

**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE**



**MEDIA POLARITY AND IMPLICATIONS ON DIPLOMATIC PROFILING OF
ZIMBABWE: CASES OF THE SUNDAY MAIL, THE HERALD, THE DAILY NEWS
AND THE STANDARD NEWSPAPERS**

By

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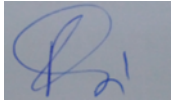
A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Peace and Governance in Partial Fulfilment
for the Requirements for Master of Science Degree in International Relations

Bindura, Zimbabwe

June, 2024

DECLARATION FORM

I, B230568A declare that the dissertation is my original work except where sources have been cited and acknowledged. The work has never been submitted, nor will it ever be submitted to another university for the award of a degree.



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APPROVAL FORM



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Thank you for your support, encouragement and prayers.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my study mates for all their assistance and contributions during this research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by my supervisor, Dr. D. Mahuku for his scholarly input, patience and guidance throughout this project. Gratitude also goes to my family, friends, colleagues and classmates for their undying support, assistance and encouragement.

It was because of the financial, material, emotional and physical support of those mentioned that the study was a success. May God richly bless you all.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
Zimpapers	Zimbabwe Newspapers
ZBTC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting and Telecommunications Corporation
ANZ	Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe
AMH	Alpha Media Holdings
EU	European Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RBC	Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation
CABC	Central African Broadcasting Corporation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

The research sought to investigate why there is media polarity in Zimbabwe and its implications on the diplomatic profiling. The theoretical framework involved the Agenda-Setting theory, the and the Neo-liberalism theory. Both quantitative and qualitative methodologies involving the pragmatism philosophy and mixed methods research approach were used. From populations of 50 media players and 40 diplomats, the researcher selected samples of 44 and 36, respectively using stratified sampling technique. Critical Discourse Analysis was used in analysing the media content. It emerged from the study that the key reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe are alignment of news outlets with political parties or ideologies, differing beliefs and values and differences in technological advancements. It was also concluded that Media polarity has adverse implications on diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe. Political factors play a central role in fuelling media polarity as the issue of political figures influencing media narratives is related to economic, social and technological factors. Technological factors also play a central role in media polarity during this digital age as it is difficult to separate between true and false information due to the Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs). Government was recommended to diversify sources and perspectives in the media industry which promotes media pluralism, through relaxation of media rules and laws. The media players, both state owned and private, were recommended to constantly engage in dialogue with different media stakeholders.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study

Social media is frequently used in diplomacy in the digital era and is seen as a methodical process by which states attempt to accomplish their foreign policy objectives (Cull, 2016). Individuals now have a platform to affect a nation's diplomatic status as a result of the deeper ties this creates between senders of international messages and recipients of local messages (Graffy, 2019). Increased communication could affect a nation's diplomatic standing. This study uses the cases of publications like the Mail on Sunday, the Herald, the Daily News, and the Standard to investigate media polarity and how it affects the portrayal of Zimbabwean diplomacy.

According to Wilson, Parker, and Feinberg (2020), media polarity is the phenomena wherein the media provides information in a way that favours one extreme, typically resulting in the polarisation of public opinion. Conversely, diplomatic profiling is the process of methodically gathering and examining data about people, organisations, or nations engaged in diplomatic relations in order to gain a better understanding of their actions, motivations, and possible dangers (Anton, 2022). This chapter presents a brief summary of the study, including the research backdrop, problem statement, research questions, objectives, and hypotheses, in order to investigate media polarity and its effect on the portrayal of Zimbabwean diplomacy. The importance, parameters, and definition of this study are further explained in the introduction. The chapter summary is preceded by an introduction to the study's overall framework.

Through diplomatic, economic, political, and social exchanges, nations are linked together. Formal recognition of one nation by another, which leads to the opening of embassies and consulates, is a prerequisite for diplomatic relations. Trade agreements, investment partnerships, and financial exchanges are examples of economic ties. Treaties, alliances, and collaboration on global challenges are all components of political relations. Cultural exchanges, interpersonal interactions, and cooperative educational efforts are all examples of social interaction. Effective communication is crucial in these interactions because it fosters mutual understanding, trust, cooperation, and peace between governments.

Media communication is a bridge that connects individuals across geographic borders and is essential to the dissemination of news between nations. The power of media communication to educate, inform, and involve audiences in local, national, and global events is what makes it fundamental. Media, which includes radio, television, newspapers, and digital platforms, has emerged as the world's main information source for people. Media polarity, a phenomena where there are significant gaps or variations in the opinions and narratives offered by various media both inside and between countries, is another effect of news being disseminated through the media between countries.

Growing polarisation is a result of shifting media environments (Druckman, Levendusky, & McLain, 2018). Most countries' media, including a growing number of questionable internet news sources, are becoming more and more politicised. In the current high-choice media environment, news is biased towards standing out among many choices (Klein, 2020), which in and of itself may drive greater polarisation Differentiation (Lelkes, Sood & Iyengar, 2017). Earlier news was biased towards neutrality and non-offensiveness to gain maximum audience share.

The advent of the Internet has ushered in a new era of communication and media consumption. The emergence of print and digital media businesses is crucial for influencing public opinion, educating the public about current affairs, holding the powerful accountable, and promoting democratic ideals. Private media companies have encouraged journalistic independence and diverse information sources, while state-owned media institutions have traditionally shaped public opinion in accordance with government priorities. Technology's ongoing advancements continue to have an impact on how media companies run and distribute information to consumers throughout the globe.

The media environment in Zimbabwe is composed of both privately held and state-owned media companies. Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC), Zimbabwe Newspapers (Zimpapers), and Zimbabwe Broadcasting and Telecommunications Corporation (ZBTC) are the main state media entities in the nation. Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), Alpha Media Holdings (AMH), ZimLive, The Citizen, 263Chat, Nehanda Radio, Capital FM, Star FM, and ZiFm Stereo, on the other hand, are the private media players.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The divisive media environment in Zimbabwe may have a big impact on diplomatic profiling. Divergent views on Zimbabwe's diplomatic standing in the area and the international system may result from foreign governments and investors basing their judgements and choices on information they learn from various media sources. For Zimbabwe to effectively connect with the international community and handle its many issues, a more impartial and balanced media landscape is necessary. By examining the role of selected state and private media players in shaping public opinion and international perceptions, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of what fuels media polarity as well as its impact on Zimbabwe's global image.

1.3 Aim of the study

The research study seeks to investigate why there is media polarity in Zimbabwe and its implications on the diplomatic profiling of the country.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To discuss reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe.
2. To examine the implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe.
3. To assess factors fuelling media polarity in Zimbabwe.
4. To explore measures that can be implemented to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling.
- 5.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are the reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe?
3. What are the key factors fuelling media polarity in Zimbabwe?
4. What measures can be implemented to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling?

1.6 Significance of the study

Policy makers, Regulators and Authorities

Zimbabwe's diplomatic policy can be informed by the knowledge gathered from the study. Policymakers may create more effective communication tactics to dispel unfavourable

perceptions and advance a more truthful depiction of the country by understanding how the media portrays it.

Media fraternity

The media is very important in influencing public opinion. The study contributes to our understanding of how disparate representations of Zimbabwe can affect people's perceptions of the nation and its diplomatic ties by analysing the polarity of media coverage. Understanding the type and degree of media bias in stories on Zimbabwe is another benefit of the study. Understanding the polarity of media coverage makes it simpler to pinpoint the important topics and viewpoints that different news organisations are emphasising or ignoring.

Academia

The study contributes to the corpus of information already available on media and diplomacy and offers insightful analysis to academics and researchers working in these domains. It may also stimulate more investigation into how the media affects public opinion and diplomatic ties with nations such as Zimbabwe.

The study makes it possible to compare its findings with those of other research projects on media coverage from various nations and areas. This can assist in identifying recurring themes and trends in the international representation of Zimbabwe, as well as variations in the methods used by different media outlets to cover the story.

The researcher

The researcher would be able to complete the studies through the research.

1.7 Limitations

Limited financial resources

Due to limited financial resources, the researcher could not manage to consider more media outlets. The researcher selected a more diverse and representative sample, including both small and large media players as well as state and private media houses, which provided a more comprehensive view of media polarity.

Dishonest responses - Due to the sensitivity nature of the research topic, some of the respondents were reluctant to provide honest responses. The researcher considered secondary data in form of media posts, which was analysed through Critical Discourse Analysis.

1.8 Delimitations

The research focuses on 4 state and private companies in the in the media industry namely the Sunday Mail, the Herald, the Daily News and the Standard newspapers. The companies are selected as they hold a significant market share.

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

Media Polarity

According to Wilson, Parker, and Feinberg (2020), media polarity is the phenomena wherein media sources deliver information in a way that is biased towards one end of a spectrum, frequently resulting in the polarisation of public opinion. According to this study, media polarity is the dissemination of both real and fake news, which leaves readers with divergent perspectives on the events covered in the media.

Diplomatic Profiling

In order to better comprehend the behaviour, intentions, and potential dangers of people, groups, or nations engaged in diplomatic activities, a procedure known as "diplomatic profiling" is the methodical gathering and analysis of information about them (Anton, 2022). The way the outside world, especially members of the diplomatic establishment, perceives Zimbabwe is referred to in this study as diplomatic profiling.

State media

Media organisations that are owned, run, or heavily impacted by the government are sometimes referred to as state media [Gehlbach & Sonin, 2014]. They can be distinguished from public service media, which are funded by a combination of government grants, licence fees, and occasionally advertising, and are created to serve the public interest. They also function independently of governmental oversight.

Private media

According to Cornia, Sehl, and Neilsen (2016), private media are those that are owned and run by private individuals or corporations. Private media are financed by sales, subscriptions,

advertising, or the proprietors themselves. The purpose of private media is to cater to the market and offer consumers entertainment, education, and information.

Politics

Politics is the process through which members of a community come to deliberate decisions (Leftwich, 2015). Making agreements between individuals to enable them to coexist in communities, such as tribes, towns, or nations, is the essence of politics. Some individuals may devote a significant amount of their time to forming such agreements in huge groupings, like nations.

State

A state is a unit of government that controls the populace and social structures within its borders [Steinberger, 2005]. The basic machinery of modern states is thought to be the government.

A nation typically consists of one state with several administrative entities. It is either a federal union or a unitary state; in the latter case, the federated polities that comprise the federation are referred to as "states" on occasion. (Additional names like "region" and "province" may also be used in these federal systems.)

1.10 Research Assumptions

1. Assumption 1: The media's political bias influences how diplomatic relations between Zimbabwe and other countries are portrayed, with different media outlets offering divergent narratives.

2. Assumption 2: State-owned newspapers like The Herald and The Sunday Mail project a more favorable image of Zimbabwe in the diplomatic arena compared to privately-owned publications like The Daily News and The Standard.

3. Assumption 3: Privately-owned newspapers are more likely to highlight criticisms and negative perceptions of Zimbabwe's diplomatic standing, potentially skewing international perspectives.

4. Assumption 4: Media polarity impacts foreign diplomats' interpretation of Zimbabwean political and economic realities, affecting international relations and decisions.

5. Assumption 5: Diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe by foreign missions and organizations is influenced more by the narratives presented in privately-owned newspapers than state-owned media due to perceived independence and credibility.

6. Assumption 6: The tone and framing of international news coverage in Zimbabwe's major newspapers affect how diplomatic successes or failures are reported and perceived domestically and internationally.

7. Assumption 7: Media coverage from polarized outlets contributes to shaping public opinion, which in turn affects the diplomatic strategies and priorities of the Zimbabwean government.

These assumptions will guide the research in exploring how differing media narratives may influence Zimbabwe's diplomatic profile and perception globally.

1.11 Chapter outline

The research is composed of 5 chapters, with Chapter 1 being the introductory chapter and providing the research background, problem and objectives and research questions. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature including concepts, theories, and empirical studies undertaken by previous researchers in the field of transformational change management. Chapter 3 provides the research methodology showing how the research was undertaken. The chapter mainly involves the research philosophy, design, population, sample and sampling, data collection and analysis procedures and techniques as well as ethical considerations of the study. Chapter 4 provides a presentation, analysis, discussion of the research findings. The last chapter, Chapter 5 provides a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature on Media Polarity and Implications on Diplomatic Profiling. The Chapter first provides theoretical framework, followed by the conceptual framework and empirical literature review involving secondary research.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Several theoretical perspectives help explain the relationship between media polarity and diplomacy. In this study, the researcher considers the Agenda-Setting theory, the and the Neo-Liberal theory.

2.2.1 Agenda-Setting Theory:

McCombs is one of the principal proponents of agenda setting theory. McCombs, one of the pioneers of the theory, has studied in great detail how public agendas and public perceptions are shaped by media coverage. Another well-known proponent of agenda-setting theory is Donald L. Shaw, who alongside McCombs co-founded the theory. The evolution and practical implementation of the idea in a range of settings have been greatly aided by Shaw's contributions to our knowledge of how media content shapes viewer perceptions. Furthermore, academics who embrace the agenda-setting theory include Bernard Cohen. The fundamental idea of agenda setting is strongly tied to Cohen's insight that the media may help shape public opinion rather than telling people what to think.

Agenda-setting theory proposes several key principles that shape its framework and understanding. These include how the media shapes the public's perspective of reality, how important media attention is (and how this affects the audience's perception of it), and how agenda-setting is organised into first, second, and third tiers. These levels investigate the ways in which the media use different techniques to shape public opinion and policy agendas. The influence of public opinion is another principle that acknowledges the role that media agenda-setting has in shaping public opinion as well as public consciousness. Gatekeeping is another fundamental component of the theory, in which media outlets and editors decide what information is made public. Setting the agenda and influencing public discourse are connected to the current study because they enable the researcher to better understand how

diplomatic profiles are shaped, viewed, and used in international relations. The idea has the power to influence how people view some crucial topics.

2.2.2 Neo-Liberal theory

Neoliberalism is a political and economic theory that supports the creation of robust capitalism and liberal institutions, enhanced by limited democracy and a constitutionally mandated but moderate welfare state. Three well-known individuals linked to neoliberal philosophy are James Buchanan, Milton Friedman, and F.A. Hayek. Despite having backgrounds in economics, all three of them wrote a great deal on political philosophy. Emphasising individual freedom, limiting government interference in the market, and the conviction that sufficient moral and legal underpinnings are necessary for markets to function are common themes in their work.

This study takes into account many facets of press freedom, communication freedom, and information diffusion in accordance with this philosophy. According to neoliberal philosophy, press freedom is essential for advancing democracy, accountability, and openness. According to neoliberals like White (2019), Brown (2015), and Foucault (2010), a free press keeps the government from overreaching and corrupting its populace by exposing wrongdoing and educating them about critical problems. Freedom of speech is also highly valued in neoliberalism since it permits the unrestricted interchange of ideas, information, and opinions. It is believed that this independence is necessary to foster economic expansion, creativity, and innovation. In neoliberalism, the free flow of information is vital because it empowers people to make rational choices.

The study of media polarity examines how different media outlets present viewpoints on various issues and why they differ while covering some issues. In this study, the theory is relevant as it helps to understand how polarization can be exacerbated as outlets cater to specific audiences or ideological positions to attract viewership or readership.

2.3 Importance of media in the International System

The media has a significant impact on public opinion, national policy decisions, and international relations, all of which help to shape the global order. The media has developed into a potent instrument in today's globalised society that may both strengthen national boundaries and foster divisions (Strömbäck et al., 2020).

All around the world, people, governments, and organisations rely heavily on the media for information. People can stay updated about events happening outside of their boundaries by using it to get the most recent information on social issues, political changes, economic trends, and global events (Erbaş, 2016).

Furthermore, by creating storylines, emphasising particular points of view, and shaping opinions about other nations and cultures, the media has the ability to influence public opinion on international affairs. Foreign policy choices and diplomatic ties between nations are influenced by public opinion (Poudel, 2019).

The media serves as a conduit for international diplomatic correspondence. In order to advance their nation's interests internationally, leaders use media channels to communicate with audiences around the world, give speeches, and participate in public diplomacy initiatives (Poudel, 2019).

The way events unfold on the global scene can be greatly influenced by media coverage during times of crisis or conflict. The way the media presents a crisis can affect how the general public feels, how the government reacts, and even whether tensions between nations rise or fall (Poudel, 2019).

Projecting soft power, or the capacity to influence people via appeal and persuasion as opposed to force, is mostly dependent on the media. Countries use media channels, digital platforms, and cultural exports to influence opinions overseas and broaden their influence globally (Erbaş, 2016).

2.4 Concept of diplomatic profiling

In order to better understand the behaviour, intentions, and possible dangers of people, groups, or nations engaged in diplomatic activities, a procedure known as "diplomatic profiling" is the methodical gathering and analysis of data about these entities (Anton, 2022). This idea is essential to diplomacy because it guides foreign service officers and diplomats in making judgement calls and creating plans for productive interactions with other nations. Thus, diplomatic profiling is the process of evaluating and categorising nations according to a range of criteria, including political systems, economic standing, objectives for foreign policy, cultural norms, and historical ties (Anton, 2022). To create successful foreign policy

plans and policies, it entails evaluating a nation's advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and threats. Notably, diplomatic profile influences how other states perceive the state in issue, which can either strengthen or worsen state relations.

For many reasons, including intelligence collecting, risk assessment, cultural awareness, public opinion, and crisis management, journalism is essential to diplomatic profiles (Hardin & Turner, 2021). The most recent information about world events, political tidings, economic trends, and social issues can be found in news sources. In order to evaluate the political climate of various nations and regions, diplomatic profiling depends on precise and timely information.

Furthermore, according to LaGarde and Hudgins (2021), news coverage aids in identifying possible dangers and threats that could have an impact on international relations. Governments can forecast wars, security threats, or diplomatic developments that could influence their foreign policy by keeping an eye on news sources. Because news media offers insights into the social dynamics, cultural norms, and values of many nations, it also facilitates cross-cultural understanding. In order to conduct diplomatic engagements efficiently and prevent misconceptions, diplomats must have a thorough awareness of these factors.

Diplomats can gain insight into domestic and international public opinion by keeping an eye on news coverage. This information aids in creating communication plans and diplomatic tactics that reflect popular opinion (Abdumalikovna, 2021). The news media is a crucial source of information for diplomats to react swiftly and efficiently during emergencies or times of crisis. Decision-makers can modify their strategy in response to developing events when they have instant access to news updates.

The way that news media outlets are portrayed by journalists worldwide is another way to demonstrate the significance of news media. For a variety of reasons, news media organisations have journalists stationed throughout different nations and areas of the globe (LaGarde & Hudgins, 2021). Local news reports, events, and developments are directly accessible to journalists on the ground, which may not always be the case with international news agencies. The localised viewpoint improves the accuracy and depth of reporting.

Journalists from various geographical locations can offer insightful cultural background and analysis that is crucial for comprehending intricate geopolitical concerns. Their existence makes it easier to do detailed reporting that considers regional viewpoints (LaGarde & Hudgins, 2021). Additionally, journalists create networks among businesses, civil society organisations, government agencies, and local communities. Through these contacts, they are able to obtain firsthand knowledge, speak with important parties, and unearth untold tales.

News media can cover breaking news events in real time, as the Covid-19 pandemic, by placing correspondents all around the world (Singh, Chouhan, & Rai, 2021). Critical information can reach audiences very fast thanks to its immediacy.

2.4.1 Key Aspects of Diplomatic Profiling

According to Pokharel (2020), information gathering, which includes learning about cultural background, political background, past behaviour, and communication styles; analysis and evaluation, which includes assessing data to comprehend the objectives and motives of diplomatic parties; and risks are all important components of diplomatic profiling. Management, which includes creating plans to lower risks and boost communication efficiency, as well as security concerns to guarantee diplomat safety and avert any possible security risks. This could entail evaluating the security concerns connected to particular people or organisations.

Other factors include cultural sensitivity, which involves diplomats using profiling to comprehend cultural quirks, customs, and sensitivities that may affect negotiations and international relations; adapting strategies to improve communication efficacy and promote favourable results; and resolving conflicts by offering insights into the underlying goals and motivations of the various parties engaged in negotiations. It helps diplomats to establish mutual understanding and assist in amicable settlements.

2.4.2 Factors Considered in Diplomatic Profiling:

Diplomatic characterisation considers a number of variables that are vital in determining how nations relate to one another. These include of historical ties, political institutions, economic standing, objectives for foreign policy, and cultural norms. A nation's political system can have a big impact on how it interacts with other nations internationally. In their foreign affairs, democracies place a higher priority on democratic principles and human rights than authoritarian regimes might. In this sense, authoritarian regimes may get along well with

other autocracies, whereas democracies may get along well with other democracies. A nation's development, trade connections, and economic prowess all significantly impact its diplomatic standing. Political clout on the international scene frequently follows economic dominance (Anton, 2022). In this sense, nations with strong economies or those with a lot of promise typically build positive relationships with a larger number of nations.

Comprehending the foreign policy objectives of a nation aids in forecasting its conduct in global affairs. Through diplomatic endeavours, nations may aim to advance ideological objectives, economic interests, security, or regional stability (Anton, 2022). Relationships can be formed in this setting on the basis of the nation's social, political, or economic interests. Furthermore, cultural elements including language, religion, traditions, and social mores can affect how one nation conducts diplomatic relations with another. Nations with similar religions or customs, like those in Africa, typically maintain close relations. Finally, historical exchanges and hostilities between nations might influence their present-day diplomatic dynamics by influencing how they approach one another on a diplomatic level (Anton, 2022). For example, a state that was formerly colonised by another state might not have good ties, and it might take some time to build connections.

2.5 Globalisation and Media

The media landscape has been significantly impacted by globalisation, particularly with the development of electronic media. Global information consumption, sharing, and communication have all undergone radical changes as a result of the proliferation of digital technology and the Internet. Along with altering how media organisations function, this change is also having an impact on their priorities and areas of interest.

The digital media landscape, encompassing podcasts, streaming services, internet, social media, radio, television, and radio, is expanding quickly. Because of these platforms' instantaneous worldwide audience reach, interaction, and accessibility, they are growing in popularity. The growth of electronic media has made it easier for people and groups to produce and distribute content, democratising the flow of information (Malla, 2021).

The evolving media landscape, resulting from globalisation and the proliferation of electronic media, requires media organisations to adjust. In a crowded market, they must now be more inventive, flexible, and sensitive to the interests of their audience if they want to stay

competitive. Furthermore, media companies need to expand their sources of income outside conventional advertising, such as partnerships, subscriptions, sponsored content, and other forms of monetization (Túñez-López, Campos-Freire, & Rodríguez-Castro, 2021).

Financial interests are the primary motivators for media organisation owners, who aim for profitability and sustainability in a sector that is becoming more and more competitive (Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021). Owners of electronic media strive to maximise viewer engagement, draw in advertisers, and use data analytics to produce content that is specifically targeted. Furthermore, in order to preserve credibility and confidence with their audiences, proprietors should balance commercial interests with editorial freedom (Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021).

Electronic media, according to Trappel and Meier (2022), offers media agency owners services in a variety of sectors, including audience reach, revenue options, data analytics, and brand creation. Owners of electronic media have a wide platform to swiftly and effectively reach audiences throughout the world. Through a variety of monetization techniques, including product placement, affiliate marketing, paywalls for premium content, sponsored posts and videos, and licencing agreements, owners can also take advantage of electronic media platforms.

Through analytical tools, owners of electronic media can gather valuable data about audience behaviour, preferences, and trends. Owners are able to measure performance indicators precisely, personalise user experiences, optimise content strategies, and make well-informed business decisions by utilising this data effectively (Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021). Owners can leverage electronic media platforms to enhance their brand recognition and reputation management initiatives by implementing strategic messaging campaigns that effectively connect with their intended audience.

2.6 Causes of Media polarity

According to Wilson, Parker, and Feinberg (2020), media polarity is the phenomena wherein the media provides information in a way that favours one extreme, typically resulting in the polarisation of public opinion. The emergence of social media and the ongoing changes brought about by technology breakthroughs have drawn a lot of attention to this idea in recent years. According to Kubin and von Sikorski (2021), media polarity can have negative

repercussions on society since it perpetuates preexisting biases and produces echo chambers where people are only exposed to data that confirms their own notions.

Case studies of the US, Russia, and Ukraine provide the best insight into the reasons of media polarisation. The media's polarisation over the US-Russian conflict in Ukraine can be attributed to a number of important elements that influence the narratives that various media sources choose to depict. Divergent portrayals of the scenario emerged from media coverage of the war, which represented the geopolitical interests and viewpoints of the parties involved.

The alignment of media organisations with particular geopolitical goals and alliances is a significant factor contributing to the polarisation of media coverage of the crisis in Ukraine. American news outlets frequently highlight support for Ukraine and depict Russia as the aggressor because of America's strategic interest in containing Russian dominance (Pavlichenko, 2022). However, a narrative that defends Moscow's activities in Ukraine while highlighting threats from Western powers is frequently presented by Russian media (Pavlichenko, 2022).

In the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the BBC and CNN both shown differing degrees of media polarity, according to a study by Lewis and Lowe (2016). Their diplomatic representations of Russia and Ukraine clearly differ from one another. According to Allcott and Gentzkow's (2017) content study, CNN tended to be more critical of Ukraine while the BBC tended to be more neutral in their reporting (Shapiro et al., 2015). Rather, when reporting on Russia, both publications employed comparable degrees of critical language, though with a few distinctions: CNN tended to concentrate on Putin's personal motivations, whilst the BBC was more likely to characterise Russia's actions as aggressive or hostile (Shapiro et al., 2015). But according to recent studies, both media organisations have a hostile bias against Russia (Bukhari et al., 2024).

Historical narratives and national identities are frequently the foundation of reporting by American and Russian media. Like in previous conflicts where U.S. engagement is perceived as promoting freedom, U.S. news media are likely to promote Ukraine's fight for independence and democracy (Bukhari et al., 2024). On the other hand, Russian media can

emphasise security concerns or the historical ties between Russia and Ukraine to support military action.

Propaganda and disinformation tactics aimed at influencing public opinion both domestically and internationally are a significant contributing factor to media polarisation. Regarding the situation in Ukraine, both Russian and American media outlets have been charged for disseminating inaccurate or biased information in order to further their own objectives. Such intentional factual distortion, according to Lemke and Habegger (2022), could further polarise public opinion.

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2.7 Implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling

Media polarity can significantly impact the accuracy and effectiveness of diplomatic profiling in several ways according to scholars including Matsuo, Han and Matsumura (2023), Roos, Koudenburg and Postmes (2022), Xu, (2023) and Matsuo et al., (2023)

Skewed Perceptions:

Biases regarding a nation's position on numerous issues might result from media polarisation. A specific media outlet's persistent negative portrayal of a foreign country, for instance, might not fairly represent the complexity of that nation's foreign policy. Because of this, ambassadors could have false impressions about the opposing side, which could cause misunderstandings and strained relations.

Reduced Credibility:

Media organisations may lose credibility if they exhibit prejudice on a regular basis. This can make diplomatic profiling less effective since decision-makers could be less likely to believe information obtained from media sources that have a track record of being biased.

Polarized Negotiations:

Situations where polarised media coverage affects diplomats could lead to more heated conversations. Preconceived conceptions and biases can impede progress and result in deeply held attitudes when they are introduced into negotiation contexts. In the end, this may make it more difficult to come to agreements that will benefit both parties.

Echo Chambers and Misinformation:

The polarisation of the media can lead to the creation of echo chambers, which can aid in the dissemination of false narratives and misinformation. Working in such circumstances could cause diplomats to lack knowledge about important topics or happenings, which could result in less-than-ideal decisions and unexpected outcomes in international relations.

Limited Understanding of Domestic Contexts:

The polarisation of the media might hinder diplomats' comprehension of the domestic environments in other countries. A nation's social fabric or political landscape may be overlooked by media outlets that prioritise sensationalist or politically motivated articles above more nuanced information. Because of this, diplomats could not understand the underlying motivations behind the words or acts of their counterparts.

Missed Opportunities for Collaboration:

Polarisation in the media can foster an atmosphere where possible points of agreement or common ground are missed. Media organisations may unintentionally contribute to the loss of prospects for cooperation and positive international involvement by concentrating only on contentious issues or unfavourable aspects of a nation's foreign policy.

2.7.1 Case studies

Diplomatic relations can be significantly impacted by how countries are portrayed in the media and how they are perceived worldwide. Media polarisation was crucial in forming diplomatic perceptions of the US, Russia, and Ukraine.

Jia and Lu (2023) observe that media portrayals of the United States frequently mirror the nation's standing as a world powerhouse. Because of their broad appeal and sway, American media outlets are able to mould perceptions of global connections and events. The way that the US is portrayed in the media affects how other nations see the US's foreign policy choices and actions.

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Mandić and Klarić (2023) claim that the Russian government employs the media as a tool to influence how the world views Russia both at home and abroad. This can entail advancing stories that highlight Russia's military might, historical significance, or resistance to Western influence. When it comes to covering foreign events, Russian media frequently emphasises how Western nations are thought to be unfair or to have double standards. This strategy has the potential to strengthen nationalist feelings and foster a sense of oneness among Russian nationals.

Ukraine's geopolitical location between Russia and the West makes it an intriguing case study. Brittain-Hale (2023) claims that pro-Western and pro-Russian narratives have an impact on Ukrainian media coverage, which reflects the nation's internal conflicts and outside influences. Pro-Russian media outlets that are prohibited include Rossiya Gazeta, Izvestia, RIA Novosti, and EuroVoice. While pro-Western media promotes for increased integration with Western organisations like the EU and NATO, these media embrace a narrative that calls for closer connections with Russia (Brittain-Hale, 2023).

The various viewpoints expressed by the media regarding Ukraine draw attention to how difficult it is to define diplomacy in a nation divided by conflicting forces. Comprehending

the disparate accounts is imperative in comprehending Ukraine's foreign policy determinations and its engagements with neighbouring nations.

2.8 Factors fueling media polarity

A number of significant elements may impact media polarisation, particularly in light of the ongoing confrontation between the United States, Russia, and Ukraine. Media narratives are significantly influenced by the geopolitical interests of any nation. Yadav et al. (2024), for instance, state that because of similar democratic principles and resistance to Russian aggression, the United States prefers to support Ukraine. On the other hand, Russian media frequently presents the conflict as a means of defending Russian interests from Western incursion.

Koltsova and Pashakhin (2020) demonstrate further that media polarity can also result from disputes between historical narratives and the past. The researchers provided an example of how Russia's historical connections to Ukraine and its stance on NATO expansion could affect how the war is portrayed in Russian media. Similarly, the dispute may be portrayed by American media as a continuation of Cold War hostilities.

The government's ability to control the media is another element. In Russia, official opinions aligned with pro-government rhetoric are frequently disseminated through state-controlled media channels. In the US, political interests and affiliations can affect how various media outlets report on disputes. Media polarisation could rise as a result of propaganda and disinformation tactics spreading. Russia and the West have both been charged with disseminating false material in an effort to sway public opinion in their favour and further divide audiences (Kwei, 2022).

Furthermore, the way that media sources present the conflict might be influenced by economic interests, such as trade agreements or energy dependency. For instance, in order to prevent endangering economic relations, coverage in nations that primarily depend on Russian energy sources can be limited (Koltsova & Pashakhin, 2020).

2.9 Media, Polarisation and Diplomatic Profiling in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe: An

Overview

The administration of the white minority in Rhodesia had strict control over the media environment. According to Mazango (2017), the government employs the media to stifle dissenting opinions and advance its own narrative. As a result, there is extreme polarisation in the media, and opposing viewpoints are either suppressed or ignored.

During the Rhodesian era, diplomatic characterisation had a significant impact on the development of international relations. African nations opposed the white minority government's discriminatory policies, and it used diplomatic channels to win over Western nations to its cause (Dombo, 2014). Zimbabwe saw a period of change in the media landscape following its independence in 1980. The government initially promised press freedom, but over time there was censorship and repression of independent media critical of the ruling party.

Diplomatic ties changed in Zimbabwe after independence as the nation tried to make a name for itself internationally. The government's diplomatic reputation with other nations and international organisations was impacted by criticism it received for violations of human rights and anomalies in the election process (Sithole, 2024). Their diplomatic ties were impacted by the divisive media landscapes in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe. Unfair media representation may have a negative impact on these nations' standing abroad, which could hinder their capacity to form alliances and win over other countries.

2.10 Zimbabwe: An Overview

During the Second Rhodesian Chimurenga that lasted from 1976 to 1979, the state's methods of disseminating news differed greatly from those conducted with the local populace. The Rhodesian administration minimised the gravity of the war and emphasised their commitment to a peaceful conclusion in order to provide an image of upholding law and order to the outside world. This is accomplished through a variety of means, including diplomatic correspondence, interviews with foreign media, and public releases.

The Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation (RBC), which provides English-language news to a global audience, is a well-known example. RBC presents a favourable picture of Rhodesia by emphasising both political stability and economic advancement. For instance, they emphasised effective counterinsurgency operations and focused on recent infrastructural

improvements. But this was a far cry from the message that was spread among the local populace. Fear-mongering and intimidation tactics were employed against opposition organisations by state-run media outlets like Radio Liberty and the Central African Broadcasting Corporation (CABC).

News communication changed significantly in Zimbabwe between 1980 and 2000, influencing both local and global communication. The intricate interaction between growing independent media, foreign influence, and state control defines the news environment in the nation. Zimbabweans started to receive news from overseas media outlets more frequently in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The most widely used outlets for foreign news are Deutsche Welle, Voice of America, and the BBC World Service. These stations offer a different viewpoint from the media under state control.

The news communication landscape has experienced significant challenges and changes between 2000 and 2024. During this time, digital platforms, independent media, and state-controlled media all emerged, changing the way information was disseminated both inside and outside of the country. Significant polarisation occurred in Zimbabwe's media landscape during this time. One example might be coverage of Zimbabwe's land reform. The Zimbabwean government launched a land reform programme at the beginning of the new millennium with the goal of giving land to the country's indigenous black population from white farmers. The Western media, which portrayed the plan as a violent and chaotic procedure motivated by political goals, heavily criticised it. Due to the introduction of sanctions and a decrease in foreign investment, this coverage had a major effect on Zimbabwe's ties with Western nations (Chipenda, 2021).

The year 2017 saw the establishment of a second new regime that reduced media sector control and expanded freedom of speech. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are becoming more and more common in Zimbabwe as a result of the development of digital technology. To communicate information more freely and get around censorship in traditional media, citizens are turning to these online avenues.

2.11 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, a review of literature related to media polarity and diplomatic profiling was undertaken. The Chapter first provided the theoretical framework which shows a review of

theories which form basis for the research. Furthermore, there was the conceptual framework of the study which shows the variables considered in the research. The views of key authorities in the study were conflicting as they have different philosophical stances which regards to the types of people that receive news. Whilst consistent conservatives tend to rely heavily on a single news source, consistent liberals, in contrast, exhibit a more diverse media diet, drawing information from a wider range of outlets. The differences in preferences contribute to diverse acceptance of news from single sources and alternative sources. The next chapter provides the research methodology which was followed in undertaking the research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The supporting literature for this study has been presented in the previous chapter. This chapter introduces and uses the research methodology in the study. This chapter describes the research methodology, design, and philosophy. Additionally, the study population and sample are specified, followed by a discussion of the tools and sampling strategies used to collect primary data. This chapter also discusses ethical dilemmas and issues of validity and reliability. The research framework shown in Figure 3.1 proposed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016) is the basis for the research methodology of this study.

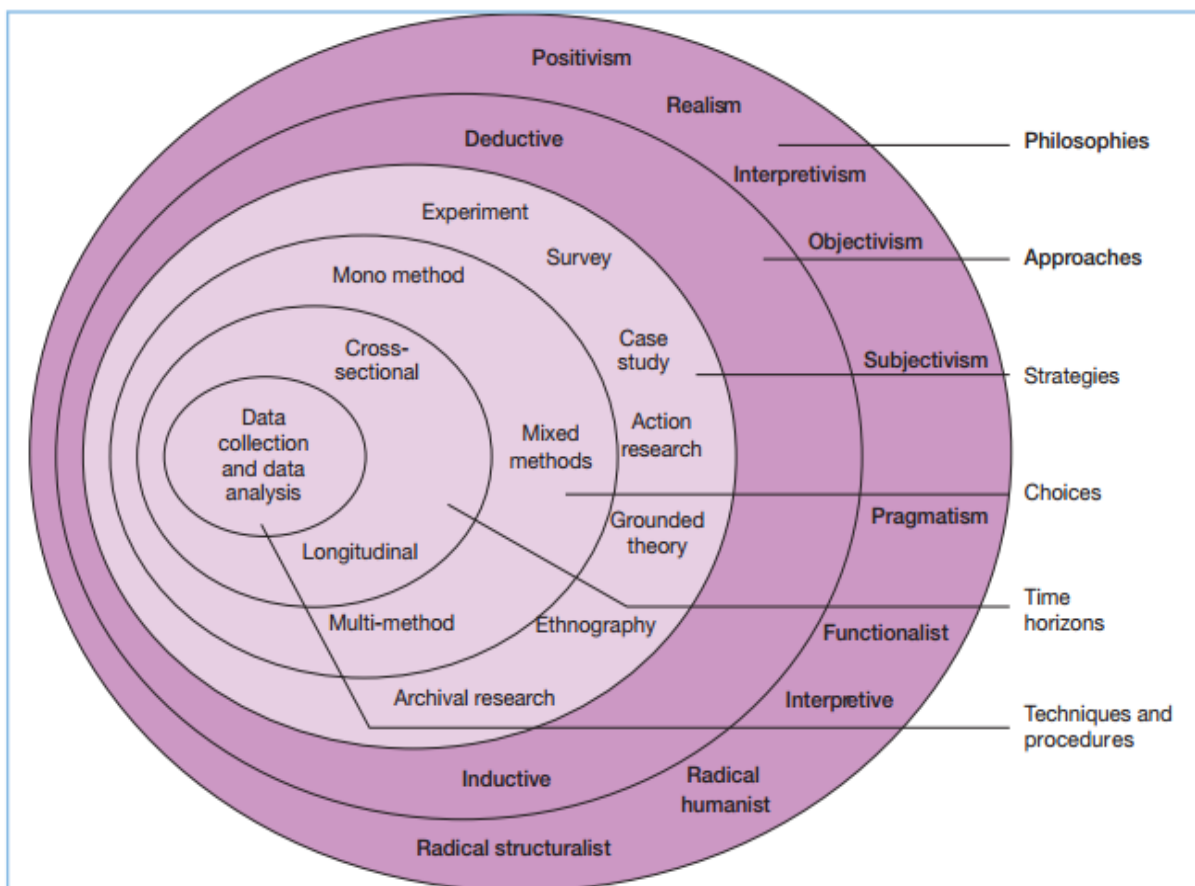


Figure 3.1: Research Onion

Source: Saunders et al. (2016, p.102)

3.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy focuses on the nature, sources, and evolution of knowledge (Bajpai, 2011). In short, a research philosophy is a perspective on the best ways to collect, analyse, and use data regarding a phenomenon. The study applied pragmatic philosophy. A deconstructive paradigm known as pragmatism encourages the application of mixed approaches in research. Pragmatism holds that concepts are only significant when they make action easier (Kelemen and Rumens 2008).

In this study, pragmatism research philosophy offered a valuable framework for understanding the dynamic relationship between media representations, public opinion, and diplomatic decision-making. Since pragmatism advocates for problem-centred inquiry, where research questions are framed around real-world issues and challenges, the philosophy was useful in addressing specific problems related to how media narratives influence diplomatic perceptions and behaviours. Furthermore, the research was able to adjust strategies based on emerging data or changing circumstances in the media landscape since pragmatism values flexibility and adaptability in research methods and approaches.

3.3 Research approach

There are numerous approaches to conducting research in the field of planning in order to address various kinds of difficulties. Deductive, inductive, and hybrid methods are some of these techniques. This study employed mixed methods research, which necessitated gathering and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data on the same subject. Researchers can investigate many viewpoints and establish links between intricate aspects of a multifaceted research subject through the utilisation of mixed methods research, which capitalises on the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Through the course of the study process, participants were able to share their experiences and have a voice thanks to this method.

3.4 Research design

Research design refers to the structure and strategy that guides the collection and analysis of data in a study. According to Creswell (2014), research design is essentially the blueprint for conducting research, encompassing the methods and procedures for gathering and interpreting information. A robust research design helps ensure that the research questions are addressed with validity, reliability, and objectivity. For the dissertation “Media Polarity and

Implications on Diplomatic Profiling of Zimbabwe,” the design must include the selection of suitable methodologies for analyzing newspaper content from The Sunday Mail, The Herald, The Daily News, and The Standard, and for examining how media polarity influences Zimbabwe’s diplomatic reputation.

What is Research?

Research is a systematic inquiry aimed at discovering new information, testing hypotheses, and solving specific problems. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), research involves the careful collection, evaluation, and analysis of data to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. It is a methodical process that starts with identifying a problem or gap in understanding and then developing a strategy to collect and analyze relevant data.

Research serves several critical functions:

- **Generating New Knowledge:** Research uncovers new facts and relationships between variables that may have been previously unknown (Bryman, 2016)
- **Testing Theories:** Through empirical investigation, research can validate or challenge existing theories (Punch, 2013).
- **Problem-solving:** Research offers solutions based on evidence and data (Saunders et al., 2019).
- **Informed Decision-making:** Sound research provides the data needed for policymakers and organizations to make informed decisions (Creswell, 2014).

In the context of this dissertation, research will involve the systematic analysis of how different media outlets in Zimbabwe report on diplomatic matters and the impact of their coverage on Zimbabwe’s diplomatic image globally.

Importance for the Success of the Study:

The success of any research study, including this one on media polarity and diplomatic profiling, depends heavily on the quality of the research conducted. As noted by Bryman (2016), rigorous research is key to producing reliable and valid results. Here’s why research is vital for this study:

1. **Objective Analysis of Media Content:** Conducting thorough research allows for an objective analysis of the news content from the four newspapers, thereby ensuring the study's conclusions are based on empirical evidence rather than bias or speculation (Creswell, 2014).
2. **Exploring Media's Role in Diplomacy:** Research allows for an exploration of how polarized media influences Zimbabwe's diplomatic relationships. According to McQuail (2010), the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and, by extension, international perceptions. This study will use research to assess how this influence manifests in the diplomatic sphere.
3. **Ensuring Validity and Reliability:** The success of the study depends on its ability to produce valid (accurate) and reliable (consistent) results. A well-structured research design ensures that the study's findings accurately reflect the realities of media polarity and its diplomatic consequences (Saunders et al., 2019).
4. **Practical and Academic Contributions:** Rigorous research provides actionable insights that can inform diplomatic strategies and media policies. Punch (2013) emphasizes that the practical applications of research findings are as important as their academic value. This study aims to offer both theoretical contributions and real-world recommendations.
5. **Identifying Cause and Effect:** Research enables the identification of causal relationships, such as how specific media portrayals (cause) affect Zimbabwe's diplomatic profile (effect). Understanding these relationships is essential for producing meaningful conclusions (Bryman, 2016).

In conclusion, research is the backbone of any successful study, providing the necessary framework for gathering and interpreting data. For this dissertation on media polarity and diplomatic profiling, a robust research design and rigorous methodology will ensure the study's findings are valid, reliable, and impactful (Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2016).

3.5 Population

A study population refers to "any precisely defined group of individuals or objects which is considered eligible for purposes of study," according to Collins and Hussey (2015, p. 62). Participants in the survey were chosen from among state media representatives, private media representatives, and diplomats stationed at foreign embassies in Zimbabwe. The researcher randomly selected one diplomat from each of the embassies located in Zimbabwe. The researcher also considers 2 state media and 2 private media players in Zimbabwe. The state media considered are the Sunday Mail and the Herald whilst the private sector media considered are the Daily News and the Standard newspapers.

The target population at the media companies is estimated at 50 employees in the media companies including the management and journalists. On the other hand, the target population of the foreign embassies in Zimbabwe were 40 foreign embassies in Zimbabwe.

3.6 Sample of the Study

A sample is a subset of the population or an assortment of items or persons selected to serve as a representative sample for the purposes of a research study. The sample size for this study is determined using the chart created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Table 3.1: Krejcie and Morgan Table

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	346
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	354
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	191	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	170	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	180	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	190	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	200	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	370
65	56	210	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	220	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	230	144	550	226	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	240	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	250	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	260	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	254	2600	335	100000	384

Note: N is Population Size; S is Sample Size *Source: Krejcie & Morgan, 1970*

Given that there are 50 people in the population, a sample size of 44 employees, including managers and journalists at media organisations, was chosen (see Table 3.1). However, as there are 40 people living in Zimbabwe, a sample size of 36 employees from the foreign embassies was utilised.

The sample was distributed according on the degree of employment, i.e., management, journalists at media businesses, and staff of embassies. As a result, the sample was divided into three groups.

The sample is distributed as follows:

Table 3.2: Sample distribution

Sample elements	Population	Sample size
Executives and managers	15	14
Journalists	35	30
Foreign embassy personnel	40	36
Total	90	80

3.7 Sampling Technique

Stratified random sampling was used in this study. The researcher employed the stratified sampling method to guarantee cross-sectional representation in the sample. Using stratified sampling, the population was divided into several groups by the researcher, and a probability sample, known as a stratum, was then taken from each group. The strata were composed of the following social groups or segments: managers and executives, reporters, and employees of foreign embassies. This was to make sure that each segment had a chance to express their opinions.

3.7 Data collection and analysis

Both primary and secondary data were employed in the study since a mixed methods approach was taken. The main method of gathering data was through the administration of questionnaires to foreign diplomats stationed in Zimbabwe as well as members of the media. In addition, secondary data sources included diplomatic statements and media information. Descriptive analysis was employed in the study to examine the data gathered through questionnaires, while content analysis was utilised to examine secondary data.

3.8 Data gathering

Saunders et al. (2016) have grouped research strategies into numerous categories. Grounded theory, ethnography, in-depth interviews, focus groups, experiments, surveys, archival research, case studies, and ethnography are some of these forms. The current study employed the Survey as a tool to collect data from a pre-selected sample in order to obtain fresh viewpoints on a particular topic. Since the researcher focuses on groups that deal with media personal who are involved in media polarity and the diplomats who engage in diplomatic profiling, information was gathered from the staff members of the media companies as well

as foreign embassies in Zimbabwe, who represent a specific population from whom insights may be gained.

3.9 Data analysis

Frequencies, percentages, and mean statistics were used by the researcher in descriptive data analysis. In addition, the study employed inferential analysis inside correlational analysis to determine the political, social, and economic elements that underlie Zimbabwe's media polarisation. The statistical programme Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to analyse the data.

In this study, the researchers also examined newspaper articles, images, and cartoons using critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques. According to Ndlela (2005:72), CDA is "a unique kind of qualitative method that aims to comprehend the processes by which reality is formed." This study contends that by analysing the textual patterns that function as the medium for communication, CDA provides insights into how newspaper articles come to mean something to their readers. Media outlets have the power to sway public opinion not just by selecting the angle of a given story but also by selecting which stories to cover.

3.10 Data Validity and Reliability

According to Sarmah and Hazarika (2012), validity refers to determining whether the measurement tools are accurate and measuring the desired object. Initially, by comparing the questionnaire to other comparable questionnaires previously used by other studies, an attempt was made to ensure that it is valid and contains unambiguous, closed-ended questions. A sample of ten people underwent a second validity check to ensure that the measuring device was comprehensive. This made it easier to determine whether respondents could successfully complete the questionnaire and comprehend it.

According to Sarmah and Hazarika (2012), reliability refers to the instrument's consistency and stability. Using SPSS Statistics, the researcher calculated data reliability using Cronbach's Alpha (α). Most commonly used to quantify internal consistency (also known as "reliability") is Cronbach's alpha. It is most frequently utilised when a survey or questionnaire has a scale made up of several Likert items and the researcher wants to find out how dependable the scale is. Sarmah and Hazarika (2012) cited Cronbach and Glesser (1957) as saying that a study's findings are trustworthy if the coefficient alpha is greater than 0.60. Using SPSS, this reliability test was conducted on the data.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

According to Gregory (2003), ethics refers to the principles of conduct that govern an individual or a group. These are expressions of our values and guides to achieving them. Ethics is at the heart of research. It is doing what is legally permissible and socially acceptable. Anastasi and Urbina (2004) state that ethics deals with what a person should or should not do based on behavioural principles or norms. In order to consider ethical rules, the researcher adhered to the following ethical rules as laid down by Oliver (2010) and Mertens and Ginsberg (2009).

Participants volunteered to participate in the study. They were free to extend their time even during the interview process and filling out the questionnaire.

The researcher explained the objectives of the study to all the participants and clarified that the research was purely academic and not related to work.

The researcher sought for permission to conduct the study from the top management.

The researcher observed and valued privacy and confidentiality of the participants. In this regard, the researcher did not put any form of identification on the research instruments, participants were not allowed to write their names on the instrument.

The researcher did not interfere with work schedules of the participants and also observed protocol, those who were given questionnaires filled them during their own spare time.

3.12 Chapter Summary

The focus of the chapter was to present the researcher's methodology that was adopted to answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. The research onion by Saunders et al., (2016) guided the research methodology. The philosophy used in the study was based on pragmatism, whilst the mixed methods approach and the descriptive design were used. The survey strategy was used in data gathering and data was analysed using descriptive analysis, inferential analysis as well as the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

The next chapter provides the presentation of findings.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

Research findings are examined, summarised, and explained in this chapter. The presentation and interpretation of the demographic findings come first, then the primary findings which are further broken down into descriptive and inferential results are presented and described. While the results from the documents are studied using content analysis, the results from the questionnaire responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented using frequencies and percentages.

4.2 Rate of Response

Response rate results are presented in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Survey Response Rate

	Questionnaires to Media players	Questionnaires to diplomats
	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires distributed	44	36
Spilt questionnaires	4	6
Successful response	90.9%	83.3%

Source: Survey Data, 2024

The researcher gave 36 questionnaires to diplomats and 44 to members of the media during the survey. Table 4.1 outlines that of the 44 media players, 40 completed and returned the survey questionnaires in full, yielding a 90.9% response rate. However, 30 of the 36 respondents from the foreign embassies in Zimbabwe completed the survey completely and returned it, yielding an 83.3% response rate. Given that Babbie (2010) asserts that a successful survey response rate of greater than 70% is sufficient for analysis, the response rates are thought to be appropriate for making inferences. Moreover, the response rate of 71.9% in a study conducted by Soteriou et al. (2019) is comparatively lower than that of the current study.

4.3 Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency metric Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. Measurement consistency is known as reliability. The test that is most frequently used to assess an instrument's internal consistency is Cronbach Alpha. A value between 0 and 1 is the Cronbach Alpha result; a value of 0.7 or higher is considered acceptable. To ascertain whether each scale (goal) will produce consistent results when doing research, Cronbach Alpha was constructed for each objective. The findings of the media player questionnaire are displayed in Table 4.2, and the results of the diplomat questionnaire are displayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.1: Reliability analysis for the variables in the questionnaire for media players

Scale item	Cronbach alpha	Items
Reasons For Media Polarity In Zimbabwe	0.701	5
Implications Of Media Polarity On The Diplomatic Profiling Of Zimbabwe	0.806	6
Factors Fuelling Media Polarity In Zimbabwe	0.762	3
Average	0.756	

Source: Research data 2024

The media players' questionnaire's internal consistency is displayed in Table 3.2. The table displays the reliability coefficients for each item in the questionnaire, all of which are higher than the 0.7 threshold. The questionnaire's reliability is demonstrated by its average score of 0.756. According to Cronbach Alpha (1957), a minimum of 0.7 is considered appropriate for Cronbach's Alpha. The media players' current study findings are sufficiently supported by a value reliability coefficient of 0.756 to be considered legitimate and potentially generalizable to similar demographics.

Table 1 **Table 4.3: Reliability analysis for the variables in the questionnaire for diplomats**

Scale item	Cronbach alpha	Items
Reasons for Media Polarity in Zimbabwe	0.704	5
Implications of Media Polarity on the Diplomatic Profiling of Zimbabwe	0.743	6
Average	0.724	

Source: Research data 2024

The internal consistency of the diplomat questionnaire is displayed in Table 4.3. The table displays the reliability coefficients for each item in the questionnaire, all of which are higher than the 0.7 threshold. The questionnaire's average score of 0.724 further demonstrates its reliability.

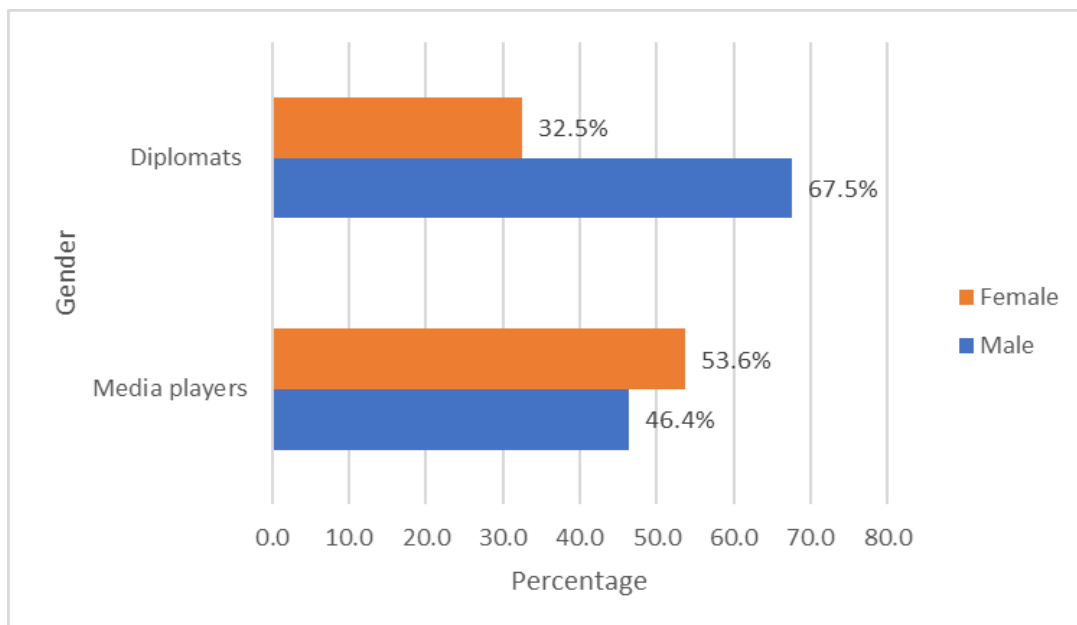
4.4 Demographic Details of Respondents

This section presents the study participants' demographic results, which include their gender, age distribution, occupation, degree of education, and length of work.

4.4.1 Gender

Gender information was requested of the survey participants, and the results are shown in Figure 4.1 below:

Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents



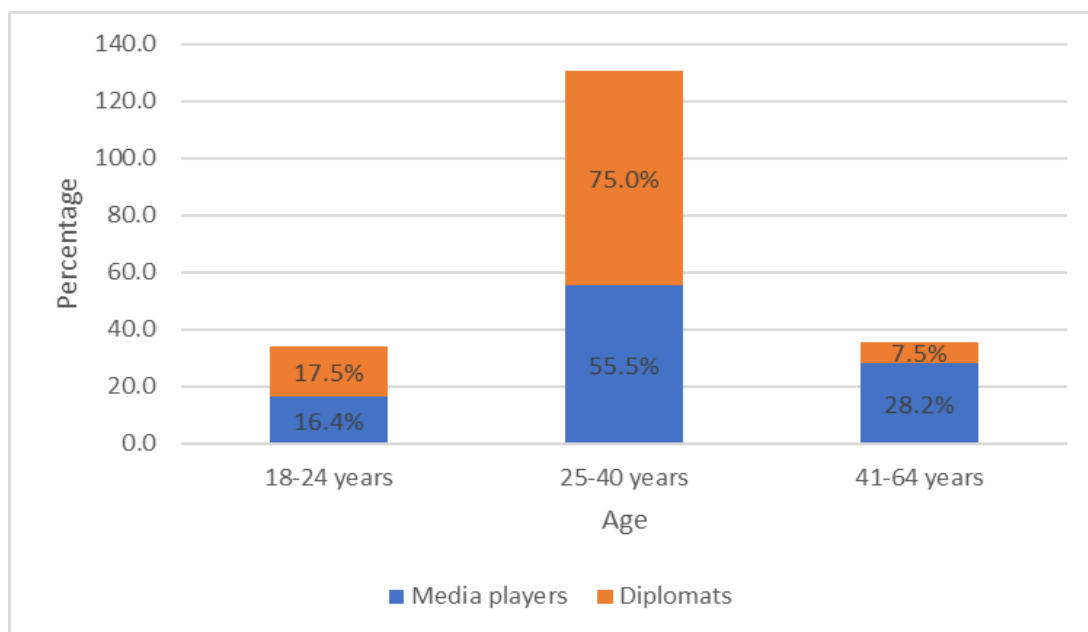
Source: Survey Data, 2024

As seen in Figure 4.1, the majority of respondents in the media sector were women (53.6%), whereas the majority of diplomats included in the study (67.5%) were men.

4.4.2 Age Group

In addition, Figure 4.2 shows results for distribution of the respondents.

Figure 4.2 Age of the respondents



Source: Survey Data, 2024

According to the research results above, a sizable fraction of respondents to both questionnaires were between the ages of 25 and 40. Specifically, 75% of the diplomats were older than 75%, while 55.5% fell into the same age bracket. Age analysis is crucial because various age groups may have differing degrees of media polarity due to differences in political beliefs and media consumption patterns. For example, a 2016 study by Grossman and Schragger found that younger generations favour digital platforms like social media and smartphone apps, while older persons are more inclined to consume traditional news sources like television and print media. Thus, the average age range of respondents of 25 to 40 years reveals that the responses were based on both the younger and the middle aged who mainly use digital platforms.

4.4.3 Education

The respondents also provided information on their education and results are presented in Table 4.4 below:

Table 4.4: Education

Qualification	Frequency		Percentage	
	Media players	Diplomats	Media players	Diplomats
Primary	-	-	-	-
Secondary	15	-	22.7%	-
Tertiary	25	40	77.3%	100%
No education	-	-	-	-
Total	40		100%	

Source: Survey data (2024)

The majority of media participants (19; n=85; 77.3%) had postsecondary education, as Table 4.4 demonstrates. However, every single diplomat claimed to have completed their postsecondary degree. Because they demonstrate that the majority of respondents were able to understand the research questions, the respondent qualifications are therefore helpful.

4.4.4 Employment Position for media players

The media players were also requested to indicate their positions and responses are presented in Figure 4.5 below:

Table 4.5: Position of media players

Occupational Position	Frequency	Percentage
Top level management	13	11.8%
Middle level management	13	11.8%
Lower-level management	22	20.0%
Journalist	62	56.4%
Total	110	100.0%

Source: Survey data (2024)

As can be seen from Figure 4.5, the bulk of media participants—56.4% of the respondents, or 62—were journalists. There were a total of 26 middle-level and top-level managers, with 22 (20%) belonging to the lower-level management. Since journalists cover news for the general public, they are more familiar with media polarity concerns. For this reason, their huge participation in the study is noteworthy, as their comments will mostly draw from their

own experiences. Management's engagement is also essential because it will help gather information on strategic measures aimed at mitigating media polarisation.

4.4.5 Employment Position of the diplomats

The diplomats were also requested to indicate their positions and responses are presented in Table 4.6 below:

Table 4.6: Position of diplomats

Occupational Position	Frequency	Percentage
Deputy Ambassador	8	20.0%
Operations	12	30.0%
Counsellor	20	50.0%
Total	40	100.0%

Source: Survey data (2024)

Table 4.6 demonstrates that the bulk of the diplomats—50%, or 20—were counsellors. Deputy Ambassadors were present, although there were only 12 (30%) employees in the Operations department. It is essential to involve a variety of people in order to collect replies that reflect varied points of view.

4.4.6 Employment Duration

Table 4.7 reveals results on the number of years the respondents were employed in their organisations.

Table 4.7: Employment Duration

Duration	Frequency		Percentage	
	Media players	Diplomats	Media players	Diplomats
Less than 1 year	21	3	19.1	7.5
1-5 years	42	18	38.2	45.0
6-10 years	28	9	25.5	22.5
More than 10 years	19	10	17.3	25.0
Total	110	40	100%	100%

Source: Survey data (2024)

Table 4.7 demonstrates that the majority of media players (n=42; 38.2%) had worked in the media for one to five years. Media professionals with six to ten years of work experience made up 25.5% of the population, while those with less than a year of experience made up 19.1%. However, the majority of diplomats (n=18;45%) had only been stationed at the embassies for one to five years, while ten diplomats (n=25%) had been there for more than ten years. The bulk of media participants and diplomats had experience that ranged from one to ten years on average, according to the results. It is likely that the results show experiences of both groups of respondents.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.5 Reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe

The first objective of the study is to discuss reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe. Questionnaire respondents in both groups were requested to indicate their agreement to various statements which are possible reasons for media polarity. The responses are presented in Table 4.8 below:

Table 4.8: Reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe

Factor	Group of respondents	Percentage					Total
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	
News outlets usually align themselves with specific political parties or ideologies.	Media players	-	4.5%	20.9%	20.9%	53.6%	100%
	Diplomats	-	7.5%	15.0%	47.5%	30.0%	100%
There is division of media based on differing	Media players	2.7%	7.3%	6.4%	40.0%	43.6%	100%
	Diplomats	-	2.5%	17.5%	35.0%	45.0%	100%

beliefs and values							
There exist huge disparities in financial resources and ownership structures among media organizations	Media players	-	9.1%	18.2%	38.2%	34.5%	100%
	Diplomats	-	10.0%	72.5%	17.5%		100%
Media outlets located in different regions or countries usually prioritize local issues over national or international news, resulting in varying perspectives and priorities in their reporting.	Media players	-	11.8%	5.5%	46.4%	36.4%	100%
	Diplomats	27.5%	45.0%	15.0%	12.5%		100%
Media organizations that embrace technological advancements have a	Media players	-	4.5%	21.8%	16.4%	57.3%	100%
	Diplomats	15.0%	5.0%	12.5%	27.5%	40.0%	100%

competitive edge in reaching audiences through online platforms, social media, mobile apps, and other digital tools, while those lagging behind struggle to adapt to changing consumer preferences							
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Source: Survey data (2024)

As shown from the results in Table 4.8, majority of media players and diplomats were in agreement that News outlets usually align themselves with specific political parties or ideologies. This is shown by the largest proportion of media players who strongly agreed (53.6%) and majority of media players who agreed (47.5%). Furthermore, both groups concurred that There is division of media based on differing beliefs and values, as shown from 43.6% and 45% of media players and diplomats who strongly agreed, respectively.

Whilst majority of the media players supported that there exist huge disparities in financial resources and ownership structures among media organizations (38.2% agreed and 34.5% strongly agreed), most of the diplomats neither agreed no disagreed (72.5%). Since diplomats may not be privy to information about financial resources of the media organisations in Zimbabwe, it is prudent to consider responses from the media players who are directly working for the media organisations. Thus, it is alluded that there are huge financial disparities among the media companies, which fuels polarity.

When asked whether Media outlets located in different regions or countries usually prioritize local issues over national or international news, resulting in varying perspectives and priorities in their reporting, majority of media players agreed (46.4%) whilst on the other hand most diplomats differed in their views as they disagreed (45%). Diplomats who are not familiar with the various media organisations might not be aware of the priorities set by some of the media outlets outside of Harare, as was demonstrated in the earlier studies. But since the media would know more, it is implied that one of the main causes of media polarity is divergent priorities. The stories that media outlets choose to cover and how they present them to their audience are influenced by their own editorial agendas and biases. These prejudices may result from a variety of things, including target demographics, political affiliations, or ownership interests. This causes a discrepancy in coverage and viewpoints since media sources may favour some subjects over others depending on their editorial position.

Results also reveal that majority of media players and diplomats were in agreement that Media organizations that embrace technological advancements have a competitive edge in reaching audiences through online platforms, social media, mobile apps, and other digital tools, while those lagging behind struggle to adapt to changing consumer preferences. This is shown by the largest proportion constituting 57.3% of media players and 40% of diplomats who strongly agreed. Thus, advanced technology among media organisations is a reason why media polarity occurs in Zimbabwe as information travels rapidly.

4.6 Implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe

The researcher also sought to examine the implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe. The media players and diplomats were asked different sets of questions. Whilst the media players were asked to indicate the effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling, the diplomats were requested to indicate their views about the country, judging from the media content they came across.

Results on responses from the media players are presented in Table 4.9 as follows:

Table 4.9: Effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe’s diplomatic profiling

Effects	Percentage					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
Skewed perceptions	-	3.6	8.2	34.5	53.6	100%
Reduced credibility	-	5.5	5.5	57.3	31.8	100%
Polarized negotiations	-	5.5	15.5	46.4	32.7	100%
Echo Chambers and Misinformation	-	2.7	16.4	44.5	36.4	100%

Source: Survey data (2024)

Table 4.9 above reveals that majority of the respondents alluded that the effects of media polarity are largely adverse. According to the responses, the major effect is skewed perceptions as shown by over half of the media players (53.6%) who strongly agreed. Furthermore, majority of the media players also agreed that other effects of media polarity in Zimbabwe comprise reduced credibility (57.3%), polarised negotiations (46.4%) and echo chambers and misinformation (44.5%).

The diplomats were further requested to indicate their views about the country and results are presented in Table 4.10 below:

Table 4.10: Views about the country

Motivation	Percentage					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	

The country is democratic	2.5	17.5	60.0	10.0	10.0	100%
Zimbabwe's economy is strengthening	2.5	10.0	17.5	32.5	37.5	100%
Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective seeks to promote security and regional stability	2.5	12.5	17.5	25.0	42.5	100%
Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective seeks to promote economic interests	-	2.5	10.0	35.0	52.5	100%
Zimbabwe seeks to promote shared values and understanding with other countries	5.0	15.0	17.5	27.5	35.0	100%
Zimbabwe and my country have good historical links	-	-	10.0	20.0	70.0	100%

Source: Survey data (2024)

Table 4.10 shows that the views held by over half of the diplomats are that Zimbabwe has good historical links with other countries (as strongly agreed by 70%) and that Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective seeks to promote economic interests (as strongly supported by 52.5%). Other views that were strongly supported by majority of the diplomats are Zimbabwe's economy is strengthening (37.5%), Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective seeks to promote security and regional stability (42.5%) and that Zimbabwe seeks to promote shared values and understanding with other countries (35%). However, majority of the diplomats constituting 60% were sceptical about whether the country is democratic.

4.7 Factors fueling media polarity in Zimbabwe

The respondents were requested to indicate the key factors fuelling media polarity in Zimbabwe. In the responses, the factors suggested were political, economic and social factors.

4.7.1 Political factors

According to research, there is a clear separation in the nation's media landscape between privately held and state-owned media organisations, each of which promotes a distinct political viewpoint.

Foreign diplomats have voiced worry about how politics is influencing Zimbabwe's media environment. "*Media freedom remains an essential component for democratic governance,*" stated one of the ambassadors. The ambassador was pleased with the Second Republic's advancements in enabling media organisations to function openly and without fear of intimidation or harassment. Nonetheless, the ambassadors generally urged the owners of private media to report with responsibility and objectivity.

The polarised political climate in Zimbabwe, where several political factions vie for control over or influence over media narratives to further their own agendas, is another factor contributing to media polarity, according to the findings. The majority of the diplomats and media players saw the lack of access as a financial constraint on the part of the parties rather than as a result of barriers by the mainstream media platforms, although one of the foreign diplomats believed that opposition parties frequently struggled to access mainstream media platforms, which led to a lack of diverse perspectives in public discourse.

4.7.2 Economic factors

Additionally, it was shown that the country's media landscape is shaped by a number of economic issues that also affect media polarity. Ownership structure was one of the economic reasons mentioned as being crucial in fostering media polarisation. There have been suggestions that a few of the nation's media outlets support political causes, which results in skewed reporting and a lack of diversity of opinion. This ownership dynamic frequently leads to divisive reporting on topics and occurrences.

Another important economic component mentioned as a major driver of media polarisation in Zimbabwe is advertising money. One of the media participants disclosed that the financial viability of media organisations is mostly dependent on advertising, which may have an impact on their editorial choices. Another member of the media expressed the following opinions:

“In certain instances, media companies may under pressure from sponsors to match their content with specific agendas, which can result in polarised and biased reporting..”

The results also indicated that media polarity in Zimbabwe is influenced by access to resources, including money and technology. The results revealed that media organisations with higher financial means could be able to manage narratives and sway public opinion because of their increased reach and influence. Therefore, the unequal distribution of resources may be a factor in the polarisation of the media.

4.7.3 Social factors

Additionally, it was noted that Zimbabwean society's social differences intensify media polarisation. Regional disparities, class divides, and ethnicity are some of the major factors that influence how various groups receive and perceive the news, according to the respondents, who are primarily diplomats.

The majority of respondents reaffirmed that media outlets frequently target particular audience segments according to these socioeconomic divisions, which exacerbates already-existing biases and polarises the conversation. It was also proposed that social divisions are a factor in echo chambers, when people look for information to support rather than contradict their own opinions.

4.7.4 Technological factors

The researcher discovered that the spread of information, both true and incorrect, has increased as a result of the growth of social media platforms, potentially exacerbating media polarisation. One of the diplomats claims that social media's enormous user base, which has expanded over the previous 10 years, makes it easy for content that divides people to proliferate, especially during politically sensitive times.

One additional noteworthy conclusion drawn from the responses is that a large number of Zimbabweans lack digital literacy, which fuels media polarisation. One of the media players emphasised that those who do use digital platforms may not have the necessary skills to critically evaluate the information they encounter.

Additional opinions that emerged from the qualitative replies included the idea that media polarisation can be exacerbated by the restricted accessibility and cost of digital technology. One of the media representatives made the following contribution:

"Although smartphone usage is prevalent in cities, many Zimbabweans still struggle to get affordable data plans and dependable internet connectivity."

This may lead to unequal access to information and a dependence on unofficial sources like social media gossip and word-of-mouth.

Finally, it was noted that foreign influence via internet platforms and foreign broadcasters can also exacerbate media polarisation in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean interests and values may not be aligned with the objectives of certain international broadcasters and online platforms, according to diplomats surveyed for this study. The diplomats claim that this may result in a distorted portrayal of domestic events and problems.

4.8 Measures that can be implemented to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling

The respondents were also requested to suggest measures that can be implemented to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling.

4.8.1 Measures

Implementing and upholding stringent ethical journalistic standards, according to one media participant, could help lessen the detrimental effects of media polarisation on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling. However, another ambassador who expressed a similar opinion said the following:

"Media outlets can contribute to a more nuanced and fair representation of the country on the international stage by ensuring that news reporting is accurate, balanced, and unbiased."

With regards to how these can be implemented, players in the media fraternity suggested

- Training and education of journalists,

- Prioritising transparency and accountability in their reporting through disclosing any potential conflicts of interest and being open about their sources of information,
- Presentation of diverse perspectives on issues by media players through inclusion of a range of viewpoints in their reporting,
- Implementation of strong editorial oversight through effective use of editorial boards or ombudsmen who are responsible for ensuring that reporting meets ethical guidelines.

The majority of the media players underlined how critical it is to promote communication and cooperation across Zimbabwe's various media organisations. The following answers demonstrate this:

"Media players can collaborate to present a more unified and cohesive image of the nation, which can positively impact its diplomatic relations, by fostering partnerships and promoting a culture of cooperation."

Additionally, the respondents discussed ways to promote communication and teamwork, and the following ideas were put forth:

- Creation of formal platforms where representatives from different sectors such as government officials, media professionals, civil society organizations, and academic experts can come together to engage in constructive dialogues. One of the media players indicated the following platforms:

"These platforms can be in the form of regular meetings, conferences, or workshops."

- Encouraging transparency by sharing accurate information and data regarding Zimbabwe's diplomatic activities. According to one of the diplomats who participated in the study, this can help dispel misinformation spread by polarized media outlets and foster a more informed public discourse.
- Establishing alliances with non-governmental groups, foreign governments, and international organisations that are interested in Zimbabwe's diplomatic ties. The respondents said that working together can assist put up a united front and combat inaccurate representations in the media.

The study's participating diplomats recommended that sources of perspectives be diversified. One of them clarified, saying,

"Media outlets can offer a more comprehensive understanding of Zimbabwe's political landscape, thus mitigating the polarising effects of one-sided narratives, by including a wide range of voices, opinions, and viewpoints in their reporting."

Promoting media literacy among the populace, promoting media ownership plurality to guarantee that a range of viewpoints are represented in the news, and supporting independent journalism initiatives were the suggested actions for putting the measure into practice. Independent journalists frequently enjoy greater freedom to report on opposing viewpoints without being swayed by political or commercial interests.

The ambassadors also believed that actively interacting with foreign media outlets may help diversify sources and viewpoints by giving them a forum and mitigating any unfavourable depictions brought about by media polarisation.

The diplomats also believed that before publishing any news articles about Zimbabwe, a process of fact-checking and verification was essential. According to one of the diplomats, media outlets can prevent the propagation of false information and the amplification of divisive narratives that could undermine their nation's diplomatic position by making sure that the material they publish is factual and trustworthy.

In addition, the following tactics were recommended to help with the fact-checking and verification process:

- Creation of a specialized team within media organizations or government agencies tasked with verifying the accuracy of information before it is published or shared. It was suggested by one of the diplomats that this team should consist of trained professionals with expertise in journalism, research, and data analysis.
- Making use of technological tools such as digital verification software, image analysis tools, and online databases to verify the authenticity of sources and information. It was suggested that these tools can help detect fake news, manipulated images, and misleading content.
- Forging partnerships with reputable international fact-checking organizations. The diplomats suggested organisations such as FactCheck.org, PolitiFact, or Africa Check.

They noted that collaborating with these organizations can provide access to best practices, resources, and networks for verifying information accurately.

4.8.2 Key aspects considered before one can qualify Zimbabwe as a country with a good image

Additionally, the diplomats were asked to list the three crucial factors they take into account before classifying Zimbabwe as a nation with a positive reputation. It was found that political stability and governance are the most frequently evaluated aspects of Zimbabwe's image by diplomats. Examining the nation's adherence to democratic values, respect for human rights, rule of law, and transparency in government operations are some of the sub-aspects that were highlighted. It was mentioned that ambassadors keep a careful eye on all political developments, such as elections, systems of administration, and the interactions between the people and their government.

Economic development and performance rank second most frequently mentioned aspects. The complexities of this proposed feature entail looking at metrics including GDP growth, inflation rates, unemployment rates, business restrictions, investment climate, and initiatives to reduce poverty. Most people agree that Zimbabwe's economy may attract international investment and improve its reputation if it is robust and has possibilities for sustainable growth.

It was also noted that the nation's diplomacy and foreign policy significantly influence how the world perceives it. The majority of ambassadors hinted that they assess Zimbabwe's diplomatic endeavours, membership in international organisations, compliance with international agreements, and interactions with other nations. Thus, Zimbabwe's standing in the international community can be improved by positive diplomatic connections.

It was also mentioned that social stability and cultural legacy are frequent factors that influence how diplomats view Zimbabwe. The country's image is influenced by a number of elements, including social cohesiveness, cultural variety, heritage site protection, art and culture promotion, high-quality education, access to healthcare, and social welfare programmes. Therefore, a dynamic culture with a strong cultural legacy can influence diplomats' perceptions of Zimbabwe in a good way.

4.9 Discussion of findings

The study aimed to examine the causes of Zimbabwe's media polarisation. The main causes found are that news organisations are aligned with political parties or ideologies, that people hold different opinions and values, and that disparities in technology improvements affect how quickly information reaches people.

The research by Mungwari (2017), which found that when reporting political conflicts, the press's ideological considerations take precedence over its informational and educational mandate, pushing ethics and professional interests to the back burner, is consistent with the findings that align news outlets with political parties or ideologies as one of the primary causes of media polarity. However, Hove (2017) demonstrated that, during Zimbabwe's military-assisted political transition in November 2017, the country's highly politicised privately owned media offered comparable storylines to those of state-controlled media. As a result, there may be occasions when public and private media converge. Nonetheless, political connections typically cause various media outlets to diverge.

While there aren't many studies that look at technology developments as a cause of media polarity, research from groups like Matsuo, Han, and Matsumura (2023) and Agarwal and Alsaeedi (2020) that demonstrate how social media has contributed to the growth of media polarity aligns with the results of this study. This is true since social media's rise to prominence is a product of technological development.

Regarding the effects of media polarity on diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe, research revealed that foreign diplomats generally believed Zimbabwe to be a friendly country with strong historical ties and a foreign policy that aimed to advance economic interests, security, and regional stability in addition to shared values and understanding with other nations.

However, there was broad agreement among the media participants that media polarity has negative effects on the country, skewed perceptions of it, diminished credibility of information from the mass media, polarised negotiations due to misinformation, echo chambers, and false information. The results are consistent with those of Matsuo, Han, and Matsumura (2023), who found that diplomats could have false impressions about their counterparts, which could result in misunderstandings and strained relationships.

Roos et al. (2022) found that decision-makers may be less likely to trust information sourced from media outlets with a reputation for partiality. This finding is similar to previous research that demonstrated the reduced credibility of information from the mass media as an implication of media polarity on diplomatic profiling. Therefore, polarisation in the media can breed mistrust, which can impact diplomatic profiling. It also makes sense that, after receiving misleading information, echo chambers, and misinformation, this eventually results in polarised negotiations. This is evident from the study's findings, which showed that the majority of diplomats were unsure about the existence of democracy.

The investigation of the variables causing media polarisation in Zimbabwe revealed a variety of political, economic, social, and technological reasons. Media polarity, a phenomena defined by sharp differences in viewpoints and beliefs among media outlets, has been a major problem for Zimbabwe's democratic system.

First, political variables influence diplomatic profiling and create media polarisation. For example, Western media sources heavily criticised the land reform, portraying it as a violent, disorganised process motivated by political goals. Due to the sanctions imposed and the drop in foreign investment, this coverage had a major effect on Zimbabwe's ties with Western nations (Chipenda, 2021). This demonstrates how political polarisation in the media can drastically alter how Zimbabwe is portrayed.

Ad income is a component of economic considerations that are also tied to political factors. Results indicated that many media outlets are now compelled to depend on political parties and institutions for their advertising revenue in order to survive due to economic challenges. This reliance on political favouritism can exacerbate media polarisation by encouraging self-censorship and biased reporting. Anton (2022) concurs that a nation's diplomatic image is greatly influenced by the strength of its economy.

The social dimensions also surfaced as noteworthy variables. These consist of discrepancies in area, class, and ethnicity. It makes sense that politicians and interest groups frequently take advantage of societal differences to sway public opinion by disseminating information in a way that advances their own agendas. Polarisation develops as a result of various societal sectors consuming news from sources that support their preexisting opinions.

Technology-related aspects are interconnected with societal factors. As disinformation develops in a new environment like social networks, where information is disseminated at great speed and whose origin is difficult to trace, it has become one of the major issues for state defence, according to McGonagle (2017) and Pamment et al. (2017). It has been shown that the growth of social media platforms has increased the spread of information both true and false which can intensify polarisation in the media. Additionally, it was discovered that media polarity is a result of low digital literacy. On the other hand, it was discovered that media polarisation can also be fuelled by the restricted availability and affordability of digital technology. Future research should examine this discrepancy to see if digital technologies are the primary cause of media polarisation or if their absence is the primary driver.

The study discovered that Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) play a significant role in media polarity through the analysis of media material. These deep learning models are primarily made up of two networks: discriminator and generator. The discriminator assesses the validity of the newly generated data samples, while the generator produces fresh ones. GANs are conceptualised as both a "forger" and a "detective" in the context of media. (Marra and others, 2018). The generator, also known as the forger, gains the ability to produce fresh data that closely mimics real-world instances (Marra et al., 2018). It accomplishes this by examining enormous collections of real photos or videos, then creating fresh examples in response to the patterns it finds. Creating realistic special effects and producing sizable datasets for training additional machine learning models are only two of the many uses for this capacity in media creation (Marra et al., 2018). Conversely, the discriminator, often known as the detective, is in charge of differentiating between authentic and fraudulent data (Marra et al., 2018). It learns to distinguish minute variations between fake and real data by being exposed to both during training.

The relationship between the senders and recipients of bogus news can be compared to the forger and detective elements in GANs in this study. The outside world receives information and attempts to determine what is real and what is fake in order to create a diplomatic profile for a nation. However, media outlets some of which might be forgeries produce bogus news and keep refining it until it becomes harder to tell the difference between authentic and fake material.

An additional significant discovery concerns foreign influence via foreign broadcasters and internet platforms, which can also exacerbate media polarisation in Zimbabwe. Results from earlier studies demonstrated that the digital age has brought people and diplomatic players closer together, facilitating communication between foreign senders and local recipients of information (Graffy, 2019). Thus, the foreign diplomats can also fuel media polarity with a view to advance their agendas of giving a country a bad image. This resonates with the Al Jazeera allegations that Ambassador Uebert Angel was among the people who were engaged in money laundering and gold smuggling (Chidakwa, 2023). Thus, some foreigners, which may include diplomats who are interested in Zimbabwe can fuel media polarity through international broadcasters.

4.10 Chapter summary

In this chapter, research findings were analysed, presented, interpreted and discussed. It was shown that the sample is made up of more female media players than males as well as more male diplomats than female diplomats. Most of the respondents had tertiary level education and had experience of issues of media polarity and diplomatic profiling ranging from 1 to 10 years. Under the main findings, key reasons for media polarity were alignment of news outlets with political parties or ideologies, differing beliefs and values, and differences in technological advancements. Whilst the effects of media polarity were adverse, it was also established that there exist an array of political, economic, social and technological factors that fuel media polarity. The next chapter provides a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The study's main aim was to investigate media polarity and its implications on diplomatic profiling in Zimbabwe using a case of state and private media players. In particular, the study's objectives were to discuss reasons for media polarity, to examine the implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe, to assess factors fuelling media polarity and to explore measures that can be implemented to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling.

This chapter presents the summary of findings in line with the research objectives. The conclusions from the findings are also provided showing the implications of the results to media industry. Lastly, recommendations of the study are made which show measures that can be employed by media players and Government to manage the effects of media polarity on diplomatic profiling of the country.

5.2 Summary of findings

In Chapter 2, theories including the Agenda-setting and International Relations theory were discussed. It is shown that the agenda-setting theory focuses on how the media influences what issues are considered important, explores how information is presented to shape understanding, and these concepts intersect with International Relations Theory to impact global perceptions and interactions. Additionally, the study's conceptual framework, which lists the factors taken into account, was present. Key research authority has divergent philosophical positions about the kinds of individuals who should get news, which led to differing opinions between them. Consistent liberals, on the other hand, have a more varied media diet, gathering information from a greater number of sources, while conservatives have a tendency to depend significantly on a single news source. Diverse reception of news from both independent and supplementary sources is influenced by individual preference variances. The research approach that will be used to carry out the investigation is provided in the next chapter.

In Chapter 3, the methodology was presented basing on the research onion by Saunders et al., (2016). Since the study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, the pragmatism

philosophy was used. It also follows that the researcher used the mixed methods research approach, a combination of the deductive and inductive approaches. From populations of 50 media players and 40 diplomats, the researcher selected samples of 44 and 36, respectively using stratified sampling technique. The sources of data were questionnaires and media content. Using the survey method, data was gathered from a pre-selected sample in order to get new perspectives on a certain subject. Data analysis was in form of descriptive statistics and inferential analysis. Furthermore, the Critical Discourse Analysis was used in analysing data, particularly the media content.

Discussion of reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe revealed that the key reasons for media polarity in Zimbabwe are alignment of news outlets with political parties or ideologies, differing beliefs and values, differences in technological advancements which determines how fast information reaches people. Other subtle reasons include differences in prioritisation of local versus international news and disparities in financial resources among media organisations.

The researcher also examined the implications of media polarity on the diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe. Findings show general consensus among the media players that the effects of media polarity are widely adverse. It was established that media polarity results are skewed perceptions about the country, reduced credibility of information from the mass media, polarized negotiations upon hearing false information and echo chambers and misinformation. On the other hand, the diplomats shared their views about Zimbabwe. The general views held by the foreign diplomats are that Zimbabwe is a friendly nation with good historical links and a foreign policy seeking to promote shared values and understanding with other countries, economic interests, security and regional stability.

Upon assessment of factors fuelling media polarity in Zimbabwe, results showed that there exist political, economic, social and technological factors. It was observed that whilst the Second Republic has made progress in promoting media organisations to operate freely without fear of harassment or intimidation, the private media owners seemed to be irresponsible and impartial in their reporting. For instance, it was observed that newspapers such as the Standard came under scrutiny for its reporting practices. Critics argued that it often sensationalized stories to attract readership, leading to a lack of objectivity in its reporting. The desire by political figures to influence media narratives emerged as a key

political aspect resulting in high media polarity. With the rise of online news outlets during the advent of the Second Republic, some websites were found to be publishing fake news and inflammatory content to drive traffic to their platforms. This irresponsible reporting further polarized public opinion and undermined trust in the media.

The key economic factors fuelling media polarity are ownership structure, advertising revenue, and access to resources. The factor of ownership structure was also linked to political factors as results showed that some of the media organizations in the country, such as the NewsDay, The Standard, and The Daily News newspapers, are aligned with political interests, which creates an ownership dynamic that leads to biased reporting and limited diversity of viewpoints. The need to maximize on advertising revenue by some media players at the expense of biased reporting also emerged as a key economic factors. Linked to this is limited resources among the small media players.

The key social factors included ethnicity, class differences, and regional disparities. Furthermore, technological factors included social media and lack of digital literacy. It was also found that limited availability and affordability of digital technologies can also fuel media polarization as it leads to unequal access to information and a reliance on alternative sources, such as word of mouth or social media rumours. More so, results showed that foreign influence through international broadcasters and online platforms can also contribute to media polarization in Zimbabwe.

In terms of measures that can be implemented to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe's diplomatic profiling, results showed that the key measures are implementing and adhering to strict ethical journalism standards, encouraging dialogue and collaboration among different media organizations, diversifying sources of perspectives and strengthening fact-checking and verification process.

5.3 Conclusion

From the study findings, the researcher concludes that media polarity is mainly a result of alignment of news outlets with political parties or ideologies, differing beliefs and values and differences in technological advancements. The differences result in unequal spread of information whereby information of some media organisations travels faster and is more likely to be believed and accepted by the public.

Media polarity has adverse implications on diplomatic profiling of Zimbabwe as it results in skewed perceptions about the country, reduced credibility of information from the mass media, polarized negotiations upon hearing false information and echo chambers and misinformation. This explains why diplomats could not agree out rightly that Zimbabwe is democratic. Media polarity has spread false information about Zimbabwe as some media players, particularly in the private sector have spread wrong narrative about democracy in the country. Nevertheless, diplomats view the country as a friendly nation with good historical links and a foreign policy seeking to promote shared values and understanding with other countries, economic interests, security and regional stability.

Whilst the key factors fuelling media polarity were categorized into political, economic, social and technological factors, political factors play a central role as the issue of political figures influencing media narratives is related to economic, social and technological factors. Whilst economic factors such as ownership structure, advertising revenue, and access to resources lead to media polarity, these are exacerbated by the influence of political figures who have the financial resources. More so, technological factors are also enhanced by the influence of political figures in media as they can fund the spread of information.

Technological factors also play a central role in media polarity during this digital age. Whilst digital technologies have been cited as factors of media polarity, limited availability and affordability of these digital technologies can also fuel media polarization. This has implications on future research as the contradiction is worth analysing to determine whether digital technologies fuel media polarity or lack of these technologies are the key factors instead.

5.4 Recommendations of the study

- The Government of Zimbabwe is recommended to further diversify sources and perspectives in the media industry which promotes media pluralism, through relaxation of media rules and laws, for both print and online media thereby independent journalism and ensuring a range of perspectives are represented in the media landscape.

- There is need for the Zimbabwean Government to implement regulations that promote ethical journalism standards and hold media outlets accountable for misinformation or incitement which helps to combat polarization.
- Whilst laws relating to media industry ought to be relaxed, there is need for Government to direct the establishment of comprehensive and dedicated fact checking and verification systems in the media organisations through regulatory bodies.
- The media players, both state owned and private, are recommended to constantly engage in dialogue with different media stakeholders, including journalists, editors, and policymakers, to promote understanding and collaboration.

5.5 Recommendation for future research

Whilst the current study established that there is a contradiction on the effect of availability and affordability of digital technologies on media polarity, the contradiction is worth analysing through future research to determine whether digital technologies fuel media polarity or lack of these technologies are the key factors instead.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MEDIA PLAYERS

You are kindly asked to participate in the study titled, '*Media Polarity and Implications on Diplomatic Profiling of Zimbabwe: A case of selected state and private media players*'. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your views on implications of media polarity on diplomatic profiling. You are required to tick in the spaces provided and explain your response in some questions.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the questions as accurately as possible by ticking the box with the appropriate answer for each question. Fill in with appropriate responses where spaces are provided.

Section I: Background and Demographic Information

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Age

18-24 years

25-40 years

40-64 years

65 years and above

3. Highest education attained

Primary education

Secondary education

Tertiary education

No education

4. Occupational position

Top level management

Middle level management

Lower-level management

Journalist

5. How long have you been employed in the media fraternity?

- Less than 1 year ()
- 1-5 years ()
- 6-10 years ()
- More than 10 years ()

SECTION B: REASONS FOR MEDIA POLARITY IN ZIMBABWE

Do you agree with the following statements about why there is media polarity in Zimbabwe? Use the following likert scale where 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree. Statement	1	2	3	4	5
News outlets usually align themselves with specific political parties or ideologies.					
There is division of media based on differing beliefs and values					
There exist huge disparities in financial resources and ownership structures among media organizations.					
Media outlets located in different regions or countries usually prioritize local issues over national or international news, resulting in varying perspectives and priorities in their reporting.					
Media organizations that embrace technological advancements have a competitive edge in reaching audiences through online platforms, social media, mobile apps, and other digital tools, while those lagging behind struggle to adapt to changing consumer preferences.					

SECTION C: IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA POLARITY ON THE DIPLOMATIC PROFILING OF ZIMBABWE

- 6.** What are the effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe’s diplomatic profiling? Use the following likert scale where 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Skewed perceptions					
Reduced credibility					
Polarized negotiations					
Echo Chambers and Misinformation					
Limited Understanding of Domestic Contexts					
Missed Opportunities for Collaboration					

SECTION D: FACTORS FUELLING MEDIA POLARITY IN ZIMBABWE

7. To what extent do the following factors fuel media polarity in Zimbabwe? *Use the following likert scale where 1=Not at all, 2=Less extent, 3=Moderate extent, 4=Greater extend, 5=Greatest extent.*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Political factors					
Economic factors					
Social factors					

8. Kindly explain the political, economic and social factors fuel media polarity in Zimbabwe.

SECTION E: MEASURES THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED TO REDUCE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MEDIA POLARITY ON ZIMBABWE’S DIPLOMATIC PROFILING

9. What 3 key measures can be employed to reduce negative effects of media polarity on Zimbabwe’s diplomatic profiling?

The end
Thank you

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOREIGN EMBASSY STAFF

You are kindly asked to participate in the study titled, '*Media Polarity and Implications on Diplomatic Profiling of Zimbabwe: A case of selected state and private media players*'. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your views on implications of media polarity on diplomatic profiling. You are required to tick in the spaces provided and explain your response in some questions.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the questions as accurately as possible by ticking the box with the appropriate answer for each question. Fill in with appropriate responses where spaces are provided.

Section I: Background and Demographic Information

1. Gender

Male Female

2. Age

18-24 years

25-40 years

40-64 years

65 years and above

3. Highest education attained

Primary education

Secondary education

Tertiary education

No education

4. Occupational position

Ambassador/ chargé d'affaires

Deputy Ambassador

Counsellor

5. How long have you been employed at the embassy?

- Less than 1 year ()
- 1-5 years ()
- 6-10 years ()
- More than 10 years ()

SECTION B: REASONS FOR MEDIA POLARITY IN ZIMBABWE

6. Do you agree with the following statements about why there is media polarity in Zimbabwe? Use the following likert scale where 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
News outlets usually align themselves with specific political parties or ideologies.					
There is division of media based on differing beliefs and values					
There exist huge disparities in financial resources and ownership structures among media organizations.					
Media outlets located in different regions or countries usually prioritize local issues over national or international news, resulting in varying perspectives and priorities in their reporting.					
Media organizations that embrace technological advancements have a competitive edge in reaching audiences through online platforms, social media, mobile apps, and other digital tools, while those lagging behind struggle to adapt to changing consumer preferences.					

SECTION C: IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIA POLARITY ON THE DIPLOMATIC PROFILING OF ZIMBABWE

7. Judging from the media content that you come across, what are your views about the country? Use the following likert scale where 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The country is democratic					
Zimbabwe's economy is strengthening					
Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective seeks to promote security and regional stability					
Zimbabwe's foreign policy objective seeks to promote economic interests					
Zimbabwe seeks to promote shared values and understanding with other countries					
Zimbabwe and my country have good historical links					

SECTION D: FACTORS FUELLING MEDIA POLARITY IN ZIMBABWE

8. What do you think are the key factors fuelling media polarity in Zimbabwe?

SECTION E: MEASURES THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED TO REDUCE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF MEDIA POLARITY ON ZIMBABWE'S DIPLOMATIC PROFILING

9. What 3 key aspects do you consider before you can qualify Zimbabwe as a country with a good image?

The end
Thank you