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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**COVERAGE OF *THE BIG FOUR AGENDA* IN THE DAILY NATION AND
THE STANDARD NEWSPAPERS IN KENYA**

By

**JOHN KURU NGIRACHU
535179**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Digital Journalism

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020

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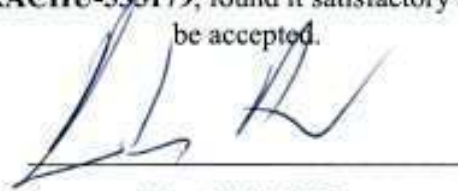
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APPROVAL PAGE

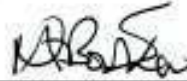
The Aga Khan University
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Digital Journalism

Members of the Thesis Evaluation Committee appointed to examine the thesis of **JOHN KURU NGIRACHU-535179**, found it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.



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DECLARATION

I, **JOHN KURU NGIRACHU-535179**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my own research endeavours.



Signature

30/01/2020

Date

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ABSTRACT

This thesis set out to study the coverage of the Kenyan government's Big Four Agenda by Kenyan newspapers between December 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018. The Big Four Agenda was introduced to Kenyans on December 12, 2017, Independence Day, by President Uhuru Kenyatta. He framed the Big Four Agenda as the most important policy of his second term and had specific objectives to be met by 2022: to construct 500,000 affordable houses, to increase the contribution of manufacturing to the Gross Domestic Product, food security for all, and Universal Health Coverage. This thesis was provoked by a study by Infotrak Research, published by The Star on December 18, 2018, which established that 53 per cent of Kenyans did not know about the Big Four Agenda. This lack of awareness was considered worthy of research considering the central role of the media in informing society about the government's policies. The media also provides spaces for interrogating the policy, and this has been the case with the Kenyan media. Newspaper coverage was selected for research because newspapers are ubiquitous in Kenya and also play an intermedia agenda-setting role. The research set out to establish the frequency of newspaper coverage, the dominant sources, the placement of articles on the Big Four Agenda, the dominant issues as well as the factors that influenced coverage. A mixed method was used to approach the research and content analysis used as the research method. Data was generated using document review of the Daily Nation and The Standard and interviews with journalists from the two newspapers. The research established that while journalists were eager to provide coverage of the Big Four Agenda, there was inadequate comprehensive information on the policy, government officials often avoided going into details on it, and the topics were considered complicated and therefore were denied publication in the prime pages. The thesis therefore concluded that the media was enthusiastic to cover the Big Four Agenda but was frustrated by a lack of information. All these factors resulted in a majority of Kenyans lacking awareness about the government's key objectives. The thesis recommended that media houses develop policies and templates for reporting on development policies, that the government develop communication plans for disseminating information about its development policies. This study should benefit the media in Kenya as well as the government and policymakers.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
ICT:	Information Communication Technology
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
KARF:	Kenya Audience Research Foundation
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
NHIF:	National Health Insurance Fund