect on the public's understanding of our democratic system".

But according to Negrine (1999), Parliamentary coverage was never guaranteed from the beginning. He quotes Steed who determined that, "the space now given to politics has steadily declined, now Parliamentary reports are condensed and treated under different headings, and in the most widely circulated newspapers Parliamentary speeches are hardly reported at all", Negrine (1999:328). He argues that there was guaranteed space which was dedicated to Parliament news in the 19th century. However, as this research argues, this is currently not the case, as Parliament has to compete with other spheres of government to make it into the news. The constitution makes it clear that the media cannot be excluded from

covering Parliament, but even with clauses such as these, Parliament still remains under-covered.

What has emerged from these studies is a clear indication that Parliaments worldwide are under-covered by the media, and to this end the South African Parliament is no exception. However what these studies have not revealed fully is the remedies that can be taken to rectify this problem.

2.3 PARLIAMENTS AND THE MEDIA

Most studies that have been done on this topic focus on the relationship between the media and Parliaments, with most theorists stating that this relationship is not satisfactory. Gibbons (2007:712) states that citizens get their news and understanding of the world from conventional media which includes newspapers, and the citizens expect the media to enlighten them on issues and the work that Parliament does. However, she argues, this expectation goes unfulfilled “with the consequence that many remain in the dark about what much of our legislation actually means to their lives”. News-framing and agenda-setting are at the heart of the relationship between the media and Parliament and to understand the coverage of Parliament it is important that these two are linked. According to Vliegenthart & Roggerband (2007:297), “an increase in issue-attention in the media leads to an increase in issue-attention on the parliamentary agenda”. These theorists argue that through media framing occurs parliamentary framing and vice-versa. Media framing is covered in more detail under the Theoretical Framework chapter. “We therefore hypothesize that increased use of a frame within parliament leads to increased use of this frame in the media, but this influence only occurs when this frame is present to a substantial degree in parliamentary documents,” Vliegenthart & Roggerband (2007). Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans (2008) argue that to some extent the media determines the agenda of Parliament. Thus by framing news in a certain manner the legislator’s agenda is depicted by the media. This view is echoed by Vliegenthart & Walgrave (2011) who agree that mass media coverage affects the political agenda, be it Parliament or government. However research has discovered that even though this is the case Parliament’s news coverage by the media remains unsatisfactory worldwide. This is attributed to the fact that Parliaments compete for space in the media with other role players such as civic movements and governments. Tresch

(2008) argues that even when covered, legislation coverage varies dependent on the frames which the media chooses to use. However this does not change the fact that, “the media are expected to inform their audience about what happens in Parliament and to provide a mirror image of the legislative laws”, Tresch (2008).

Considering the entrenched under-coverage of Parliament by the media, what can be done to remedy this? Anderson & McLeod (2004) suggest that to fix the problem of under-coverage by the media, Parliaments need to resuscitate their communications structures and actively promote themselves as to get in the news. This is the view that this research holds. There is an active competition in the political sector to be covered by the media and Parliament needs to meet the media halfway and ensure that its information is readily accessible. The media use frames when deciding what to put in the news agenda and thus it may not necessarily publish all that Parliaments want it to publish. Negrine (1999) argues that the relationship between the two institutions is critical as it ‘affects the future of political journalism’. He also argues that the decline of coverage of laws in the media is further complicated by the unavailability of information about Parliament. According to Tresch (2008), based on the personalities and prominence of some Members of Parliaments (MPs), the media chooses to cover some and exclude others. However this research is concerned with finding out about what informs the decision to cover certain laws by assessing news coverage of the South African legislative laws. It is the view of this thesis that for a democracy to thrive the citizens of that country have to fully participate in its law making processes. To exhibit the importance of citizenry participation in a democracy, Lyons & Lyons (2004) argue that the recent history of the failure of democratic regimes can be linked to the failure of African parliamentary democracy to generate support or assent amongst its citizens. “Parliament is viewed by many citizens as alien, incomprehensible, and distant” (Lyons & Lyons 2004:13). This is despite Parliament calling for citizens to participate in its law making processes through calling for comments on its legislations through the media. The South African Constitution also explicitly states that Parliament should facilitate public involvement in its legislative laws.

Tresch (2008) argues further about who the media decides to cover and states that various factors are at play when the decision is made on who to cover. The issue of

ownership is also central to debate around what makes it in the news. Mukhongo (2010) argues that for Africa to have a media landscape that promotes participation and development, it needs to diversify content and ownership. It is important to note that in South Africa there are strides being made to ensure that this happens, evident in the emergence of newspapers like The New Age newspaper. But has the diversification of the media in terms of ownership led to changes in how the media covers the laws passed by Parliament. What is the media's role in ensuring that there is public involvement in the legislative laws of the legislature?

To further understand the reasons behind this it is important to look at the history of the South African media as well as its current state.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE PRE AND POST-APARTHEID

Many theorists argue that even post-apartheid, the media landscape in South Africa remains unchanged. They argue that, like during the apartheid era, the government still wants control of the media and the media still serves the interests of those who have power and access, thus neglecting the needs of the majority of citizens. The argument some theorists bring forward is that, like in the apartheid era, the South African media still consists of those news media organisations that are against government and those who are for government. In this thesis, an assumption is made that The Times Newspaper is against government, whilst the views published in its counterpart, The New Age, are pro-government. To this end Sebola (2012:411) argues that, "a strong characteristic of today's African democracy is that the country will have some of the media that are friendly to government and some that are completely unfriendly".

Under apartheid the media was regulated by laws which were against press freedom and were largely authoritative, but post-democracy this has changed, as the press has more freedom. Berger (1998) argues that from a political view, the media in the Southern Africa countries historically served the narrow interests of colonial power and local settlers. However, studies done by theorists such as Tomasseli (2008) argue that even though post-1994 the media has become more inclusive in terms of the views, it is still seen as the enemy by the democratic government, which suggests that nothing has changed. This is despite radical ownership changes that have occurred in print newspapers. It is the purpose of this thesis to find out whether

some of these radical ownership changes in print newspapers have changed the way the media reports about Parliament. Steenveld (2004) argues that the role of the print media in South Africa is complicated by the fact that the identity of the media is racialised.

This research looks at whether, in a post-democratic South Africa, the media through its selection and publishing of certain news stories hold the interests of the poor? This research will look at the number of laws which the media publishes, specifically the print media, and in whose interests those laws appear to be in. Wasserman and De Beer (2005) state that, in the post-apartheid era, the media need not only point out society's problems, but they must also help them find solutions. "The resulting change in norms for media conduct would construct a role for the media to become involved on a community level, rather than mythologizing a role that emphasizes independence and neutrality" (Wasserman and De Beer, 2005:40). It is the purpose of this research to find out whether, in publishing laws passed by Parliament, does the media help the citizens make sense of the world they live in.

The media plays a central role in ensuring the development of a country and the coverage of these laws leads to empowering citizens of that country. McEachern (2002) argues that the role of the state is nation-building and further attests that it is impossible to embark on this role of nation-building without the media. She argues, "Increasingly media provide a public sphere in which nation building is debated and affirmed" (McEachern, 2002: 5). Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans (2008) echo this by stating that newspaper coverage of political issues leads to politicians taking a stance or resolving the problem which is highlighted by the media houses. They argue that, "mass media act as political agenda setters in parliamentary democracies" (Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans: 2008: 817). This research will now turn its focus to the South African print media and its location in the public sphere.

2.5 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRINT MEDIA

The South African print media falls within what Habermas defined as a public sphere, and in giving an overview of the print media industry, this research first unpacks what the public sphere represents and its meanings. The question examined by this research is whether the South African media play their role of ensuring that citizens are educated about the laws passed by the legislator thus

enabling a proper meaningful public sphere? The role of the public sphere is to contribute to the citizen's way of understanding the world, which is filled with many actors. It is also to enable the citizens to become one of the actors in shaping the politics of their country. This view is supported by Jacobs quoted in Zegeye & Harris (2003) who states in the post democratic South Africa, the media have also become political actors in their own right. This exhibits that the media are an integral part of the public sphere. Habermas was the founding father of the term "public sphere". Fourie (2007:36) quotes him as having identified the public square as, "an intermediary system between formal organised deliberation and informal face-to-face deliberations in arenas at both the centre and the periphery of the political system". Thus according to this definition the public sphere is about interactions, informal or formal, that take place about politics, involving both the lawmakers and the people whom the laws are made for. What is important in the public sphere is deliberation as this is where people can deliberate about politics. This view of deliberating about politics is further supported by the Middle East and North Africa development report titled "women in the public sphere" which also defines the public sphere as "the sphere of power, influence, and patronage".

When it comes to creating a meaningful public sphere, Jacobs quoted in Zegeye & Harris states that some theorists argue that a proper public sphere in South Africa can be constituted through having an African National Congress (ANC) or left-wing media which he argues against. When the New Age was formed there were discussions that it would become an ANC mouthpiece based on its owners alleged close relations with the President of the country, Mr Jacob Zuma. However even though this view has not been confirmed nor denied by the owners of the newspaper it can be argued that in some of its reporting it is pro-government. This can be deduced from The New Age's sponsorships of talks by government ministers in conjunction with the South African Broadcasting Corporation. The ANC has been largely criticised for wanting to control the public sphere. Johnston (2005) argues that the ANC prefers the political sphere to remain distinct and privileged, stating that it does not want the media to play a role or be part of this political sphere. "The ANC has been reluctant to co-operate with the media in the construction of a jointly occupied political sphere in which they compete with others in a daily struggle for the reproduction of favourable political perception and the management of negative

ones” (Johnston, 2005:15). Is this reluctance by the ruling party the cause of what is seemingly the under-coverage of laws passed by Parliament? Who should create a meaningful public sphere?

This view of creating a meaningful public sphere is supported by Olorunnisola (2006:97) who states that amongst the many roles that the media plays in a democratic state, central should be to “set a meaningful daily agenda, provide platforms for all shades of views and offer an incentive for citizens to learn”. Thus it has to be the media who provide a meaningful space in which to engage. To this end, Olorunnisola (2006) argues, “for democracy to flourish there must be provision for the participation of citizens in public affairs so that there are avenues for individual, group and institutional express of opinion”. The research can only discover whether this happens in the South African media by properly analysing the content of the newspaper in the South African print media landscape in terms of covering law legislation.

Certain conditions need to exist for a proper political public sphere to exist. Johnston (2005) argues that access and diversity are the keys to transformation of the media to contribute to the development of a public sphere. This thesis has alluded to the fact that there has been radical transformation of the print media in South Africa since the democratic elections, and what remains to be seen is whether that transformation will lead to a meaningful political public sphere. The political public sphere in South Africa is dominated by broadcast and print news media. However the broadcast media is the one which dominates as it has a wider reach than that of the print medium. Latest circulation figures from the South African Audience Research Foundation (Saarf), indicated that out of a reading population of 34 934 adults, only 10 808 read newspapers daily thus meaning only 30% of the reading population reads newspapers, (www.saarf.co.za). This is a huge contrast to the 89% of the adult population which access their news from South Africa’s commercial radio stations.

Prior to the research getting into what both The New Age Newspaper and Times Newspaper aim to represent and who they are it will give an overview of the ownership of the South African Print media industry. The issue of ownership of the newspapers is important as it determines and explains the reasons behind articles in

newspapers as Steenveld (2004:98) argues that it is "one of the most powerful ways in which the media are seen to serve dominant interests".

Tomaselli & Teer-Tomaselli (2008) have stated that the print news media consists of four press companies, viz, news24, Caxton, Avusa (formerly known as Johnnic) and Independent Newspaper Group. Emdon cited in Duncan & Seleokane (1998) argue that even though new newspapers have been formed, very few are owned and run by black people. This is due to a variety of factors including competitive business factors. They trace back the history of ownership in print media and state that "until the early 1990s, the print media was in the control of an effective duopoly, a split between the Afrikaans-controlled press- Nasionale Pers and Perskor and the English Controlled press-Times Media Limited (TML) and Argus" (Duncan & Seleokane, 1998:32). Avusa forms part of the four major press companies. The others are: News24, Caxtons and Independent Newspaper Group companies, (Tomaselli & Teer-Tomaselli, 2008). Avusa, previously known as Johnnic, was formed when Johnnic was sold to black entrepreneurs of the union-based National Empowerment Consortium, led by mining unionist, Cyril Ramaphosa (now Deputy President of the ANC) as part of the Black Economic Empowerment deal. Tomaselli & Teer Tomaselli (2008) argue that the idea was for the media to give both the ANC and the official opposition (the Democratic Alliance) support. They state that for the large part following 1994, most papers supported the ANC even though the tone was critical of government. Even though at one state Cyril Ramaphosa chaired the Avusa Board, his chairmanship did not steer away the newspaper from its direction of being objective in its reporting.

It is important to note that these ownership changes still do not change the media's role of being a watchdog to the state and being critical of government. In South Africa the print media has been vocal in its opposition to state intervention into its affairs which makes the media in the country one of the most independent. This view is echoed by Emdon quoted in Duncan & Seleokane (1998:30 who state, "The press industry in the past has argued that an important indicator of business confidence in the economy is the freedom of the press (media) and that state intervention in the media is regarded as an early warning system of other types of intervention".

The South African media's vocal criticism of the ruling government has naturally created tensions between the media and the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). This, some argue is to be expected in any democracy as the ruling parties and free press often don't see eye-to-eye. But what causes this tension between the print media and the ruling party? Johnston (2005) states that the tension between the print media and the ANC points to basic dilemmas about the forms democracy should take as it is consolidated in South Africa. However, authors argue that for the development of a nation to be fully realised there need to be good relations between the government and the media. Hofmeyr (2003:210) argues that, "whether a government gets favourable exposure, will depend on the media's judgement of its performance". Thus Parliament's exposure and the news coverage of its laws by the South African print media will depend on how the media judges Parliament's performance overall. The thesis will now look into the theoretical framework that the research falls under.

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CHAPTER THREE- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 THEORIES AND MODELS

This section will look at the theories and models that would help explain the functionality and impact of the news coverage of laws that are passed by the Parliament of in South Africa. In addition this section will address two main theories that are applicable to how the media sets the agenda and how news is framed. How these theories will be applied in this research will be dealt with lastly. This section will now look into the relationship between the role of media and policy discourse.

The relationship between the role of media and policy discourse has been contested towards the degree of influencing one another. Different scholars have argued over the thesis of policy influences media or media influences policy. These argument have been researched and debated over times but “the issue remains undecided” (Malek and Weigand 1997, p.21).

Piers Robinson pointed out about the two schools of thought in understanding media influencing policy or policy influencing media. He argued reviewing the theory of manufacturing consent and role of media in conflict of different researches and concluded that two models should be taken together to provide “a starting point for a two-way understanding of direction of influence between media and the state that builds upon rather than rejecting existing theoretical account” (Robinson, 2001, p.541).

Some scholars view media as a pawn in the political game, where media serve as an instrument in the actual implementation of policy. Similarly, third aspect of media influence is that neither media nor the government or political force are manipulative as extreme positions do not suggest nor do they work together to manipulate public opinion (Malek and Wiegand 1997, p.4).

In this thesis, I have focused on the theoretical dimension of policy influencing media to understand how this reciprocating relation between media coverage and legislative laws overlap.

Influence of Policy on Media

The theoretical dimensions of influence of policy on media have based their studies on three major factors, they are: the relationship between government and media and ideology factor that affects in the framing and using of sources to bring out the influence of policy in representing the news story.

Different scholars on the basis of empirical findings have argued that the influence of policy on media is because of manipulation of news media by government to serve their purpose (Malek and Weigand, 1997, p.6; Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Rourke, 1961). It is even argued that government influences media even about how the story is written as media depends highly upon government sources. Rourke (1961) explained that the government is capable of gratifying “the hunger of the communications media for news about public affairs” (cited in Malek and Weigand, 1997, p. 6). Malek and Wiegand (1997, p.6) assert that executive branch manipulates media in such way that government policy are presented positively to public.

According to Robinson (2001) the manipulation of government occurs when journalists are influenced. Robinson maintains that given the political and economic positioning of major news media institutions news accounts tend to support the dominant perspectives, i.e. the ability of government to influence the output of journalists and the tendency of journalists to both self-censor and perceive event through cultural and political prisms of their respective political and social elites (Robinson 2001, p.525).

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s work published in 1988 *Manufacturing Consent*, which consider media to play a ‘propaganda role’. The ownership of news media and use of powerful sources by the journalists have a major role in setting the propaganda. They view that media’s societal role as both representing a ‘tolerably realistic portrayal of the world’ and simultaneously meeting the requirements and interests of those who dominate the media-the corporate world and the government (Herman and Chomsky 1988, p.303). Their writing pointed out that journalists rely overwhelmingly on elite sources to making news supply a steady and rapid flow of important news stories combined with the vast public relations apparatus of government and powerful interests (Herman and Chomsky, 1988)

Media and National Interest: Role of Journalists

Scholars have stated their point of using the media to align with the national identity and interest. Ebo (1997) considered that media operating within the states are controlled to promote the national interest, while nations with global media will have the best chance to shape their international image. "Every nation will have some power to construct its national identity and internally by exerting control over domestic forces, including national media, nations with dominant global media advantage will have a better chance of shaping their internal image and placement in the global political hierarchy" (Ebo, 1997, p.54).

So in this context, the functioning of media can be questioned with regards to its operation within a boundary of the state. Can it ignore the national interest of the state? Bosah Ebo and other writers have mentioned that governments argue news media must and directly serve the interests of the nation and are legitimate official forums to articulate and promote foreign policy initiatives and the adversarial role of media is considered to be not fitting the national development. This is in contrast to the libertarian concept, where the media and government are considered to have an adversarial role. Here media are considered to play the role of watchdog, and fourth estate and are expected to oversee the activities of government (Ebo 1997, p.46)

3.1.1 AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

The previous section have alluded to the agenda-setting theory as they argue that the media's role in setting the agenda cannot be downplayed as the media are amongst the main agenda-setters in South Africa and worldwide as they influence the way we view current issues.

Agenda-setting is a process through which the mass media communicates the relative importance of various issues and events to the public (Graber, 2007:81). The power of the news media to set the nations agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is a well-documented phenomena. Not only do people acquire factual information about public affairs from the news media, readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it on the news (McCombs, 2002). Sparks (2006) echoes this view and argues that, "according to this theory, public opinion about what should be on the

public agenda is heavily influenced by the topics and issues that appear in the news”.

In the context of political news coverage, it is the media who sets the agenda on which laws get prominence in news coverage. Thus the media tells the news consumers what to think about. It is important to find out why some issues get placed on the agenda of journalists and not others. This is where agenda-setting as a theory comes in. Kim et al (2012) support this and state that whatever the media defines as important, the consumers of media will also define that issue as important. Thus the media transfers what it sees as important to the mind of the people (news consumers) through the media products it disseminates such as news. Abidin (2009) warns MPs to be careful of agenda-setting as she states, “often reporters first design and frame the story and then seek out sources to confirm what they have already planted”. This theory asserts as Kim et al (2012) argues that “the media have the power to make certain issues more salient by placing them more prominently in news coverage or by devoting a large proportion of the news hole to the issues”. This argues Kim et al (2012) leads to ‘priming’ which is the impact that agenda-setting has on the way people view public officials.

The media agenda, according to Sparks (2006) precedes the public agenda. Thus news journalists and editors form the heart of the agenda-setting theory as they decide what gets covered in their newspapers and news bulletins and the prominence this is given in news formats. However it is important to find out what makes agenda-setting theory so important in a time when the media claims to be objective and non-influenced by factors such as state control of the media. Liu, Lindquist & Vedlitz (2011) talk of attention grabbing factors in agenda-setting as they argue that, “one factor that may increase attention to a problem is the changing factual indicators surrounding the problem”. Thus, for example a person may pay more attention to news coverage around the increase of the petrol price as it will affect them directly. The authors further argue that there must be a pushing factor to push such issues above other issues on the agenda. The pushing factors are called ‘triggering’ or ‘focusing’ events. The petrol price could be described as a focusing event in terms of where it is placed in the newspaper. Oosthuizen (1996) argues that agenda-setting occurs because of journalistic practices. It is the journalist who is the

gate keeper, deciding what to include and exclude in an article. Lewin, quoted in Oosthuizen (1996) describes gatekeeping as “the travelling of news items through communications channels”. Thus by choosing which news items are important and where to place them, the journalists are withholding some information and thereby setting the agenda for the news consumers. At the heart of this theory is the idea that the media has an influence over the depth and length of reporting on issues, thus “readers tend to consider items which are reported on frequently as being very important’ (Oosthuizen, 1996:87).

An example of how this occurs is how the 'Protection of State Information Bill' still remains one of the widely covered pieces of legislation passed by the fourth Parliament because of the direct influence that it will have on the media. The protests that were held countrywide in protest of passing the Bill were one of the factors which made it take centre stage and be published above other legislation. This was one of the triggering factors to the news coverage received by the legislation. Kim et al (2012:44) argue that “greater frequency of coverage will make an issue or an attribute more likely to be used by the audience. Attribute salience is operationalized by counting how often a particular attribute is made in the media”. Thus at the heart of attribute salience is the frequency to which a news item appears on the agenda of the media. The fact that the Protection of State Information Bill with its objectives appeared frequently in the media made it more important in the minds of South Africans, hence the increase of protests worldwide. However Kim et al (2012) argue that mentioning an issue does not necessarily mean that the media frames that particular issue and how the minds of the audience should take it in, this thesis however argues that by giving a news item more prominence in the media, the news editors are consciously telling the audience that they should place importance on the issue.

Through its assertion that the media sets the agenda for the public, the agenda-setting theory is relevant to this thesis, as the thesis looks at which laws are covered by both The Times and The New Age newspapers and how these laws are covered. It is the media who sets the agenda and thus decide which laws are important and how they should be covered, as well as the prominence they should be given in terms of the number of words of these articles that are about these laws.

To this end, Kim et al (2012:45) argues that, “in the agenda-setting model, it is the salience of the issue itself, rather than the way the issue is described, that evokes audience responses in the subsequent judgements and decision making processes”.

This thesis argues that it is the media that plants in the minds of its news consumers through the articles that it publishes which laws are important by giving them prominence in coverage. For example, by widely covering the 'Protection of State Information Bill' the media was consciously telling people that this is the law they should give their attention to as opposed to other laws that were passed or were being considered around the same time. The converse is the amount of laws that are passed by the Parliament of South Africa but don't receive any form of news coverage. This resonates with the agenda-setting theory which states that the media sets the agenda for the public who then make decisions based on what they read. The way in which the media shapes the agenda is dependent on numerous factors, amongst them, the ownership of the media. This is central to this thesis as it looks at newspapers which are often described as pro-government, thus it will be interesting to find out whether, through an analysis of the agenda-setting and news-framing features of their coverage of South Africa's legislative laws, these newspapers are pro-government.

It is however impossible to mention agenda-setting without mentioning the news framing theory as these two are related. This thesis will now briefly explain news framing and its relevance to the research.

3.1.2 NEWS FRAMING THEORY

The lens that the media uses to decide which news to publish, how to present it, and how this news influences the news consumers are important factors. The use of this lens, in which news editors decide which information to publish, is defined as news-framing. News-framing is important as it shapes public opinion, as theorists argue that news consumers base some of their political decisions on what they read in the media. At the centre of news-framing is news filtering which is a process influenced by a number of factors, that decides which news gets published. News-framing argues that only certain news get selected in a given context, and the selection of

what gets published is based on numerous factors, such as economic factors and ownership of the media. To this end, Chomsky (1997) argues that, “the elite domination of the media and marginalisation of dissidents that results from the operation of these filters occurs so naturally that media news people, frequently operating with complete integrity and goodwill, are able to convince themselves that they choose and interpret the news ‘objectively’ and on the basis of professional news values”, whereas they are influenced by matters beyond their control.

De Vreese (2005) states that it is factors that are beyond the control of news editors which determine how journalists frame issues and which angles they take. As stated above these are factors such as ownership of the media. Who owns the media determines how news is framed based on the perceptions of that owner. Media owners use the media to promote their own interests. It is through this promotion of own interests by media conglomerates that leads to news-framing which authors define as that in which audiences understand the news that they consume. Steenveld (2004) argues that certain social classes maintain their control over society through their ownership of the media, thus being in power to decide how news gets framed. Vliegenhart & Roggerband (2007) simplify framing as that which helps us to understand how salient issues are presented. To this end, Lecheler & De Vreese (2012) explains that news-framing is the process through which we get to understand the extent that the media has an effect on citizens’ understanding of politics. Framing thus influences people’s understanding of a particular political issue or event (Willnat & Awe, 2009). De Vreese (2005) further explains that the consequences of framing are crucial as they can lead to shape decisions made by individuals. This is because the media focuses the attention of the audience on particular news events and then places them within specific fields of meaning (Entman: 1993 & Scheufle: 1999). Cramer (2008) summarises framing as a way that the media organises and presents events and issues to the audience and the way that the audience in turn interprets what they receive from the media in the form of social meaning. Frames influence the perception of news in the way that as a form of agenda-setting it does not only tell one what to think about, but also how to think about it. Therefore framing leads to a situation whereby the audience accepts one meaning over another. It is the media who decides how to frame the news and they are therefore influential in determining which meaning of events is accepted by the

audience. Thus news-framing “can produce various results, sometimes arousing public attention by labelling events in ways that evoke moral disapproval, establishing empathy with people who have been harmed or victimised and attributing responsibility for events to particular people or policies that can be held accountable”, (Bennet et al 2007:89). The news coverage of the xenophobia attacks that took place in South African in 2008, are an example in this instance. Through news framing of the xenophobia attacks the media was able to gain sympathy for the foreign nationals that were attacked by publishing gruesome images of the attacks that took place.

News-framing has its roots in the mass media theory which states the media have a direct influence in how people behave. The problem with the mass media theory, however is that it views “the mass media as having the power to directly influence the attitudes and behaviour of ordinary people”, (William: 2003:29). However research has shown that this is not the case as people are not just passive receivers of information by the media. They are active receivers and they frame the news through the use of personal lenses.

CHAPTER FOUR- RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodologies that I have used in this research. After contextualizing the study through the background information and a theoretical perspective, the rest of the thesis focuses on the findings of the study. Before getting into the findings of the study, let me explain the methodology that I adopted to answer the questions of the study

This section will discuss the research methodology that will be used by first giving its definition and its principles and then will state how this methodology will be applied in this research. In trying to find out about whether the laws passed by Parliament are sufficiently covered by the media, this thesis will use content analysis as a form of research methodology. In this research, qualitative content analysis means that through observation and analysis of the content that appears in the research sample, The Times and The New Age Newspapers, in terms of which laws are published and what words are used by the journalists, the research will be able to deduce what effect this has on the news consumers of these newspapers. Through qualitative content analysis this thesis will try and make meaning of the frequency of news articles about laws in the newspaper and the impact thereof on news consumers. Through the analysis of the articles the research will look at the underlying themes that exist in the pattern of the articles. To this end, Burman quoted in Kohlbacher (2008:35) states that when looking at qualitative content analysis, “there is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognising the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item is being analysed”.

4.1 CASE STUDY

The reason for selecting this approach in the present study is to analyse South Africa press reporting on legislative laws that are passed by the parliament. The case being a sensitive issue for South Africa that makes this case study approach very helpful means to understand the influences of government policies in the press. Journalists and news editors' perspective is also considered as core part of the inquiry.

Yin (1989), describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that: (a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which (c) multiple sources of evidence are used. Various types of case studies have been identified, including exploratory, explanatory and descriptive (Yin, 1989). This study lies within the explanatory and exploratory typologies, which seeks not only to record and describe behaviour and phenomena surrounding foreign policy influences on media, but also explains the wider aspect of media and foreign policy relations.

According to Hartley, "Case study research is a heterogeneous activity covering a range of research methods and techniques, a range of coverage (from single case study through carefully matched pairs up to multiple cases), varied levels of analysis (individuals, groups, organizations, organizational fields or social policies), and differing lengths and levels of involvement in organizational functioning" (Hartley, 2004, p.332). Case studies usually help to demarcate a unit of analysis within a wider subject.

This study uses a single case of legislative laws that are passed by the Parliament to bring in the perspective of South African press coverage on the issue and explains 'how' government policy influences in reporting. Yin points out case study is preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when investigator has little control over events and then the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within the real life context (Yin 1989, p.13). As such, this study has considered not just the voice, but also the perspectives of the actors.

In this qualitative content analysis, I measured the volume of news stories published by the New Age and Times. The reason for choosing the sample is based on the main hypothesis of this research that there is low news coverage of the work that is done by Parliament which inhibits the public's understanding of the importance of laws passed by the legislature. But the main research objective of the thesis will address the ***role of the South African print media in covering the legislative laws in Parliament.***

Qualitative content analysis is concerned with the words and language and analysing them to derive meaning. Forman & Damschroder (2008) define qualitative content

analysis as that which is concerned with examining data which arose out of open-ended data collection techniques which were aimed at looking at detail and depth rather than measurement. They state that qualitative content analysis is one of the many qualitative methods used to analyse textual data. Sparks (2006:19) argues that qualitative content analysis is most useful in studying media effects as “it helps us to discover what content is present that might be bringing about various effects”.

As there were total (190) news articles on the New Age and Time, it was not possible to analyse all the news articles. I selected (50) news articles to conduct the qualitative analysis based on a set of news genres as news stories, editorials and opinions.

The qualitative content analysis is based on framing and use of sources of the content. For analysing the news stories, the use of source and framing or the angle of the news stories was considered. Whereas, for the op-ed and editorial, the framing of was only used for analysis.

This analysis explains how the sources have been used and how the news of the legislative laws that are passed by the parliament was framed by the news media.

My Field Work

The fieldwork for the research was carried out between (01 March 2011-01 June 2011). It involved collection of newspaper content of legislative laws that are passed by the Parliament; protests in South Africa, collecting relevant literatures and studying the background study. I also collected data that dealt with the SA Parliament, the documents that dealt with media environment, which helped me to strengthen in understanding the case. I collected the newspaper content and articles from the National Library where archives of newspapers are kept. This is where I had photocopied all the newspapers that were published in two of the newspaper for the duration of three months from March to June 2011. I spent almost one month (August-2010) period for the collection of these articles from the National Library.

4.2.1 APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

In tracing the history of content analysis as a research methodology, Krippendorff & Bock (2009) make reference to how in the past the British Parliament forced journalists to apologize for reporting on Parliamentary sessions, in contrast to how today it is the Parliament that begs for coverage from journalists. The same could be said in the South African situation as this research has observed from working in The Parliament of Republic of South Africa's Communications team. When there is a law that gets passed, Parliament issues out media invites to the media thus asking them to cover the passing of the law. This could be seen as begging the media for coverage.

4.2.2 PRINCIPLES

The main principle of qualitative content analysis is looking and analysing data and deriving meaning from that analysis of data. Thus by analysing the texts that is content in the aforementioned newspapers might give the research an indication of the news coverage of Parliament. Thus, the thesis looks into the number of articles that focus on the laws passed by Parliament the research will be able to deduce whether or not there is a low coverage of Parliament laws in the media.

For the purpose of this research, this thesis will look at qualitative content analysis which deals with the analysis of text data. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) state that the text data that gets analyzed in content analysis varies and might be in verbal, print, or electronic form or print media such as articles. They further define qualitative content analysis as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic process of coding and identifying themes or patterns", (Weber, 2005). This research's main focus is analysing articles that are published in the New Age and The Times newspapers about South Africa's legislative laws and to properly analyse the news coverage of laws in the media it will be important to look at the number of articles that appear in these newspapers over a period of three months. The main aim for applying this research method is to look at how the print media covers the laws that are passed by South Africa. It is also to get an indication of what the communication trends are and what can Parliament do to improve the coverage that it receives from the media. Thus this will serve as some form of media

audit for Parliament. By analysing the frequency as well as the content that both newspapers have about laws that Parliament passes, this will give an indication to the research whether (or not?) there is a low coverage of laws passed. The research will also be able to see if there is any relationship between the news coverage of legislative laws and the understanding that the news consumers have of the impact of the laws on them. Content analysis explains why certain newspapers code certain articles in a certain way.

4.2.3 RATIONALE OR APPLICATION OF QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The rationale behind applying this research methodology is that qualitative content analysis is the best method to analyse news coverage as the research would have to look at the number of articles that focus on the laws that are passed by Parliament. Following this method might certainly help in mapping the different trends in terms of media coverage of laws, and see what Parliament can do to ensure that it is sufficiently covered. With the main research objective of trying to better understand **the role of the South African print media in covering laws that are passed by Parliament,**” the research method will enable the research to explain the trends in the media coverage of laws passed by the legislative.

Through coding the texts published in newspapers the research will be afforded an opportunity to understand the interaction that exists between the sampled newspapers and the laws that are passed by Parliament. This form of methodology will enable the research to make deductions from the content analysed. Krippendorf (1980) argues that even though the data to be analysed is made available, its contexts is not which then becomes the role of the research. For Krippendorf (1980:81) “data are the primitives for a content analysis and constitute the surface which a content analyst will want to penetrate”. Thus this research will go beyond the traditional wisdom of using content analysis that leads to empirical evidence to more qualitative and in-depth use of the material, by going deep and assess the meaning and the implications that the coverage has on citizens and its implications for political communication.

4.3 RESEARCH POPULATION

Deacon et al (1999:118) argues that research populations refer to “aggregates of texts, institutions, or anything else that is being investigated”. In this paper the research population is the news articles from The Times and The New Age that will be analysed in order to assess the news coverage of South African legislative laws. The research has chosen to include a small population as it will be looking at news articles published by the newspapers from March 01-June 01 2011, a period of three months. The population will be every article published in those aforementioned newspapers which is about South African legislative laws. The rationale in choosing a period of three months is to get a truly representative sample on the issue of the coverage of laws in a circumscribed time period.

4.3.1 SAMPLE

The method of sampling that is used in the analysis on articles published in both The New Age and The Times Newspaper will be random sampling. Samples are taken from populations, argues Hsia (1988) thus this research will select certain articles from a population of newspaper articles from both the newspapers giving them an equal chance of being analysed. But it will only sample from a population of articles published from March 01-June 01 2011, so it is a purposive non-probability sample that can never be generalized though it fits the research objectives and help unpack the case study. The research takes all the relevant articles that are published by the newspapers in the time and theme specific to assess the news coverage of the laws passed. This research will now look into the background and description of the aforementioned newspapers.

THE TIMES NEWSPAPER

The Times Newspaper is part of the newspaper titles which were owned by the Johnnic Communications Group, now Avusa Media. The subsidiary which owns the newspaper is 8called The Times Media Group. The Times is seen as the daily version of its sister newspaper, Sunday Times, which states that “it is leveraged off the trust platform of the Sunday Times”.

The Times Newspaper was borne out of the sale of shared in Times Media Limited (TML) to the black-controlled New Africa Investments Limited (NAIL) (Jacobs, 1999). This was a major change in racial ownership of the print media in South Africa, as Jacobs (1999) details that the members of NAIL, are “either close to or are members of the governing party and many had been active in the struggle against apartheid”. It is important that one of the members of NAIL is ANC National Executive Member who has recently been appointed the Deputy President of the governing party, Cyril Ramaphosa.

The newspaper hasn't shifted its goal of being critical of government based on its new owners. This view is echoed by Jacobs (1999:2) who states, “Nothing much has changed in the editorial make-up or advertiser base of these newspapers, but their columns have been opened for a concerted debate about the future role of media and government”. However, the fact that its ownership base, with Deputy President of the ANC Cyril Ramaphosa having a stake, it could be expected that it would lean more on pro-government coverage and portraying the government in good light. The research aims to find out whether this is the case.

According to the Average Issue Readership of Newspapers/Magazines (AMPS) for the period under review (Jan-December 2011), The Times Newspaper has an average readership of 0.9% of the population, which is considerable higher than that of The New Age newspaper. This could be because it has existed for a longer period as opposed to The New Age. Another reason could be the spin-off that is created from its sister newspaper, The Sunday Times (10.7%) making it the highest read weekly newspaper in South Africa. Its readership currently stands at 331 000. It is also published in English and is distributed nationally.

THE NEW AGE NEWSPAPER

The New Age Newspaper is relatively new, only a year and a half into existence and thus it has been challenging to finding scholarly articles on the paper. The New Age newspaper is a national daily newspaper, owned and operated by TNA Media (Pty) Ltd. TNA Media was established in June 2010 and the first publication of The New Age was on 6 December 2010. When it was formed, most critics stated that it would become “an ANC mouthpiece”. In writing about the paper's first year anniversary, Le

Cordeur (2012) states that there was speculation about the newspaper becoming an ANC mouthpiece when it was formed. The Media Club South Africa explicitly positions the paper as pro-government, even though it has no formal ties with any political party. This view has not been denied by the owners of the newspaper who in describing the newspaper in their “about us” section state that, “Our goal is to focus on the positive side of news, and we aim for constructive criticism of our leaders in our newspaper”, (www.thenewage.co.za). This goal could be seen as leaning towards the publishing of more pro-government news which in turns possibly means more coverage on legislative laws passed. The rationale in choosing the newspaper is that it is currently under-researched and the aim of the research is to contribute to scholarly articles about the newspaper.

In the period under review (Jan-Dec 2011), according to the AMPS, The New Age had an average readership of 0.1% of the adult reading population. It is published in English and is distributed nationally. According to these statistics, this newspaper is amongst the least read daily newspapers in South Africa. The highest read newspaper around the time under review was The Daily Sun with an average daily readership of 15.9% of the adult population.

4.3.2 VARIABLES

Variation as Krippendorf (2004) states is concerned with what makes the data collected informative. Variables refer to the factors that can change during the course of the research. Stacks & Hocking (1992) describe variables as anything that changes, hence the term variable. The independent variable refers to the variables that change as a result of changing the dependent variable. Stacks & Hocking (1992:181) sum it up by stating that an independent variable is “the variable that is the cause of, or the antecedent to, or the predictor of, the dependent variable. The dependent variable gets its name because it depends on the independent variable for its value”.

A variable in this research is the population size, which in this case is the number of articles that will be analysed. It is important to note that the research can decide to change or manipulate the number of articles analysed. The independent variable will be the results of this change in the number of article. Another dependent variable is

the type of laws that analysed. The outcome of changing the laws is the dependent variable. So if the research decides to analyse only social development laws that appear in news articles published by the newspapers, then the results of the study will change. How the research measures the response that she receives from changing the focus is called the dependent variable. Thus the dependent variable is the effect of changing the factors that influenced the research. Du Plooy (2002:49) argues that the” purpose of controlling and manipulation in research is to isolate the actual factors (variables) that cause certain phenomena.

In order to have reliable meaningful variables this research will not be looking at articles that are not about laws passed. For example it will shun the articles that are about Parliament as an institution and will focus on articles that focus on the laws passed by Parliament. Krippendorf (2004:156) echoes the view of not analysing what will not help the research questions when looking at variables as he states, “if the units of a content analysis do not exhibit in their description, analysis of units cannot inform anything”. The variables which the research aims to use will be the one which tests the hypotheses below.

4.4 HYPOTHESES:

- Media agendas do not prioritise Parliament laws
- There is low news coverage of Parliament passed laws
- The news-framing of Parliament laws do not help the public understand and unpack their meanings and significance.

Based on the aforementioned hypotheses, the research will look at the articles that are published in the aforementioned newspapers and make sense of whether the hypotheses are true. It has been proven by theorists such as Weber (1990) that the best way of making sense of newspaper articles is to embark on a content analysis of what is published in them. As Hansen et al (1998) state that if we wish to describe and analyse media content then the best way of doing this will be embarking on a content analysis method. This research will then look at the number of articles that are published by the New Age Newspaper. Looking at the number and the frequency in which articles that focus on passed laws is in line with the content analysis methodology and will enable the research to deduce whether there is low coverage of Parliament. To quantify this view Berelson (1952) states that elements of a

content analysis study “must indicate frequencies of occurrence of such characteristics with a high degree of precision’. However this research will not only look at the frequency, but will also look at how articles that are about South Africa legislative laws are portrayed.

4.5 SELECTION OF STUDY PERIOD AND RATIONALE FOR PRINT MEDIA

The period that has been chosen for the study is March 1, 2011 to June 01 2011. This falls within the first quarter of Parliament’s business and is one of Parliament’s busiest times. This time is crucial as it comes after the annual State of the Nation Address which sets the tone and the themes which government and Parliament will follow. It can thus be argued that the ground is fertile for passing laws at this time as the theme for the State of the Nation Address is still fresh in the minds of MPs whose responsibility in Parliament is to pass laws. During this time there was also the local government election which could serve as a limitation, as for the period of May most political news articles focused on the elections. As mentioned in Chapter One, the aim of the research is to assess the news coverage of the South African legislative laws by analysing the content in two print daily newspapers. The research is cognisant of the fact that print media reaches a lesser audience as opposed to broadcast media. However it is important that studies on these relatively new newspapers that are yet to reach their ten year anniversaries is undertaken. This could assist in discovering the trends behind the inclusion of certain articles about laws passed by Parliament. Thus through analysing the content in both these newspapers, the research will have an indication of the news coverage of laws by the print media. Another rational for choosing the print media is that as Abidin (2009) argues, “Print media tends to create a longer lasting and deeper impression on the reader’s minds”. The print media has also been criticised for lagging behind when it comes to transformation which is another reason that the research chose to focus on the print media. To this end Mukhongo (2010) argues that both the print and broadcast media have unique roles to play in enhancing good governance and accountability of governments.

4.6 APPLICATION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TO THE RESEARCH

The agenda-setting theory as mentioned in Chapter three under the Theoretical Framework, argues that through the topics that the media publishes daily, they create a particular image of reality (Fourie, 2001). Thus by deciding to publish or not news that portray laws in South Africa, the media have framed what should be important to news consumers. Mcquail, quoted in Fourie (2001:447) argues, “The attention given in news coverage to items or issues, influences the rank order of public awareness and attributes to the significance of an issue”. In applying content analysis as a method, this research will look at the prominence that is being given to laws that are passed by Parliament. By deciding which laws to publish or not publish the media is indirectly telling the South African media audience which laws to see as important. To this end, O’Sullivan quoted in Fourie (2001):462 states that “agenda-setting is concerned with how the media’s legitimisation of issues and events affects our perceptions of reality”.

News-framing is a theory that is related to agenda-setting as Fourie argues that it, “describes the influence on the public of the news angles used by journalists”. It involves the way in which the media report about a matter, a person a group in a certain way. Thus how the newspapers mentioned report about the laws and in which part of the newspapers (pages) they place articles that are about Parliament is key. By analysing the content in these newspapers, the research will be able to give evidence to the hypotheses mentioned elsewhere in this paper.

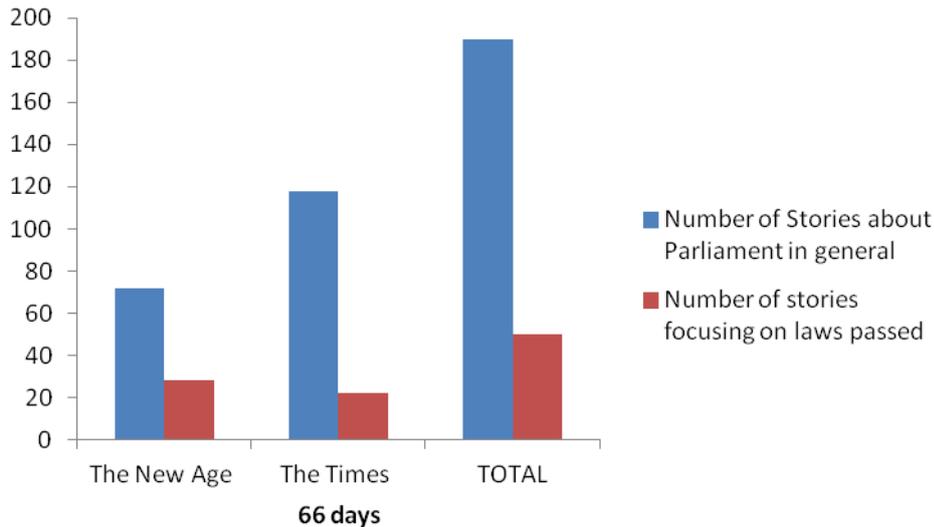
CHAPTER FIVE- DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the researcher will present the main findings of the research by providing a thorough analysis and address all the research questions. In its first part, each aspect will be highlighted and later in the chapter a cross examination of the findings will be derived and discussed.

5.1 DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Frequency of news coverage of The Times and New Age newspapers

Number of days	Number of Stories about Parliament in general	Number of stories focusing on laws passed
The New Age (66)	72	28
The Times (66)	118	22
TOTAL	190	50



Graph 1

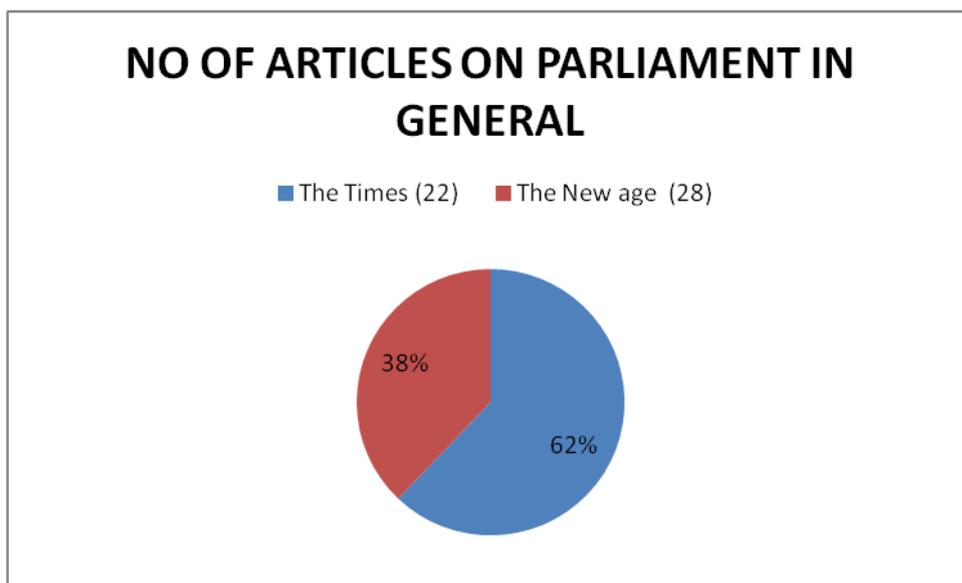
Based on the above tables, the research found that a total number of 50 stories which focus on laws passed by Parliament were published for the research period (01 March-01 June 2011). The stories were spaced over 66 days and, based on the findings from above, out of the 50 stories found in both newspapers, a majority of 29 articles were published in The New Age newspaper as opposed to a smaller fraction of 22 stories published in The Times newspaper. However the research found that a The Times Newspaper had more articles that were about Parliament in general, with 118 stories focusing on Parliament. Out of that 118, only 22 were on the laws passed by Parliament. This is in contrast to The New Age whose coverage on general laws was 72 articles, however out of those 72 articles 28 of the articles were on Parliament's passed laws. The results indicate that in terms of news coverage, The New Age has more coverage of Parliamentary laws as opposed to The Times Newspaper.

Table 2: No of stories about Parliament vs No of stories about laws passed

NO OF ARTICLES ABOUT LAWS	NO OF ARTICLES ON PARLIAMENT IN GENERAL	%

The Times (22)	118	18
The New age (28)	72	30

The above table indicates that New Age had a percentage of 30 % of articles that are about South Africa’s legislative laws as opposed to The Times’s 18% that focus on laws.



Pie Chart 1

ACTORS

Deacon et al (1999:122) describes Actors in news articles as those people or political groups who appear in the texts. He states that “actors are often coded to compare the differential presence of social and political groups in media content”. Sicakkan (2008) argues that media actors can both be political or social actors. He argues that because of their mobilising capacity, political actors “influence citizens’ way and substance of involvement. Thus it is crucial that in the analysis of newspaper articles about laws, that this thesis looks at how many stories feature media and political actors in both newspapers analysed.

Table 3: Actors: The New Age

Parliament or MPs as	Ministers	or	Opposition parties	Civil society and
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actors	Departments		experts
8	10	6	16

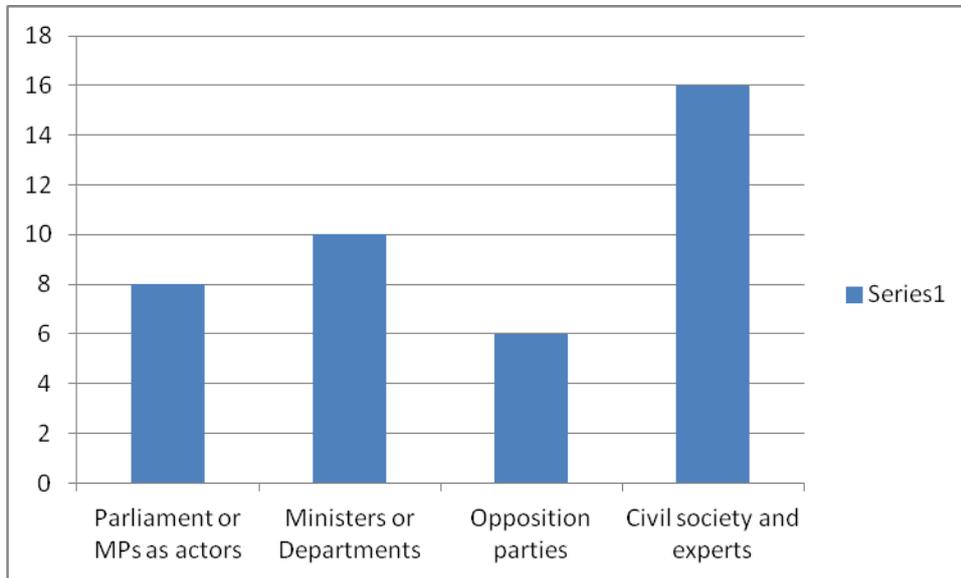
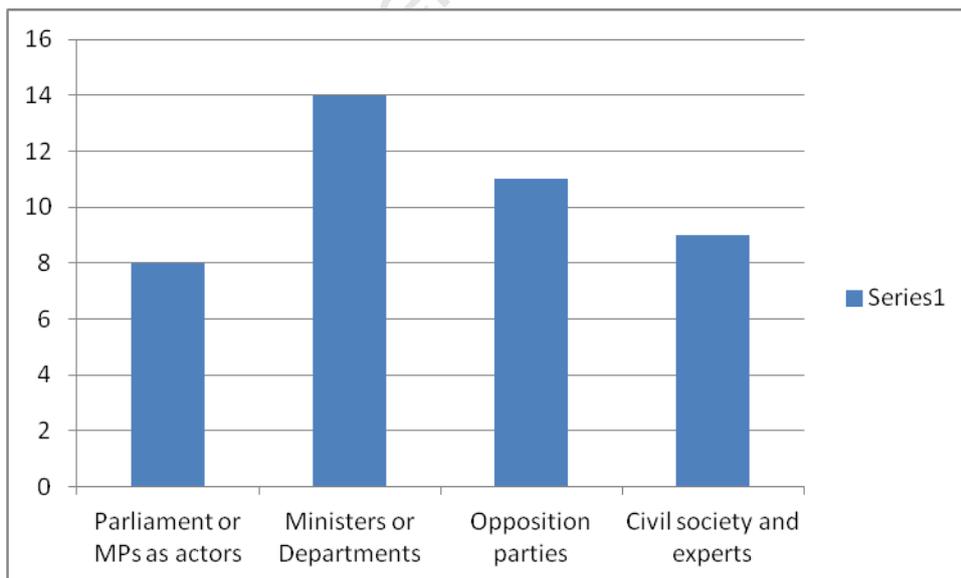


Table 4: Actors: The Times

Parliament or MPs as actors	Ministers or Departments	Opposition parties	Civil society and experts
8	14	11	9



Findings from the above table indicate that the agenda when it comes to news and articles is driven by government and Ministers and that Parliament through its MPs,

is not a major actor in shaping the news. Only 8 stories from both papers had MPs or Parliament as institutional actors in the news stories. This is opposed to the 10 stories for the New Age that had government Ministers as actors, and the 14 that had government ministers for The Times newspaper. In their news articles The Times newspaper's stories on laws seem to be initiated by the oppositions as findings from above state that 11 stories out of the sampled stories have the opposition as actors. This is in contrast to The New Age which only has 6 stories with the opposition as actors. It is important to note that opposition does not only refer to the official opposition, but other opposition parties as well. In the analysis of the news articles findings indicate that The New Age newspaper in their stories, use more experts to balance their stories with 16 stories quoting experts in their news stories as opposed to 9 stories quoting experts in The Times newspaper. When it comes to actors, the researcher found other actors in the stories, such as unions and individual members of the public, however they were too few on both articles to mention thus rendering them insignificant.

NEWS-FRAMING OF STORY HEADLINES COVERING PARLIAMENT

This research will now look at the news-framing of stories that are about the laws that are covered in the print media of South Africa by looking at the headlines which the stories carry.

Table 5: News-framing of stories covering Parliament: The New Age

No of news frames	Positive	%	Neutral	%	Negative	%
28	12	42.8	2	7	14	50

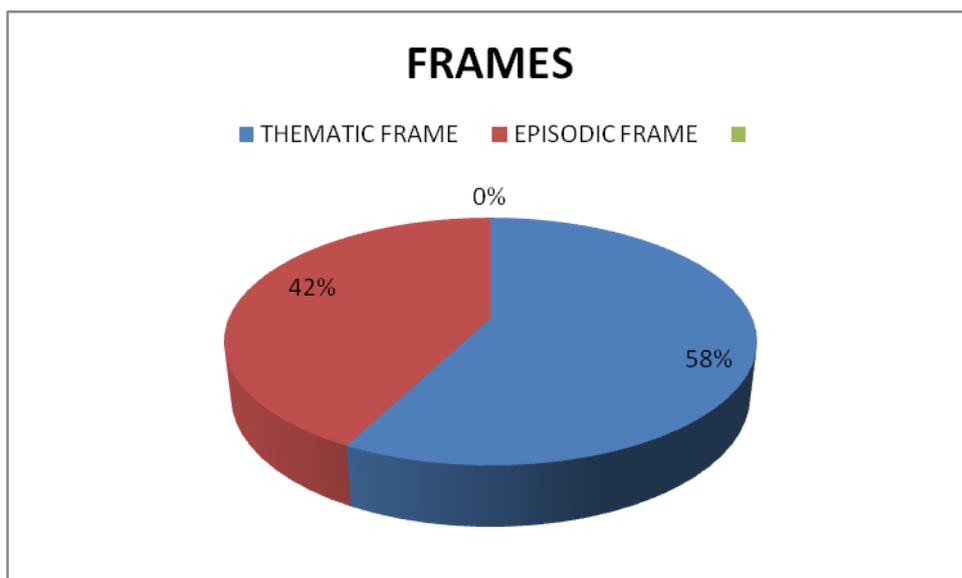
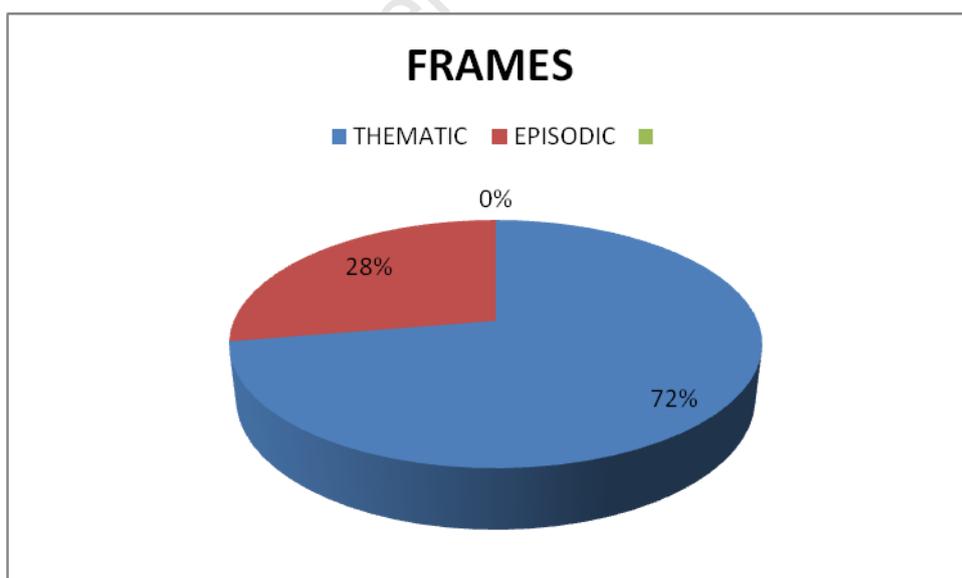


Table 6: News-framing of stories covering Parliament: The Times

No of news frames	Positive	%	Neutral	%	Negative	%
22	5	22.7	4	18	13	59



Findings from the above table indicate that Parliament is mostly framed in a negative way by the print media. This is based on the headlines that the research analysed.

The Times Newspaper had an overwhelming 13 news stories which portrayed Parliament and the passing of laws in a negative way. The Times newspaper thus only framed 5 news stories in a positive way when it comes to the passing of Laws. The New Age newspaper framed 14 news stories in a negative way, but on the other side framed 12 stories in a positive manner.

TABLE 7: EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE HEADLINES IN THE TIMES

HEADLINE	DATE
Union calls for withdrawal of Equity Bill	09 March 2011
Concourt sends Hawks law back to Parliament	17 March 2011
Minister, MPs differ over Bill	22 March 2011

TABLE 8: EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE HEADLINES: THE TIMES

HEADLINE	DATE
Immigration Amendment Bill submitted to Parliament	22 March 2011
DA urges ANC to back anti-corruption Bill	23 March 2011
Opposition welcomes Bill curbing cadre deployment	24 March 2011

TABLE 9: EXAMPLES OF NEUTRAL HEADLINES: THE TIMES

HEADLINE	DATE
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MPs have until June 24 to finalise Secrecy Bill	19 March 2011
Bill to extend Ngcobo's term	27 March 2011

TABLE 10: EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE HEADLINES: THE NEW AGE

HEADLINE	DATE
Information Bill to be finalised by end of June	11 April 2011
MPs plan special sitting to finalise law	08 April 2011
New Act comes to rescue of consumers and producers	28 March 2011

TABLE 11 EXAMPLES OF NEGATIVE HEADLINES: THE NEW AGE

HEADLINE	DATE
Truant MPs in hot water	29 March 2011
Bid to snaffle councillors halted	25 March 2011
Consumer Act may negatively affect property leases	19 April 2011

TABLE 12: EXAMPLES OF NEUTRAL HEADLINES: THE NEW AGE

HEADLINE	DATE
Radebe announces rethink on Bill	04 April 2011
Minister clarifies Employment Equity Bill	March 07 2011
SA military request their own sector (Military Veterans Amendment Bill	30 March 2011

Table 13: Types of frames: THE NEW AGE

THEMATIC FRAME	%	Episodic frame	%
16	57	12	42

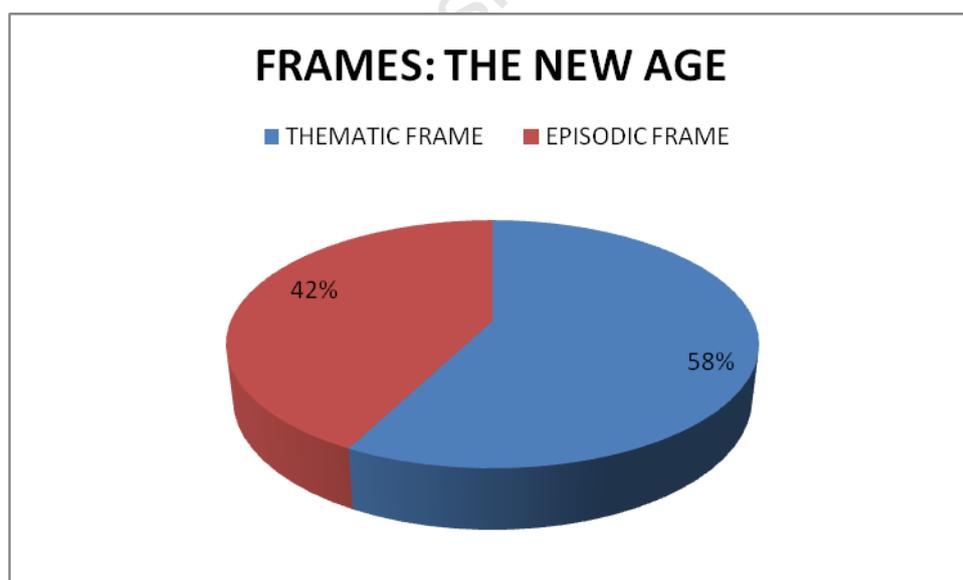
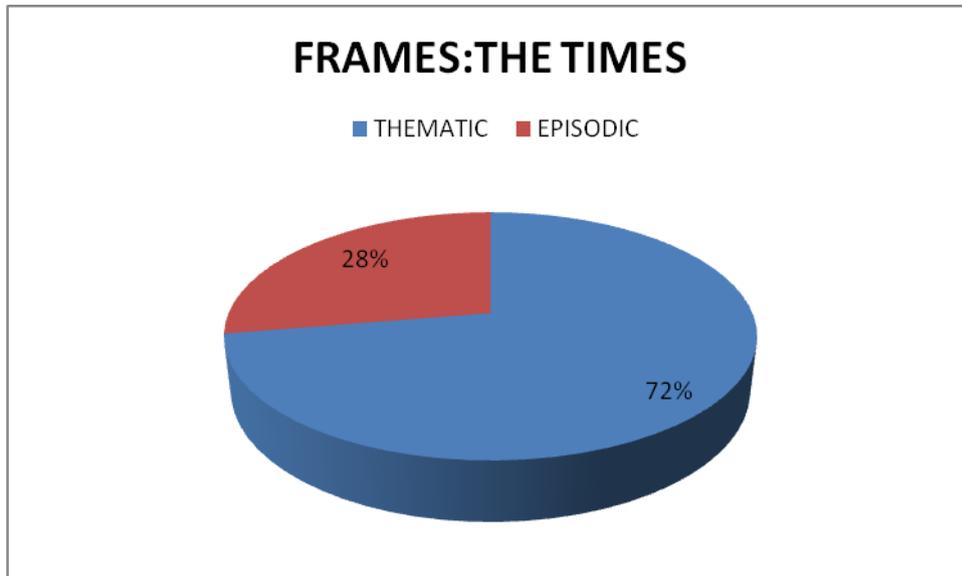


TABLE: 14 TYPE OF FRAMES: THE TIMES

THEMATIC FRAME	%	Episodic frames	%
15	68	8	36



Based on the above table, the print media uses thematic frames more than episodic frames when framing the news. Findings indicate that from the articles analysed, frames that took into account groups of people and the context of the news are more numerous than those that take into account only views of the individuals. The table above indicates that The Times newspaper published more stories based on thematic frames, these are stories with headlines such as “*Six month guarantee with new consumer Act*” (published on March 28 2011). The article explains the relevance of the act and how the rights of consumers will be guaranteed under the act. There is a huge gap in the number of frames in the stories about laws, published by The Times. Most of the stories for the period of research were more thematic than episodic, with only 28% of the articles taking on an episodic frame, by allocating responsibilities to an individual. These are articles like “*Zuma clarifies employment equity Bill*”, (published on March 3, 2011). This is contrary to the New Age whose gap between thematic and episodic frames is very close, with 42% of its news stories taking on an episodic frame, whilst only 58% take a thematic frame. Examples of thematic frames found in The New Age Newspaper, include “*New Act comes to rescue of consumers and producers*”, (published on March 28, 2011). It is interesting

that this article is similar to that published by The Times as it goes into depth about the implications of the new act, and how it is seen as protecting consumers and producers. However there were also a number of episodic stories, in The New Age, like “*Mine worker dies before receiving compensation*” and “*ANC Chief Whip wants secrecy bill to be finalised by June*” respectively published in March 03, 2011 and March 22, 2011.

LINK BETWEEN FRAMES AND NEWSPAPER: THE TIMES

Due to the fact that The Times Newspaper published more stories based on thematic frames, it can be argued that the stories that they publish aim to educate the citizens of the country about the laws which are passed. This is because when the Newspaper publishes an article about a law, they do not focus on individuals but rather on the context of the law and its implication or lack of that it will have on citizens. An example of this can be found in how articles which focused on the Consumer Protection Act were framed by the paper. It can then be argued that proper detail and attention was given to this piece of legislation as its implications were clearly spelt out in all the articles published about this Act. However episodic frames were used when referring to articles that refer to politicians. An example of this is the coverage of the Employment Equity Bill by the paper. It carried headlines like “*Zuma clarifies employment equity bill*”. By using an episodic frame in this headline, the article was alleging that it was the President’s fault that the Employment Equity Bill had not been properly drafted and thus he was being afforded an opportunity to explain the legislation.

LINK BETWEEN FRAMES AND NEWSPAPER: THE NEW AGE

The research found that there was not much of a gap in the frames used by this newspaper. Findings indicate that even though the newspaper uses mostly thematic frames as well with 58% of stories published being given a thematic frame, it also to a large degree uses episodic frames, with findings stating that 42% of news articles in the paper used episodic frames. An example of how thematic frames were used in the paper, are in headlines such as “*New act comes to rescue of consumers*” and “*Far reaching changes in SA prison laws*”. These articles were published on March

28, and March 08 respectively in The New Age. These articles go in depth about the legislation they mention and its impact thereof on citizens, they contextualise the legislation. This is contrast to episodic frames used in headlines like “Radebe announces rethink on bill” and “Malema strongly urges MPs to amend constitution’s compensation clauses” published on 04 April and May 06 respectively. These articles focus on individuals and do not give an in depth detail of the legislations and its impact thereof.

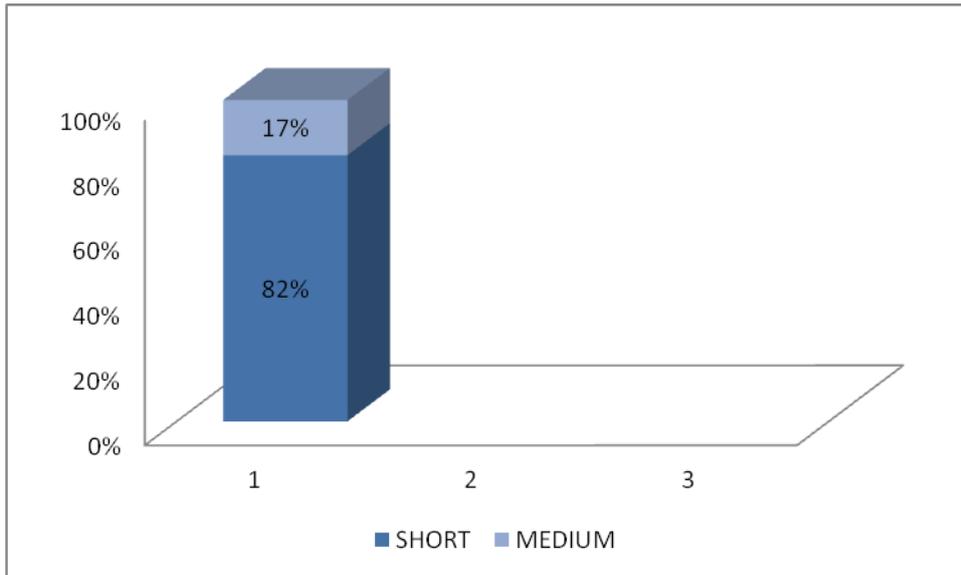
LENGTH OF STORIES

Table 15: Length of stories

Newspaper	SHORT	MEDIUM	LONG
The New Age	23	5	0
The Times	12	10	0
Total	35	15	0

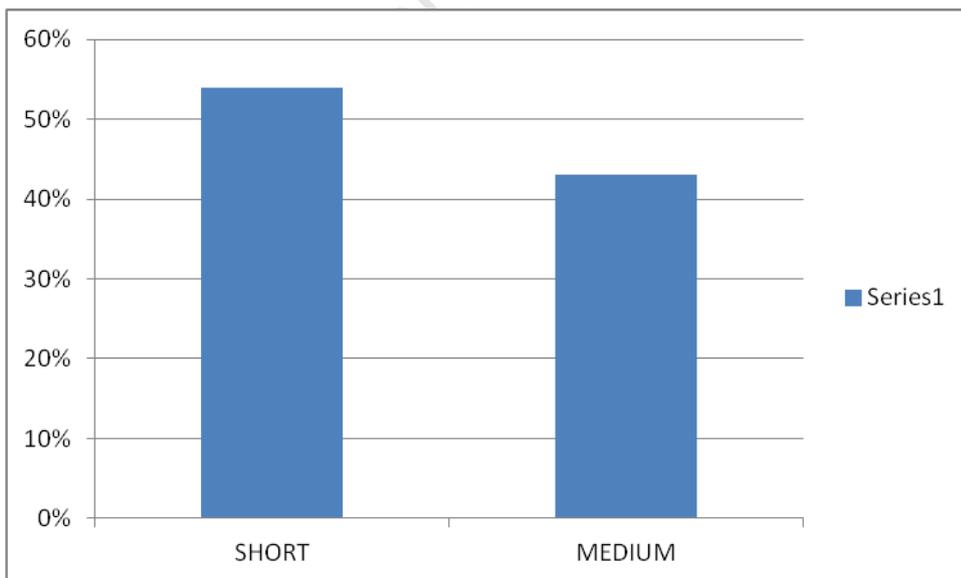
THE NEW AGE

NO OF STORIES	SHORT	%	MEDIUM	%
28	23	82	5	17



LENGTH OF STORIES: THE TIMES

NO OF STORIES	SHORT	%	MEDIUM	%
22	12	54%	10	43



Based on the above, even though The New Age newspaper publishes more laws about Parliament, the length of those stories is very short (less than 600 words) for more than half of the articles analysed. This shows that they are not giving much attention to salient issues. This is in contrast to the Times Newspaper which, even though publishes fewer articles about the laws passed by Parliament; its articles are more in-depth thus allowing the reader more insight into the issues raised in the articles. For the period of research, The Times Newspaper published 10 articles which were more than 600 words and only published 12 which can be described as short.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research aim was to assess the news coverage of laws that are passed by the South African Parliament by looking at the articles published in two relatively new newspapers in the South African print media industry. In order to achieve this, it was important that the research studied the history of news coverage of Parliament as an institution as well as the relationship between Parliaments and the media. This was essential as the type of the relationship that exists between the media and Parliament will decide how the media covers Parliament.

The research questions was: **“What is the role of the South African print media in covering laws that are passed by Parliament”**

The hypotheses are:

- Media agendas do not prioritise Parliament laws
- There is low news coverage of Parliament passed laws
- The news-framing of Parliament laws do not help the public understand and unpack their meanings and significance.

HYPOTHESIS: Media agendas do not prioritise Parliament laws

Based on the literature review, this thesis has found that Parliament’s laws have never been prioritised by the media for centuries now. Looking at studies done on

European Parliaments this thesis has discovered that news coverage of laws passed by Parliament remains low. The South African media and the South African Parliament are also no exception as this thesis has discovered. The research discovered that the print media in South Africa, particularly The Times newspaper covers Parliament news in general. These are news focusing on the debates that take place in Parliament as well as the sectorial Parliaments often hosted by the South African Parliament. This research found that there were 118 articles that were in The Times newspapers focusing on general news about Parliament and out of those only 23 focused specifically on the laws passed or being in the process of being passed by Parliament. This means that only 18 % of news articles in Times were about Parliament. This is however in contrast to findings of The New Age newspaper which has a slightly higher percentage of stories that focus on laws passed by Parliament with 30% of its stories focusing on laws passed by Parliament. The above finding proves that the media agenda does not prioritise Parliament laws.

- **HYPOTHESIS: There is low news coverage of Parliament passed laws**

Based on the findings this thesis has discovered that there is low news coverage of Parliament passed laws. This is because out of 118 articles published in The Times newspaper, that are on Parliament only a small fraction of 22 laws was about Parliament, thus indicating that coverage about Parliament is limited to general news on Parliament and not on the legislation passed by Parliament. The same is true of The New Age even though the margin between Parliament's general news in the paper and those that focus on laws is not that vast. Out of 72 articles that were published in The New Age, only 28 were solely focusing on the laws passed.

- **HYPOTHESIS** The news-framing of Parliament laws do not help the public understand and unpack their meanings and significance.

It was the hypotheses of this thesis that the news framing of Parliament laws does not help public understand and unpack their meanings and significance. However the research findings are contrary to this hypothesis. This is because the findings indicate that both newspapers use more thematic frames in the framing of laws passed by Parliament. Thematic frames as indicated in the

Chapter on theoretical framework help the news consumer understand the laws covered by the media and their significance. This thesis has found that both the Times and The New Age newspaper use more of thematic frames than episodic frames.

Currently there is debate on whether the New Age is a government mouthpiece and is sympathetic in its coverage of government and its entities. This is based on the fact that the owner of The New Age media is 'close' friends with the South African President Jacob Zuma. The research found that The New Age has 30% of articles published that talk about the South African legislative laws as opposed to a lesser 18 % published in The Times. This margin is however very close as the research had expected more articles on the coverage of laws from The New Age since it is seen as government aligned. These findings are similar to those found by the Media Tenor on its research in January 2011, which found that The New Age had almost four times, as much political coverage on average as other media. Based on these findings it is difficult to ascertain whether The New Age in its coverage is sympathetic to government and its entities, as the research was limited to only assessing the news coverage of the laws that are passed by Parliament. However when the research analysed the content of the news articles published in The New Age newspaper against those of The Times, it found that even though there are more articles that talk of the laws passed by Parliament there is not enough space dedicated for these articles in The New Age. When publishing articles that are about South Africa's legislative laws the Times news articles are more in-depth as opposed to those of The New Age.

Upon closer inspection of these articles however, the research found that MPs and Parliament were not the main actors or voices in the articles. Out of the articles analysed, both The Times and The New Age only had 16% of the articles with MPs and Parliament as actors or voices. Parliament is tasked with passing laws and might thus be better placed to explain the legislation that it passes. Thus journalists are missing the opportunity to explain the legislation to news consumers when they don't use the Committee Chairperson from Parliament to explain the meaning behind passing legislation. This thesis found that Ministers and government departments

were the leading voices in the news articles, whereas in Parliament it is the MPs that drive the topic and thus they should be the main voices in news articles. In 2003, The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Group Study on Parliament and the Media recognised that the media and Parliament are at the cutting edge of civic engagement. However it is interesting that neither of the newspapers publish long articles on laws which are above 700 words. This proves the hypotheses that there is low news coverage of Parliament law passing, and that the media agendas do not prioritise Parliament laws. This is self-evident; as if the media prioritised Parliament and the coverage of its laws in its agenda then they would dedicate more space to the articles.

Amongst the findings of this research was that in The New Age, 80% of the articles assessed that are about the legislative laws were written by one journalist. This is dangerous because it is the same voice, thus only giving the same view in the coverage of articles. Thus there is no different voice that portrays the articles. Plurality in the portrayal of news is very important as it diversifies the news value. In their framing of news articles about legislative laws, both The Times and The New Age use a large number of civil society and experts in their voice and actors as opposed to using MPs as actors. This supports Scheufele's news-framing theory that the pressure of interests groups lead to certain frames in the media. It is through framing that the media mirrors each other's agendas.

This thesis discovered that even though it analysed different newspapers, the way that the stories were framed was similar. An example is the similar way in which the Military Veterans Bill was covered by both newspapers. The Times newspaper led with the headline "Veterans get R65bn (published on March 29) to avert threat of instability", with The New Age newspaper (published March 29, 2011) leading with "Veterans 'deserve' R65bn benefit". Even though the articles phrase the story differently, the nuances are the same.

In analysing the articles further, the research discovered that the way in which the laws are framed by the print media in South Africa do not help the public understand their significance. This is evident in the fact that out of the articles analysed only a few articles had a proper explanation on how the passing of the legislation will affect citizens. In both newspapers, an attempt was made to explain the effect that the

Companies Act will have on the consumers. This is commendable, but it is the argument of this thesis that the same attention needs to be given to other laws as well. Another law which was given sufficient coverage by the media and explained how it affected the citizens was the Protection of State Information Bill. It could also be argued this was only done because this law had a direct impact on the media and has future implications on the operations of the media thus explaining why it was given so much salience. The Times had a total number of four articles, which solely focused on the Protection of State Information Bill; out of the 22 articles that were talking about Parliament's passed laws. This means 18% of the articles were about the Protection of Information Bill, whilst The New Age had a similar percentage of 17%, with only five articles talking about the Protection of Information Bill, thus proving the above assumption that the media gave the Protection of State Information Bill biased coverage. Along with the Companies Act, the Protection of State Information Bill, received the most coverage as opposed to other laws that were published in both newspapers.

The contradictions to note in the coverage of laws exist in the covering of the Municipal Systems Bill, which is a Bill which affects the running of municipalities, stating that members of parties cannot hold position at political party and at municipal level. Out of the 28 articles that talk about the legislative laws, The New Age Newspaper had four articles that focus on the Bill, thus meaning at least 14% of the articles were about the Municipal System Bill. This is in contrast to the 9% of the articles in The Times that were about the same act. This finding is interesting in that it can be argued that the legislation is one of the most important legislations to be passed by the fourth Parliament as it curbs corruption, thus making it important that it be given more prominence in the media so as to make citizens aware of this important legislation. Thus it can be argued that the New Age is the one that gives more prominence to legislation that aims to change the country. The Employment Equity Bill received the least coverage from both newspapers, with only one article published over a period of three months.

CHAPTER SIX- CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 CONCLUSIONS

Parliament is at the heart of the political debates that happen in South Africa and is tasked with passing laws that are responsive to the needs of its citizens. However, Parliament's passing of laws should not take place in an ivory tower, but should ensure that citizens are fully informed of important political decisions, and encourage the participation by citizenry in decisions that make a difference to them. It is here that the media becomes an important role player in ensuring that this happens as they become the vehicle in which Parliament can carry its messages to the public. The media, particularly print newspapers, become a link between Parliament and its citizens and how they frame and portray the laws that Parliament publishes has an effect on how people view Parliament and its legislators. Mattes (2002) cite a survey in which only 34% of respondents stated that they trusted Parliament, which is a low number. Could this mistrust be caused by the articles or lack thereof that appears in the media about Parliament? In trying to understand whether this is the case, the research studied news coverage of Parliament and legislation in other countries as well as the history of the South African print media. This has enabled the research to understand the environment in which the two newspapers analysed operate under. It is important to understand the environment as it gives an indication as to why news is framed the way it is. This thesis has used the news-framing and agenda-setting theories to highlight how the print media sets the agenda for the public; thus influencing the issues they might deem as important. However even though both the news-framing and agenda-setting theories state that the media influences the way the news is consumed, it is also important to note that this is only limited, as people access news products that are directly linked to them. To this end, Dahlgren (2009) argues that it is the people's circumstances which motivate them to follow news. An example of this would be the lack of interest from poor news consumers on financial law because it does not benefit them.

In trying to understand the role that South Africa's print media play in covering the legislative laws passed by Parliament, this thesis has studied the history of news coverage of Parliaments worldwide. For centuries, news coverage of the laws passed by Parliament has been neglected by the media, and South Africa is no exception. In trying to find the causes behind this seeming lack of interest in the laws passed by the legislative, the research explained two theories of the press, viz the agenda-setting and news-framing theories. These theories have attempted to explain why certain issues make it to the news and others don't, and the thinking behind framing news in a certain manner.

This thesis concedes that public participation is essential in a democracy, but the media is central in ensuring that this happens and has in detail described the lenses in which the media use to publish news, by describing both the news-framing and agenda-setting theories. For it is only through the understanding and unpacking of these theories that one is able to understand the way the media operates. In order to pass legislation that is responsive to the needs of the people, Parliaments worldwide need to use the media to connect with their citizens. That is why it is important that there be good relations between the media and Parliament. However for the media to fulfil its role of encouraging citizenry participation, it has to be free and objective. Studies indicate that even in post-apartheid South Africa, press freedom is still threatened, with the government wanting to regulate it further. The question is can a media that are regulated by government fulfil the need to encourage citizen participation? Parliaments must pass laws which ensure the freedom of the press, and must guard against government's threatening of the media. This means that the role of the legislative as being a voice of the voiceless needs to be taken seriously by Parliaments by guarding the interests of the media, and guarding against it being used for sinister motives by the ruling government.

In conclusion, the way that the print media frames the South African legislature is indicative of the relationship that the media has with government and other public institutions. The history points to a relationship that has always been marred by differences and mistrust, and it is the conclusion of this research that even in the democratic fourth Parliament there is still hostility between the media and government. This has led to Parliament introducing legislation like the Protection of State Information Bill which has been described by its critics as hampering media freedom. It is the concession of this thesis that with the media and government at loggerheads, public participation is neglected, as both institutions which are tasked with strengthening democracy are not ensuring that this happens. This is evident in the alarmingly low coverage of the passing of laws. Where laws appear in news articles, the MPs are not the driving dominant voices in the articles; it is the government ministers who take centre stage. It has been the argument of this thesis that it is the legislators (MP) who fully understand the laws as they have a direct link to the citizens through their constituents, and thus their voices should feature prominently in news articles explaining the importance of laws.

Where the voices of government are not dominant in articles, they are replaced by civil society and experts, which this thesis argues is a double-edged sword, in that it can be seen in a positive and negative light. It could be positive in that civil society and experts add diverse voices and balance the views in an article and are playing a watchdog role over government. However, this can also be seen as negative as it can be argued that they also

influence agenda-setting and sometimes journalists and newspaper houses can be used by experts subconsciously to fulfil hidden agendas. This is what the media needs to be wary of.

Even though the media is meant to be objective in its news coverage and let news consumers make their own decisions independently, the news-framing and agenda-setting theory imply that news is subjective, as media actors decide which news gets published and what prominence those news articles receive. The two theories also explain the importance of news-framing and its effect on citizens who are unaware that someone else makes decisions on what they read and how they react to it.

6.2 LIMITATIONS

In trying to assess the news coverage of the South African laws, the research was confronted with numerous limitations. Chief amongst these limitations was the research period chosen (01 March 2011- 01 June 2011). May 2011 was the time for the local government elections in South Africa and thus most of the coverage prior to and after May was hugely concentrated on party politics and the elections. Walgrave & Van Aelst (2006) and different studies have demonstrated that during election times there is limited or no influence from the media agenda on the political agenda.

The election period also coincided with Parliament's termly recess, thus making newspapers coverage on legislative laws thin as most coverage focused on elections. Prior to embarking on the research, the researcher had set on only assessing the coverage of developmental laws, however this changed and the researcher decided to look at the coverage of laws. This was because of the lack of the material that the researcher found.

Another limitation was that there is not enough scholarly articles on the history of the two newspapers as they are relatively new, thus to fully understand the reasoning behind the formation of the two newspapers, the research had to look at the overall print media in South Africa thus limiting the research.

6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst there is a plethora of studies done on news coverage of Parliaments worldwide, these studies has focused on general Parliament and not on the laws that it passes. Thus there is scope for future research on the impact that the lack of news coverage of laws passed by Parliament has on citizens. Even when Parliaments are studied, there is a lack of studies on African Parliaments, thus presenting scope for future research. Scholars from Africa need to study their own Parliaments and the impact of the seeming lack of interest in covering the laws that are passed by Parliaments. To solve Africa's problems requires a lens that someone who has lived in the continent is privy to. Parliament is also the heart of debate for

government policies and in this context it is crucial that it has some form of symbiotic relationship with the media. It is within this context that there is a need to review the literature that exists around the decrease of news coverage of Parliament in the media.

The little that has been done does not focus on the law-making function of Parliament and the impact the laws have on citizens, but rather on the oversight function of Parliaments. With the South African Parliament currently concluding the processing of the controversial Protection of State Information Bill which aims to regulate the information which can be published by the media, it would be interesting to see the implications of the Bill on the media.

In South Africa, the media and government have always been at loggerheads about the role of the media in deepening the role of democracy and encouraging citizenship participation in law making processes. The government has been accusing the media of covering it unfairly with the media accusing the government of enacting laws that make it difficult for them to effectively do their job. The ANC has suggested that there be a media tribunal to regulate the work of the media. But is there a need to take such drastic measures? Is there no way that the media and government can meet each other half-way as they both encourage participatory democracy? As such, scope exists for future research to find out whether in a country that prides itself of being one of the most democratic countries in Africa, is there a need to regulate the media? Regulating the media would mean that there is little difference between the democratic and the apartheid South Africa. Is it necessary to limit the freedom of the press? Saleh (2010) argues that journalism is hampered by a number of factors, including the lack of laws which aim to safeguard journalism education and professional values. The media already has self-regulation methods like the Press Ombud and the Press Council, however critics of these institutions have labelled them toothless and inefficient (Daniels, 2012) thus arguing for the media tribunals. The thesis has contributed to an under-researched area by researching the news coverage of the laws published both in *The New Age* and *The Times* which are relative newcomers in the print media industry. The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa is currently embarking on a public participation drive, encouraging citizens to participate in the law making processes of the institution. It is the recommendation of this research that there needs to be a study done on how the laws that Parliament passes impact the ordinary citizens, and to see what role the broadcast media in comparison to print media plays in ensuring that this happens.

If the mainstream media can provide a way in which the public can have in-depth knowledge about the laws that affect them, is it time to look at alternative media perhaps? These are questions that can be asked in future research. Numerous research studies have indicated

that social media is beginning to fill the gap created by traditional media in encouraging citizen participation. Authors like Zachry (2010) argue that political campaign style has drastically changed with the inclusion of social media networks like Twitter & YouTube creating a platform for public participation in politics. The creation of these new platforms has altered the relationship between journalists, politicians, readers and citizens. But can these platforms replace the role played by traditional media or will they enhance it? Herein lies scope for future research. The Parliament of RSA is currently trying to use these social platforms to encourage more public participation in its law making processes. At the time of the completion of this research, the Parliament of RSA Twitter had 13.311 followers and had 2,562 likes on their Facebook page. On both social media platforms the Parliament asks its followers and Facebook friends to suggest the best way in which they communicate with them, thus placing an importance on the fact that Parliament has to communicate with the citizens. It remains to be seen whether the legislative's decision to use social media as one of the ways in which it can encourage participation in the law making processes will be successful. It does however raise a pertinent question on whether Parliament should not only rely on the media to reach citizens but use new media as well?

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