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China's media image in Zimbabwe: The Case of The Herald and NewsDay

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Abstract

This study investigates China's media image in Zimbabwe. It does so through the lens of two leading newspapers: *The Herald* and *NewsDay* during the intense election campaign period of 2013. It deploys both quantitative and qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles drawn from *The Herald* and *NewsDay* in order to investigate the image of China in the Zimbabwean media. In terms of theoretical underpinnings, it draws from various media and communication theories. These include the broad area of image studies and framing theory to understand the media-constructed image of China before, during and after the 2013 electioneering period. These communication theories are tested and applied as a means of gaining insights into how the media shape images of China in Zimbabwe and in Africa generally. The findings of this study suggests that during this period the media image of China was projected in a more positive light in *The Herald* when compared to the negative images and depictions in the *NewsDay*. It shows that the economic consequence frame dominated the coverage of China thereby portraying the East Asian country as an economic partner, donor, economic saviour, development source and investor in Zimbabwe. The study also reveals that the construction of the media image of China is influenced by interplay of several factors such as the editorial slant of news producers, economic and political pressures influencing the polarised media environment in Zimbabwe.