FIRST MEDIA MONITORING REPORT (22 MARCH TO 2ND April 2014) OF THE 2014 MALAWI TRIPARTITE ELECTIONS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This is the first media report of the IWPR/USAID/DFID Media Monitoring Project. It covers the period 22nd March to 2nd April 2014. It should be noted that this period did not include the output of state radio and television following the undertakings they gave to the Malawi Election Commission on 4 April 2014 that their election campaign coverage would be more even-handed than it had been in the campaign to date.

The project monitored the print, electronic and social media. It is worth noting that the latter are a first in media monitoring history (as far as is known). This report highlights the emerging issues from the media monitored for balance between Presidential, Parliamentary, Local Government elections and which party was mentioned, voice - that is, which politicians or spokespeople were quoted or heard directly in print or web or on air, which issues, excluding those devoted only to party or politician matters were covered and the extent to which news items were perceived as broadly neutral or broadly pro or anti in tone with regard to a specific party or parties. The project focused on news coverage on radio, television, newspapers and social media. We focused on news not just on the grounds of limited resources but also because research from around the world indicates that news has higher audiences and greater credibility than other aspects of media outputs.

2.0   METHODOLOGY

Data for this report was collected from print, electronic, web and social media. 40 trained monitors under the supervision of their two experienced, prominent senior journalists and lecturers from The Malawi Polytechnic and Malawi Institute of Journalism (MIJ) collected and coded data from the two major newspapers groups: The Times Group,(The Daily Times, Malawi News, Sunday Times) and The Nation Group (The Nation, Weekend Nation and Sunday Nation); radio stations: Malawi Broadcasting Corporation's (MBC) Television station and their Radios 1 and 2, Capital FM, Galaxy, Joy, MIJ, Matindi, Star and Zodiak radio stations six news websites specifically covering Malawian news and four Facebook Groups. Data from newspapers was collected from front page and inside pages for any political stories. Radio data was collected from the 12 noon and 6pm news bulletins. Data from Facebook and the news websites was collected at midday and 6pm and on the Facebook groups we looked at the trending news of the day. Initially we planned to collect data from Twitter at midday and 6pm. However, we observed a lack of traffic on the media which signalled that few Malawians were using this medium to discuss political issues.

Double blind coding for each media monitored was achieved by having separate coders based in the two institutions thus ensuring data reliability and validity. Data was entered, cleaned and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) to produce frequency tables and charts to illustrate the relationship between a number of variables. Content analysis was used to analyse the issues discussed.

3.0   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
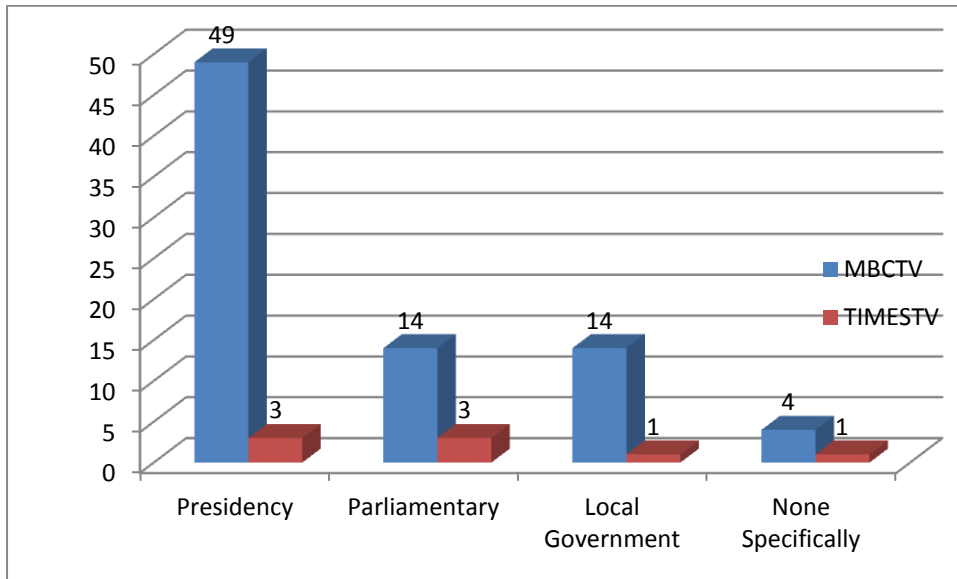
3.1   TELEVISION

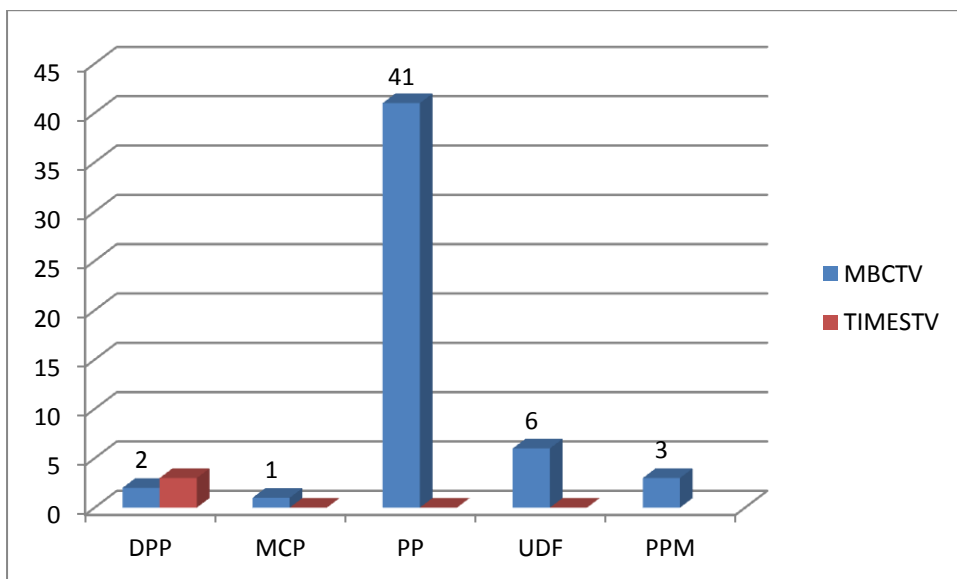*Figure 21: Coverage of Tripartite Elections by MBCTV and TimesTV*

Figure 22: Presidential aspirants mentioned by party MBCTV and TimesTV

The data shows that the Peoples Party presidential candidate was mentioned more than the other candidates by MBCTV. DPP was mentioned slightly more by Times TV. In terms of voice, Figure 23 shows that the presidential candidate was mainly heard (76%).
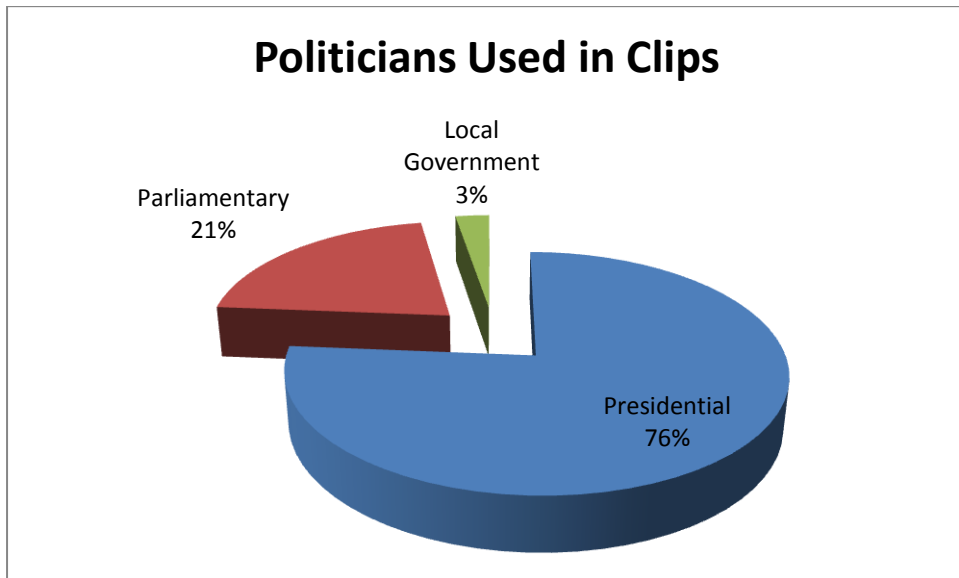

Figure 23: Politicians used in clips on MBCTV and TimesTV

Topical Issues

Data on topical issues on television are presented in Figure 24. The main issues covered by MBC TV were agriculture, the Electoral Process 43.1%, N=44), Agriculture (29.4%, N=30), Economy (19.6%, N=20), Gender, youth and disabilities (15.7%, N=16). Law and order (13.7%, N=14). Issues of corruption and Cashgate did not get significant coverage.
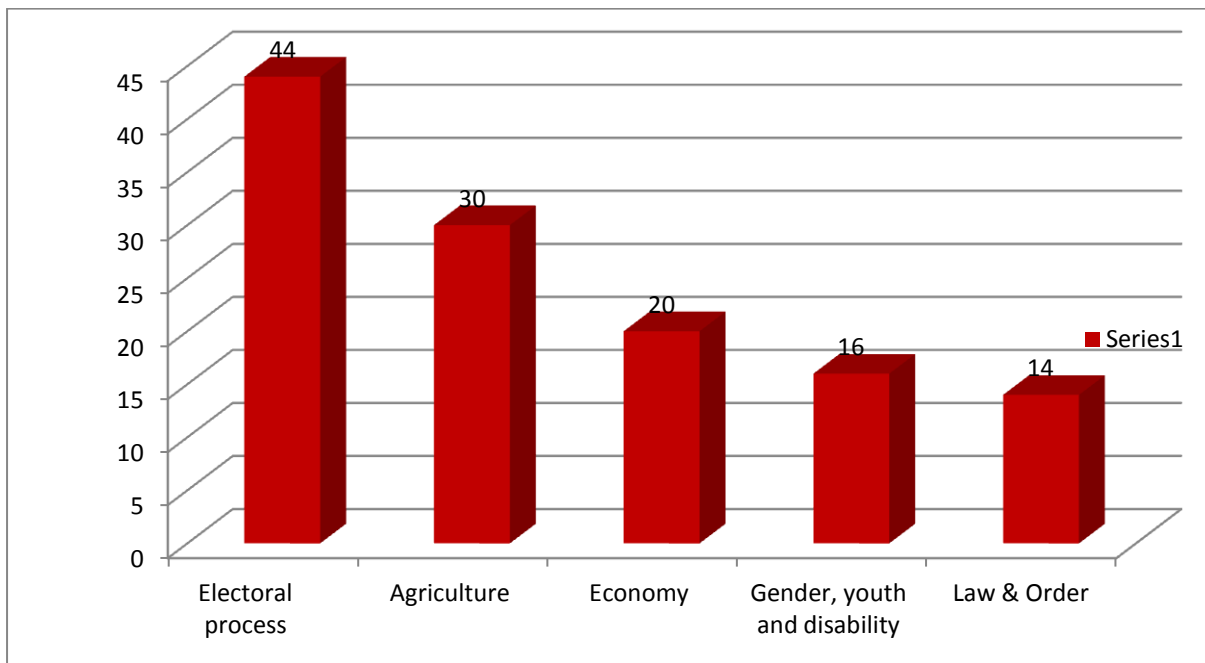
Figure 24: Issues discussed on MBCTV and TimesTV

Data on general tone of coverage on Television stations revealed that whilst much of the coverage was judged neutral in tone (49%, N=50) by both MBC TV and Times TV, where there was bias MBC TV was overwhelmingly ProPP (92.6%, N=25). We also noted that the least coverage by MBCTV was on DPP (see Figure 25).
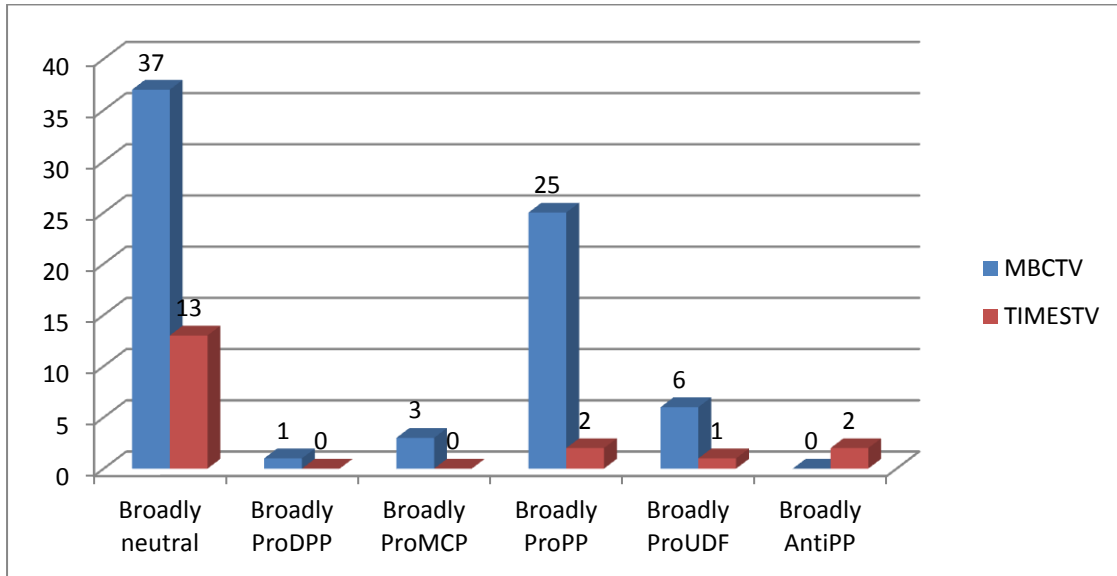

Figure 25: Tone of coverage of MBCTV and TimesTV

3.2   RADIO

This section presents the findings on quantity and tone of radio coverage. The project is monitoring the following radio stations: MBC 1, MBC2, Power101, Capital FM, Galaxy, Islam, Joy, MIJ, Maria, Matindi, Star, Ufulu and Zodiak. However, this report is based on data from 10 Radio stations: MBC 1, MBC2, Power101, Capital FM, Galaxy, Joy, MIJ, Matindi, Star, and Zodiak. The data from the remaining radio stations is still being processed. 365 news items have been analysed so far.

Non-party/politicians issues covered overall on radio
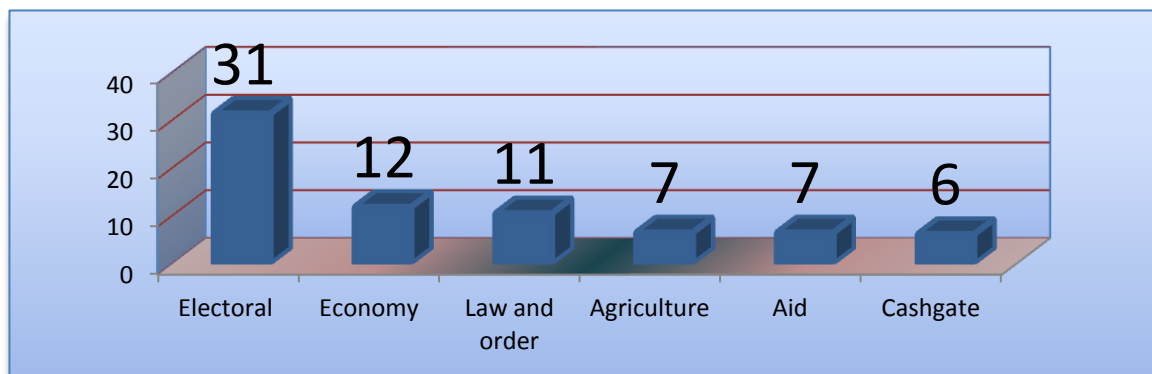

Figure 24: Non-party/politician issues covered on all radio stations

The topmost issues featured in news bulletins were: the electoral process (31%, N=188), economy (12%, N=71), law and order (10%), agriculture (7%, N=39), aid and foreign relations (7%, N=39) and the Cashgate and other corruption issues (6%, N=37) (see Figure 24 above). All other news received less than 5% of the overall news coverage. Figure 25 below illustrates this.

Column1	MBC1	MBC2	Capital	Galaxy	Joy	MIJ	Matindi	Zodiak	Star
Electoral	24	0	12	3	23	9	8	8	13
Economy	14	3	16	11	23	3	20	1	9
Law and order	6	0	6	11	35	0	16	3	22
Agriculture	26	10	8	10	26	0	3	5	13
Aid	10	3	13	3	23	3	26	3	18
Cashgate	2	0	33	7	16	2	16	5	18

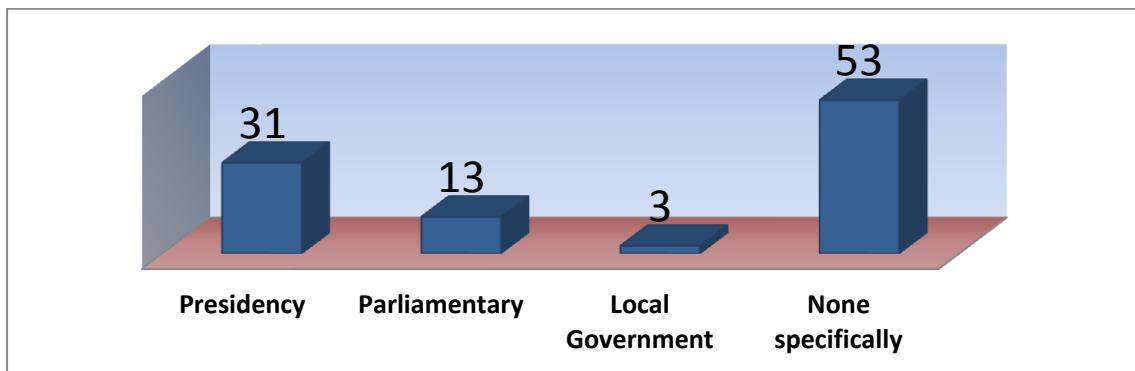*Figure 25: Non-party/politician issues covered by station*

Figure 26: Coverage of Tripartite Elections by party

Most of the presidential coverage was given to the PP presidential aspirant.
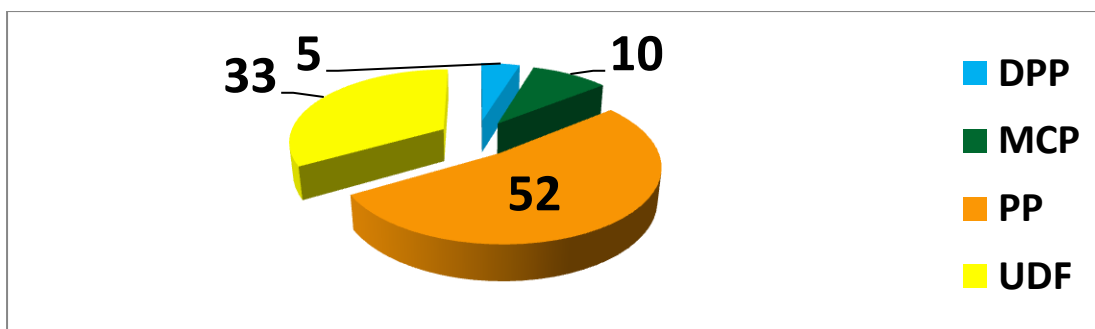

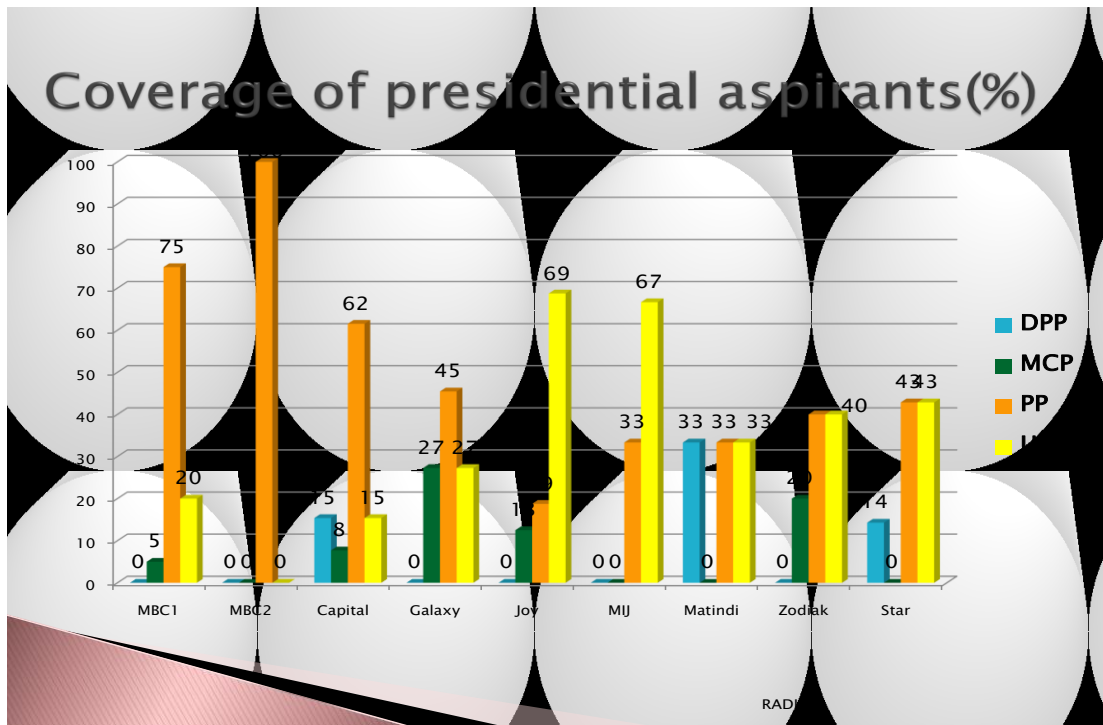*Figure 27: Coverage of party presidential aspirants on radio overall*

Figure 28: Coverage of residential aspirants by station

Tone of Coverage

The overall tone of coverage was mostly neutral (48%, N=176). Furthermore, articles which have a negative tone were less (22%, N=81) compared to those which had positive coverage (30%, N=111).
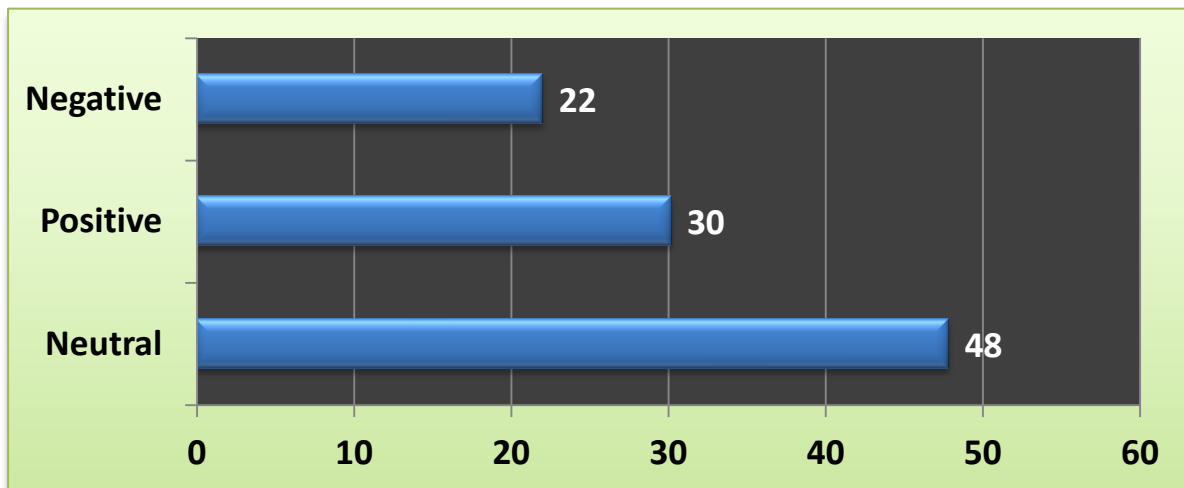

Figure 29: Overall tone of coverage on radio

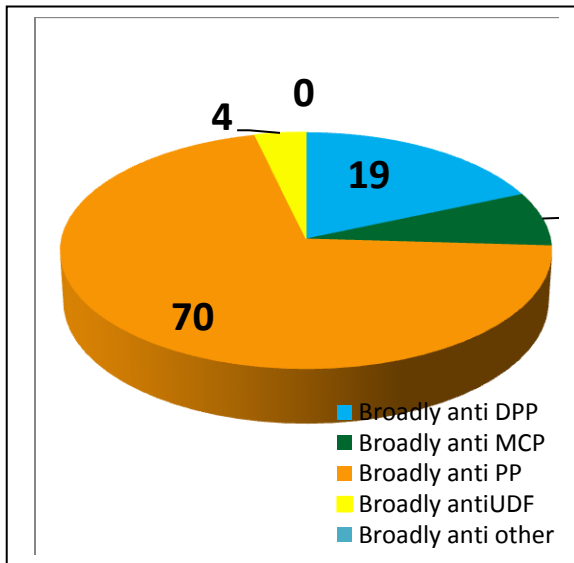The PP received most of the positive as well as the negative coverage.
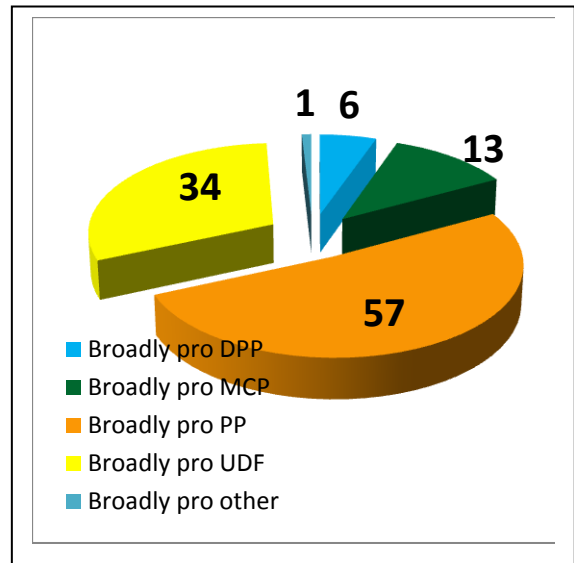

Figure 30: Negative tone coverage by radio
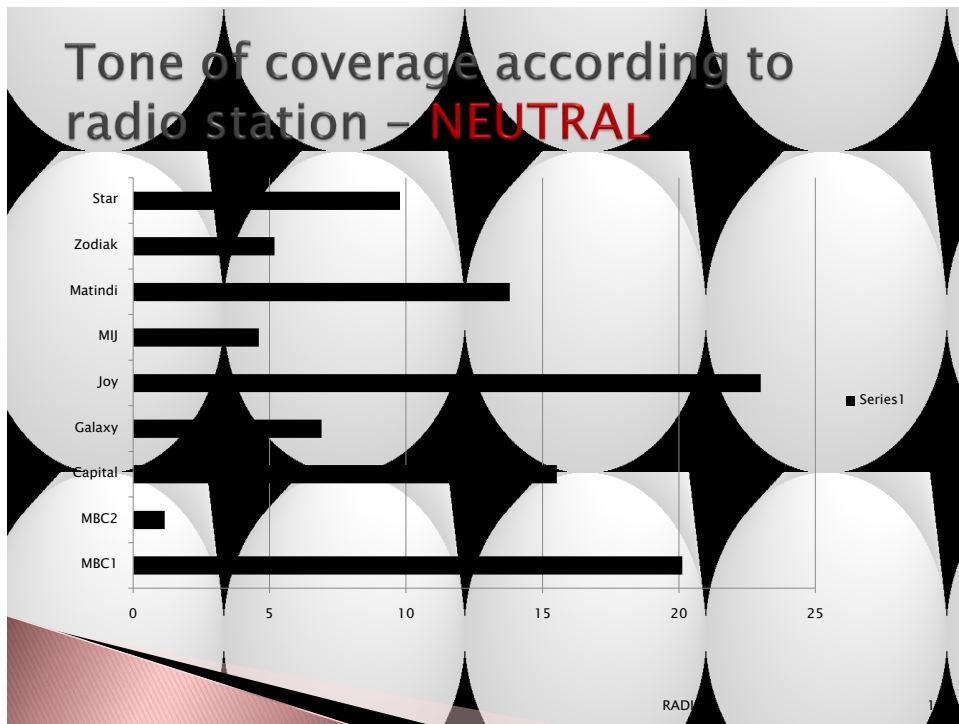

Figure 31: Positive tone coverage by radio

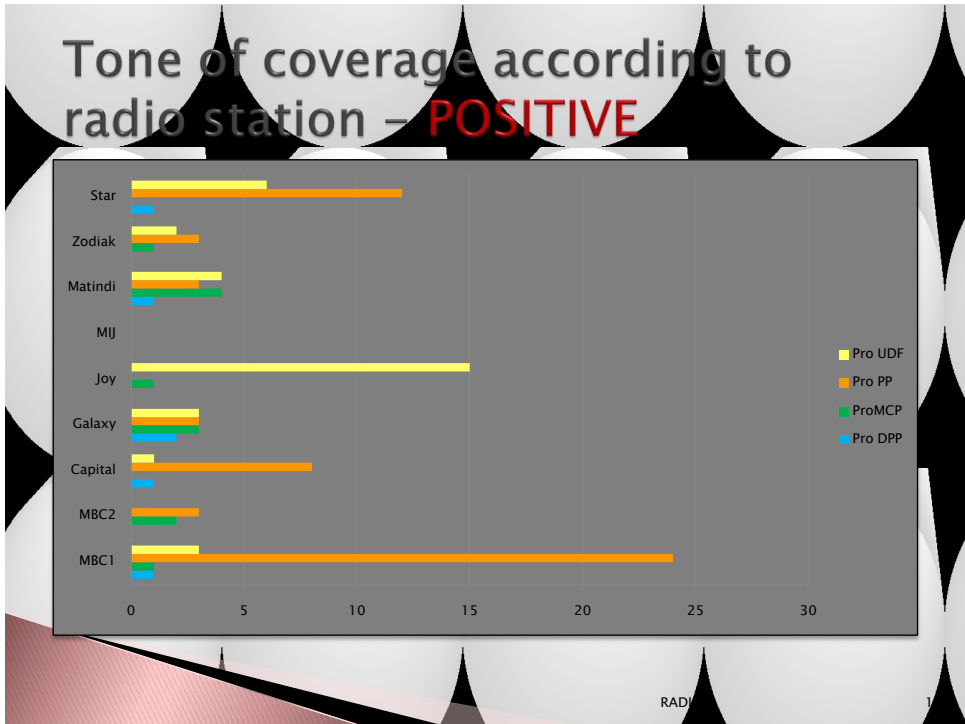*Figure 32: Coverage judged 'neutral' by station*

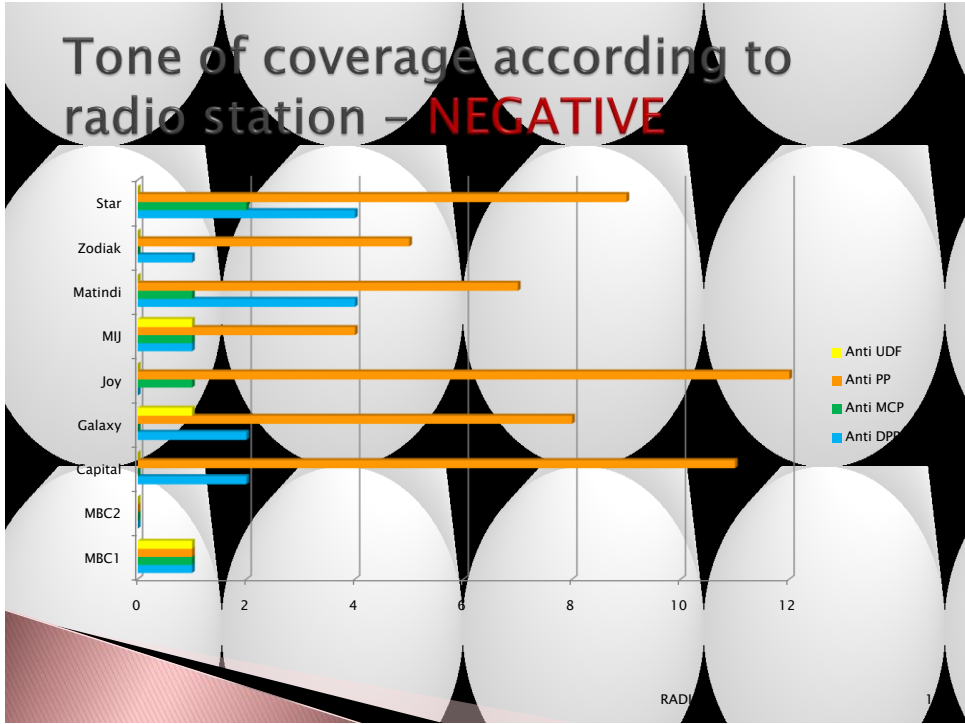*Figure 33: Coverage judged positive by station*

Figure 34: *Coverage judged negative by station*

3.3   NEWSPAPERS

This section of the report presents the performance of the Malawi newspapers in their coverage of political matters in the run-up to the May 2014 elections. The assessment period covers the first two weeks of the campaign and a total of 255 articles were monitored and analysed. Figure 1 below analyses the major issues covered by the journalists in the print media, both from The Times Group and Nation Group Publications Limited. There were over 19 issues that newspapers covered in the first two weeks of the campaign period.
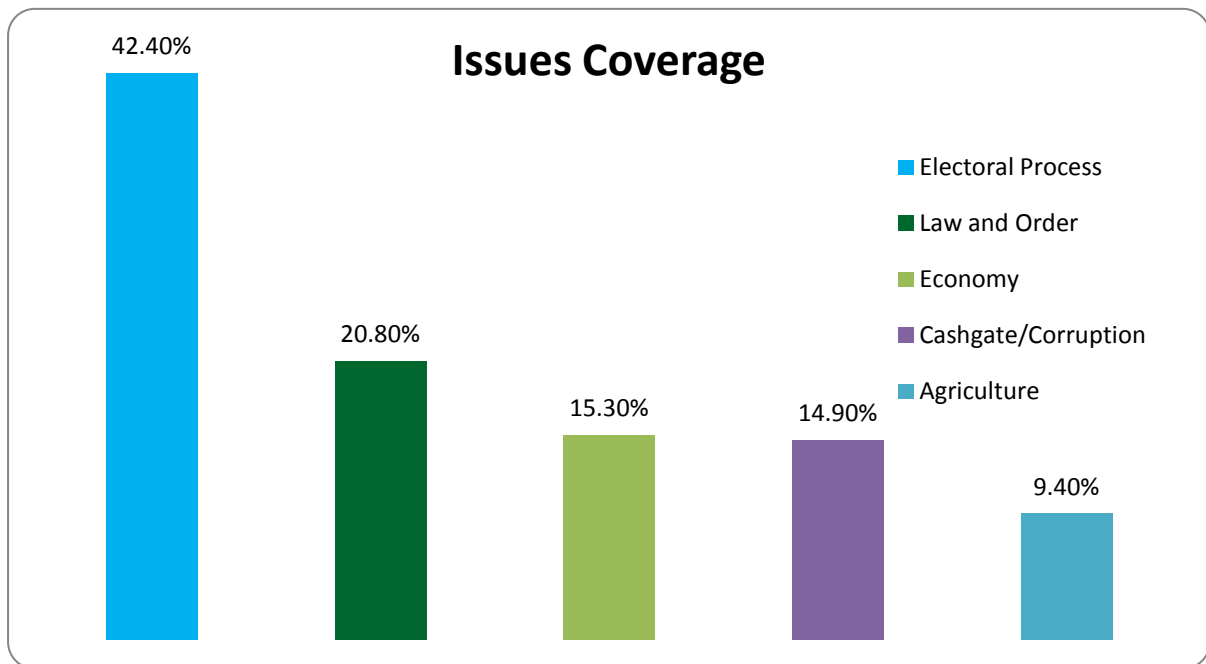

Figure 1: Non- party/politician issues covered in newspapers

The figure above shows that the electoral process (concerns about ballot rigging etc.) enjoyed wide coverage featuring in 42% (N=108) of all stories. . This was followed by Law and Order with 21%, (N=53), Economy at 15% (N=39), Cashgate or Corruption at 15% (N=39) and Agriculture at 9% (N=24).

Coverage of Tripartite Elections

The project also analysed the coverage of the 2014 tripartite elections with a view of finding out which of the three elections were receiving most coverage. Coders are asked to judge which election, if any, is being discussed, even if no aspirant is mentioned. The figure below presents the findings from the Times Group and the Nation Publications Limited.
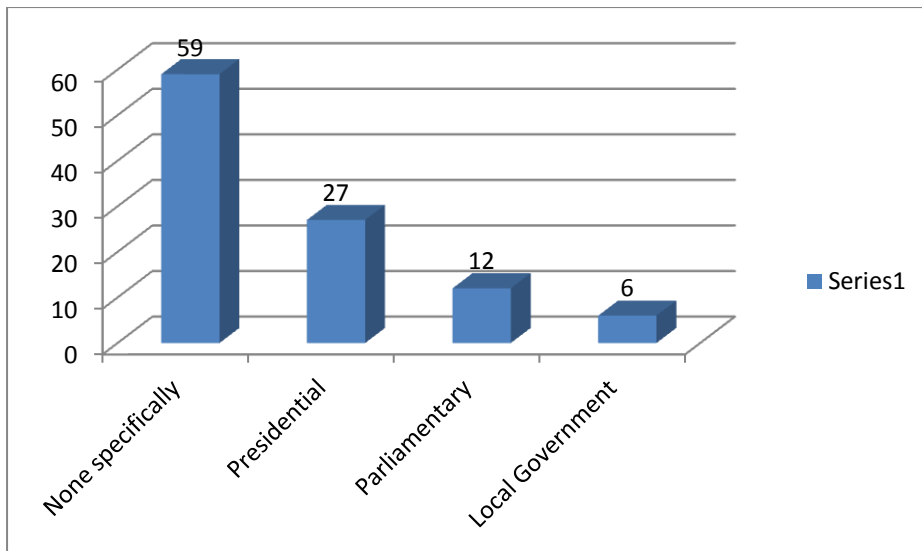
Figure 2: Percentage of newspaper coverage by type of election

The figure above shows that the papers have given significant coverage to the presidential election (27%, N= 64), then Parliamentary (12%, N= 28) but Local government received only 2% (N= 6) of the coverage; in 59% (N= 143) no specific election was referred to.

Tone of coverage of the newspapers

The study sought to analyse the tone of newspaper coverage in those areas where a bias was detected. In general, the vast majority of articles analysed were deemed neutral in tone 56% (N=143). Below is the analysis of the stance by different papers with regard to the parties. Not all parties were covered but the main four received the overwhelming share of the coverage (96%, N=245). The analysis so far has detected no significant differences between the two newspaper groups in terms of the overall tone of their coverage.
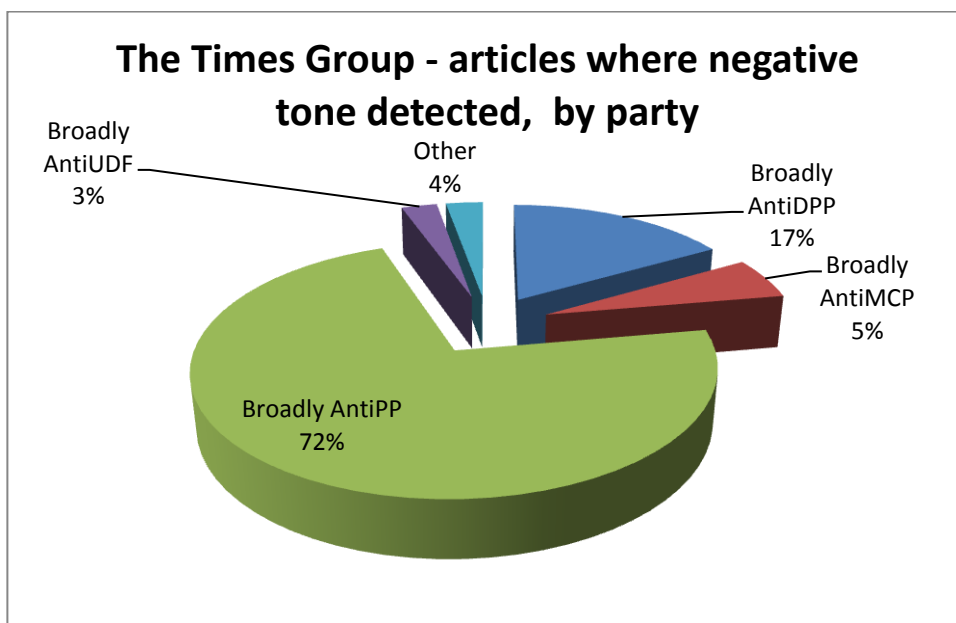

Figure 3: Where negative tone detected in Times Group newspapers, by party.

The Nation Group - articles where negative tone detected, by party

Broadly AntiUDF 0%
Other 0%
Broadly AntiDPP 19%
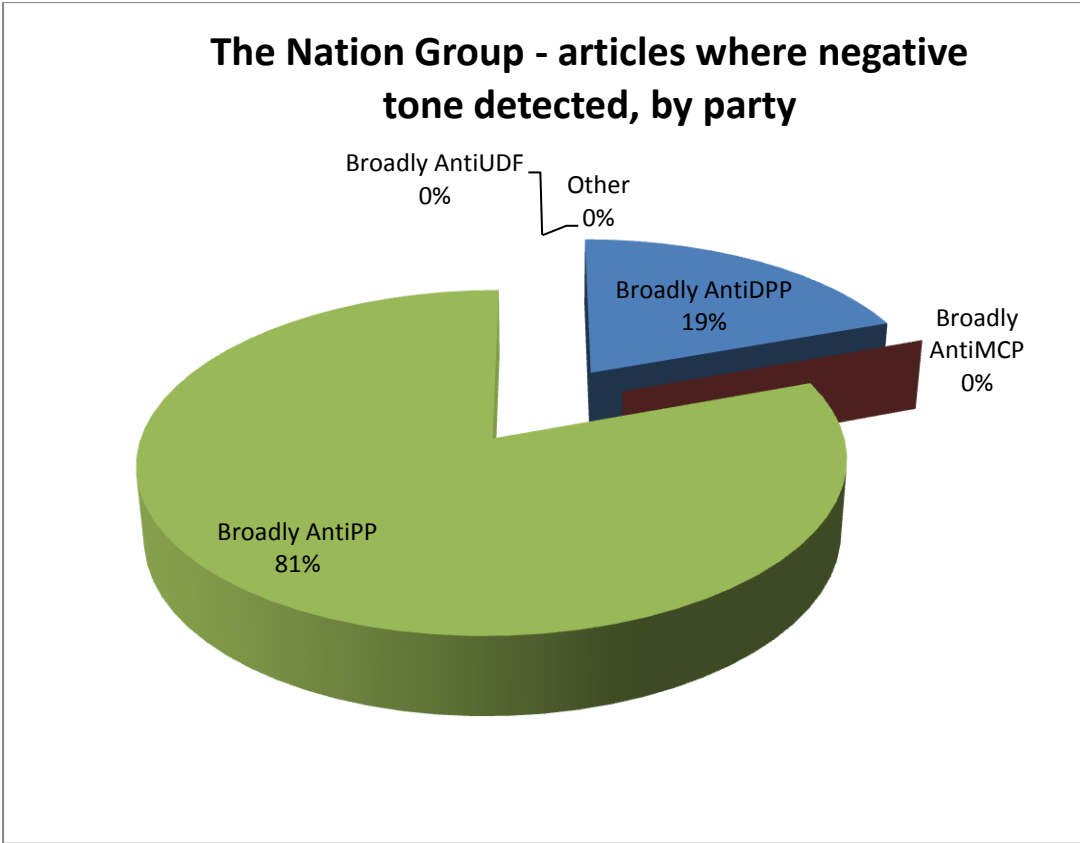Broadly AntiMCP 0%
Broadly AntiPP 81%

Figure 4: Where negative tone detected in Nation Group newspapers, by party.

We also analysed those newspaper articles that were judged to have a positive bias – again no significant differences between the two newspaper groups was detected.
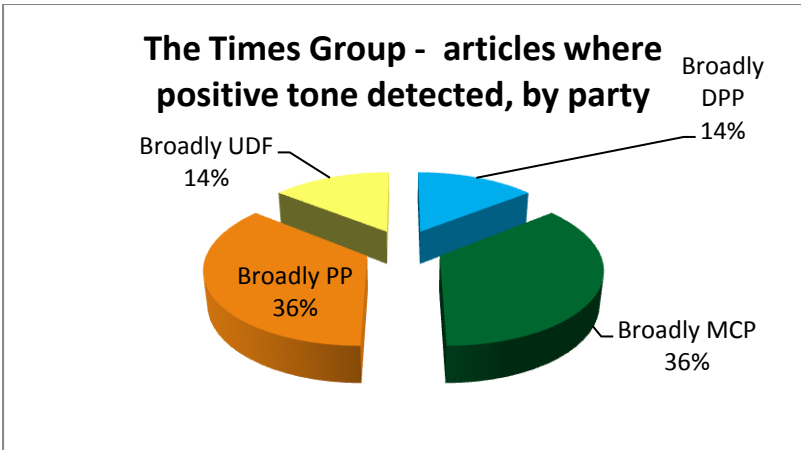

The Times Group - articles where positive tone detected, by party

Broadly DPP 14%
Broadly UDF 14%
Broadly PP 36%
Broadly MCP 36%

Figure 5: Where positive tone detected in Times Group newspapers, by party.
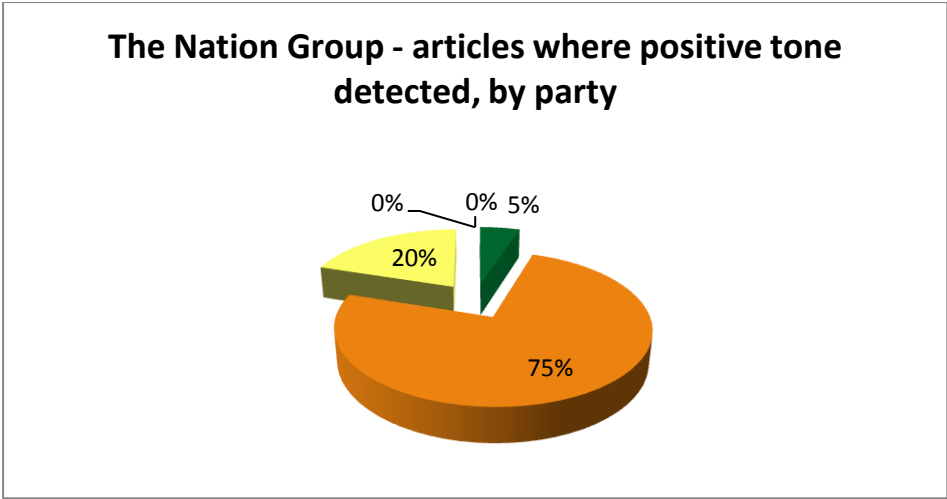
Figure 6: Where positive tone detected in Nation Group newspapers, by party.

3.4   NEWS WEBSITES

We monitored 124 items on news websites. The sites monitored were Malawi 24, accounting for 22.8% (N=28) of the items monitored, Nyasatimes 20.3% (N=25), Malawi Voice 17.9% (N=22), Maravi Post 14.6% (N=18), Mana Online 15.4% (N=19), The Oracle 4.9% (N=6) and Banthu Times 4.1% (N=5). Data on News websites is summarized in Figure 14.
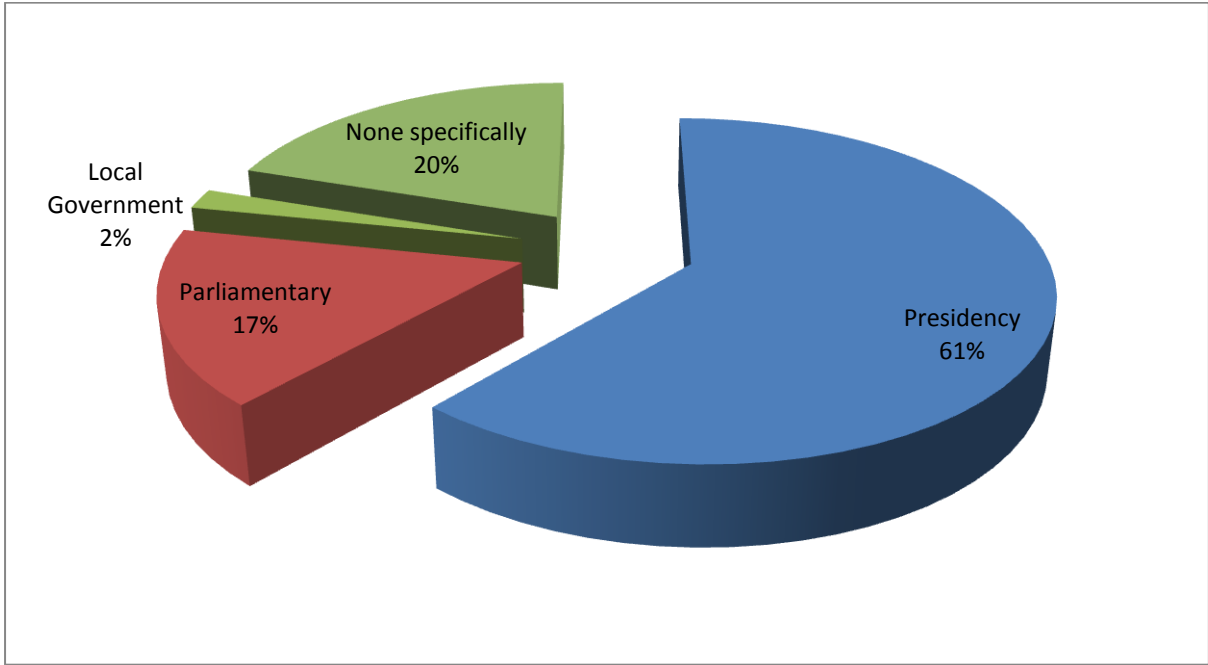

Figure 14: Coverage of tripartite elections on news websites

The news website also gave the most coverage to the presidential elections (61%) and the PP presidential candidate received the most mentions (51%) followed by the DPP presidential candidate (19%), the UDF (14%) and then the MCP (14%). See Figure 15.
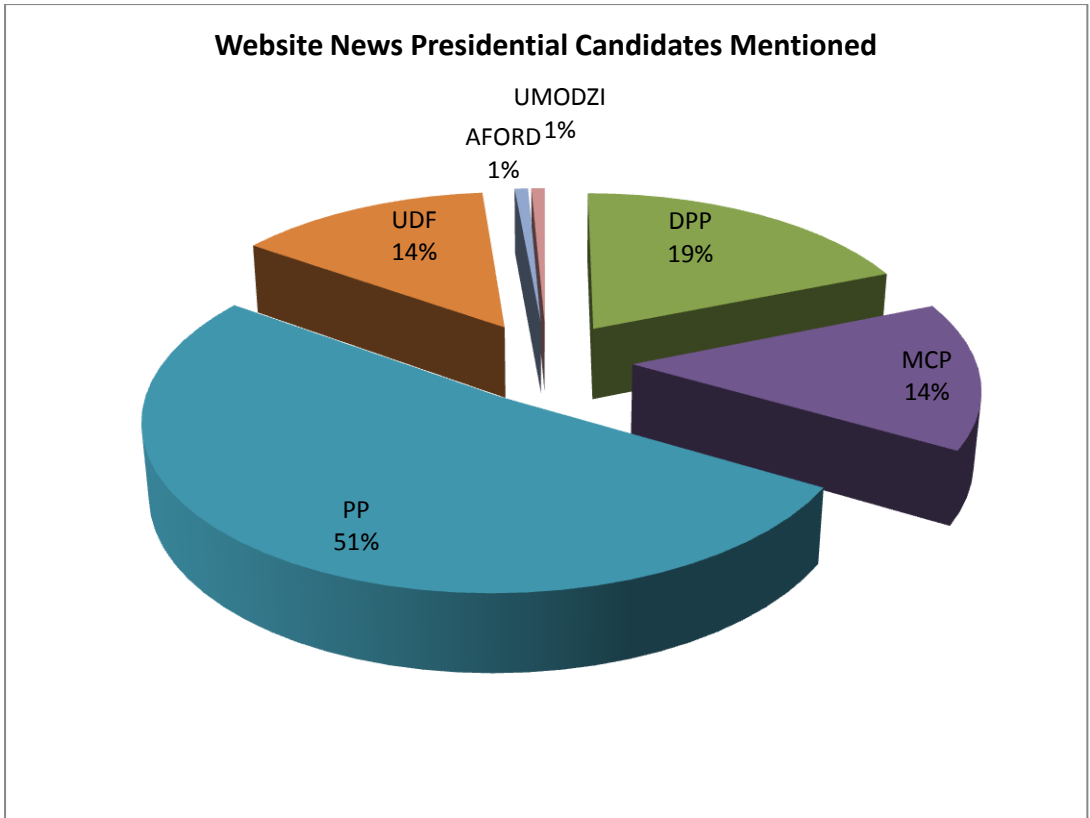
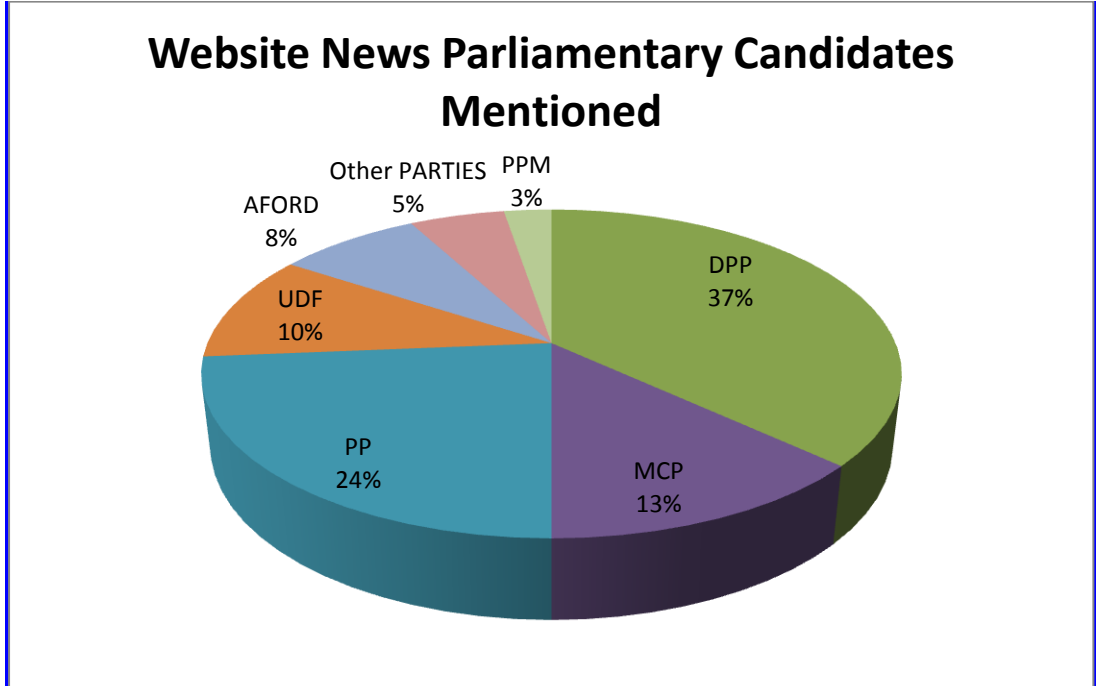*Figure 15: Presidential aspirants mentioned on news websites*

Figure 16: Parliamentary aspirants mentioned on news websites

The project also sought to find out the tone of coverage on website news. Data is summarized in Figures 17-18. Neutrality of tone by news websites.
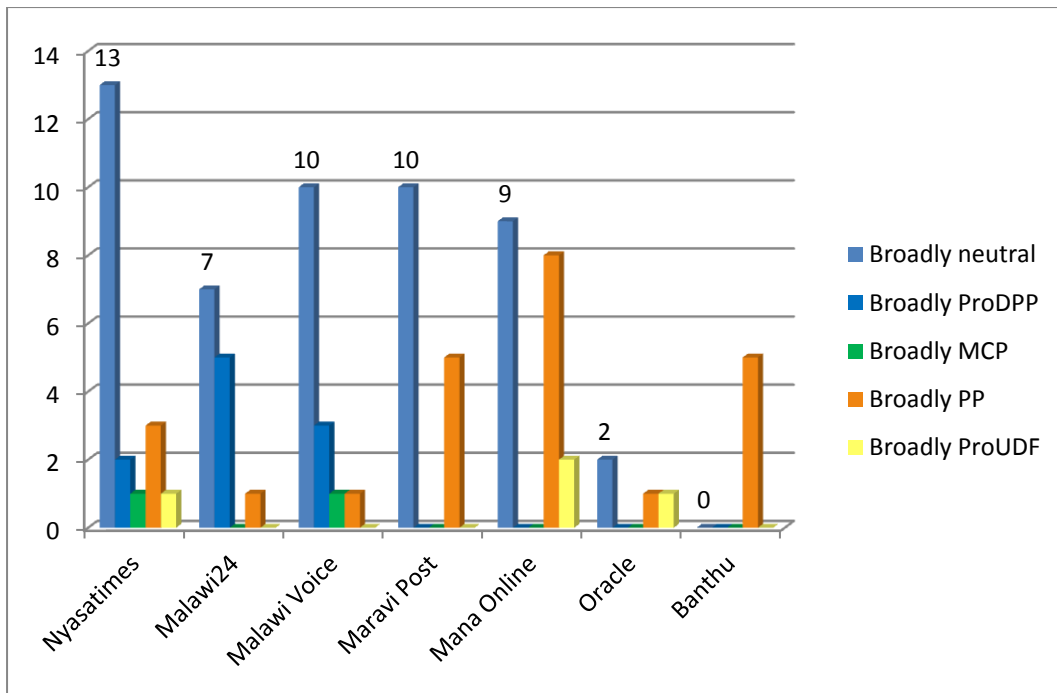
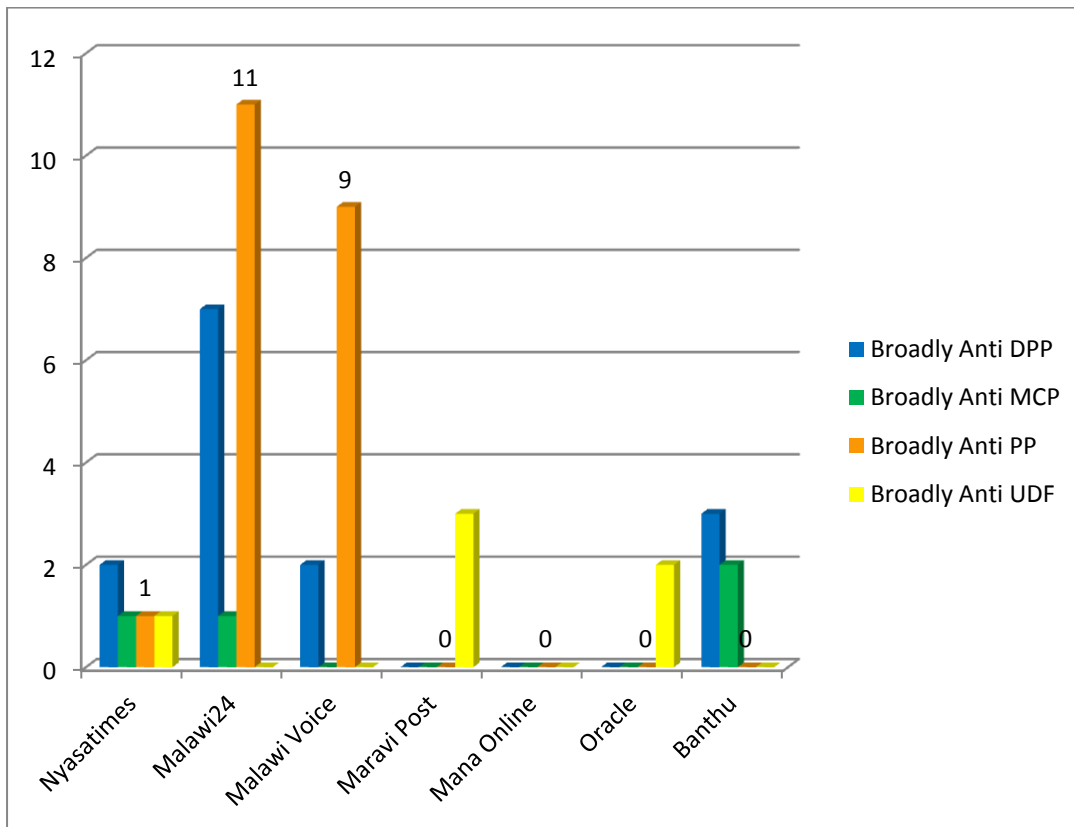*Figure 17: Positive tone of coverage by news website*

Figure 18: Positive tone of coverage by news website

The main issues featured on news websites were Agriculture (N=31) which was featured most by the Nyasatimes (29 %,) Mana Online (25.8%) and Maravi Post (19.4%). The economy was an issue in Nyasatimes (33.3%) and Mana Online (18.5%). Security issues were raised by Malawi Voice

(26.5%), Malawi 24 (17.6%) and Mana Online (14.7%). The electoral process was an issue in the Malawi Voice (26.5%), Mana Online (33.3%, N=8).
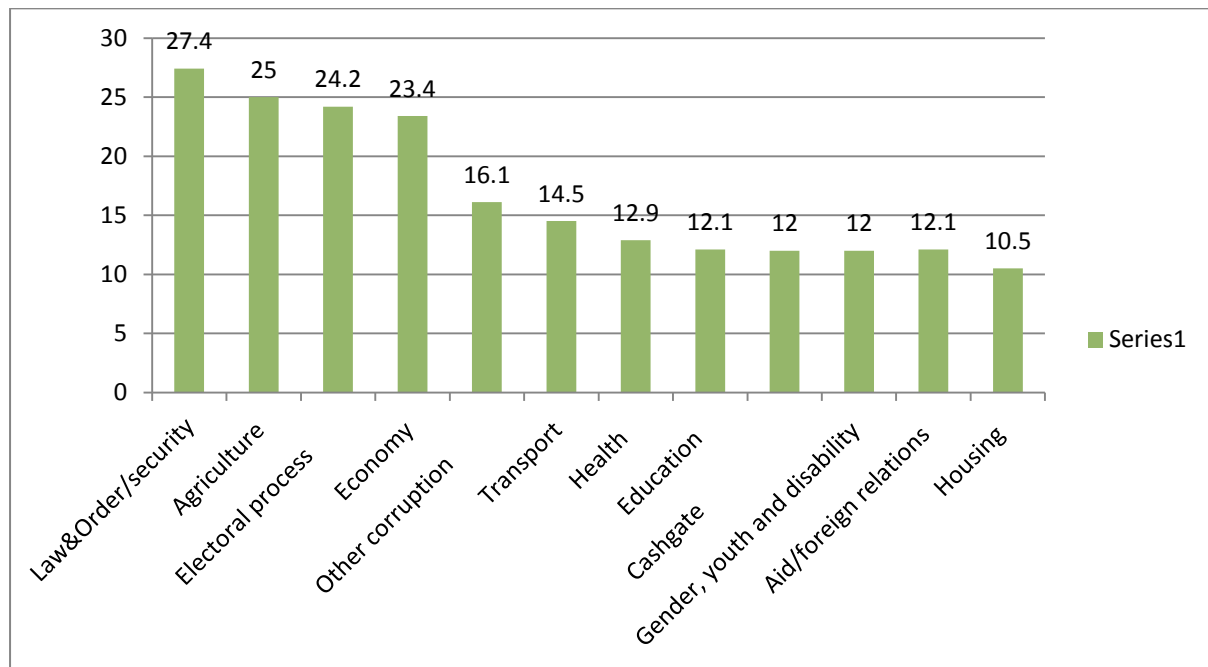

Figure bar values: Law&Order/security 27.4, Agriculture 25, Electoral process 24.2, Economy 23.4, Other corruption 16.1, Transport 14.5, Health 12.9, Education 12.1, Cashgate 12, Gender, youth and disability 12, Aid/foreign relations 12.1, Housing 10.5

Figure 19: Issues discussed on News websites

3.5   FACEBOOK

Monitoring election news coverage on social media is not strictly comparable with monitoring news coverage on the other media here reported upon. Facebook is an entirely user-generated medium and is far more important in terms of discussion than it is for news. However, given both its growing importance in Malawi (particularly among young voters) and the fact that it looms large in the newsgathering activities of journalists working for the more traditional media, we believe it forms an important component in the election campaign and hence should be monitored. (Note that we monitored Twitter in the first week but it did not generate sufficient election traffic to make it worth continuing this particular aspect of the monitoring).

 On Facebook, we monitored 152 entries found in the following Groups - . My Malawi My Views which had the highest number of entries: (83.6%, N=114), followed by Malawi Freedom Network (16.5%, N=25), Malawi@50 (3.1, N=4) and Malawi Breaking News (3.8, N=5). In total, 152 chats were monitored. Of these, the traffic was heaviest on My Malawi My Views where we monitored 78 (88.6%) chats, followed by Malawi Freedom Network N=4 (4.5%), Malawi@50 N=3 (3.4%) and Malawi Breaking News N=3, (3.4%). Data on coverage of tripartite elections on Facebook is summarized in Figure 7. Focus is mainly on presidential elections (83%) then the Parliamentary (6%) and then Local Government (3%).
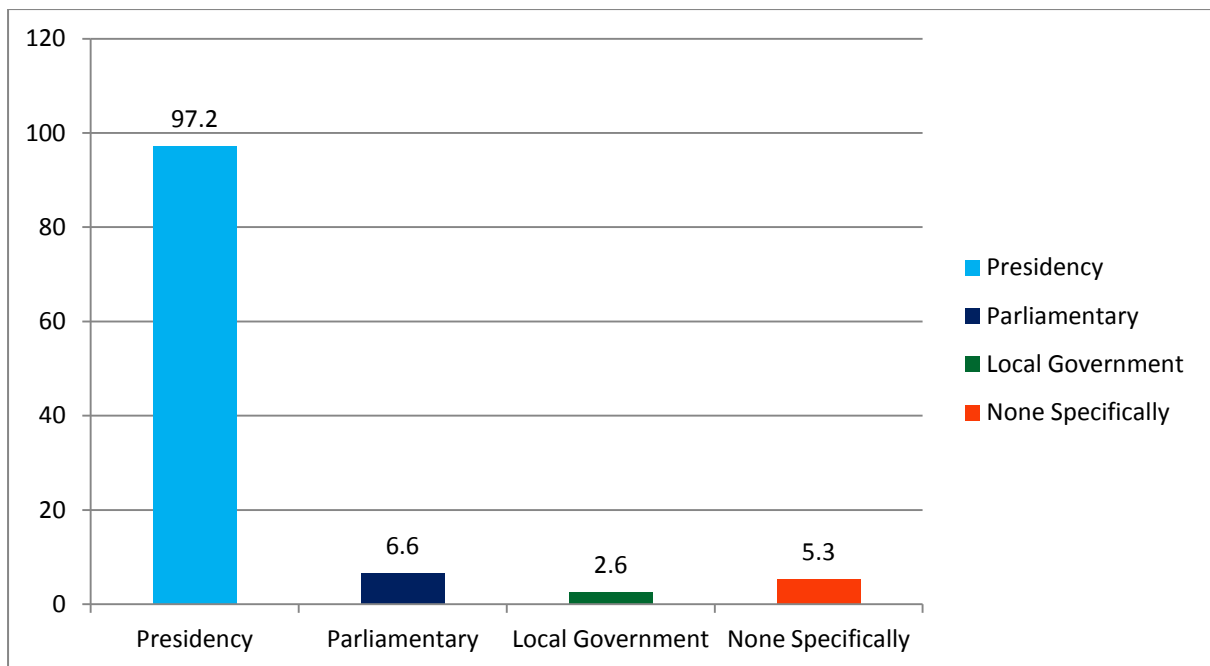
Figure7: Type of election referred to in Facebook discussions.

Figure 8 presents data on party presidents mentioned in Facebook entries. Of all the presidential contenders mentioned, the PP presidential candidate was mentioned more (43%) than the other candidates (DPP (25%), UDF (17%) and MCP (17%)). This is hardly surprising given that PP is the current governing party. My Malawi My Views mentioned the PP presidential candidate 51 (86.4%) times compared to the DPP candidate 27, UDF (22) and MCP (15).
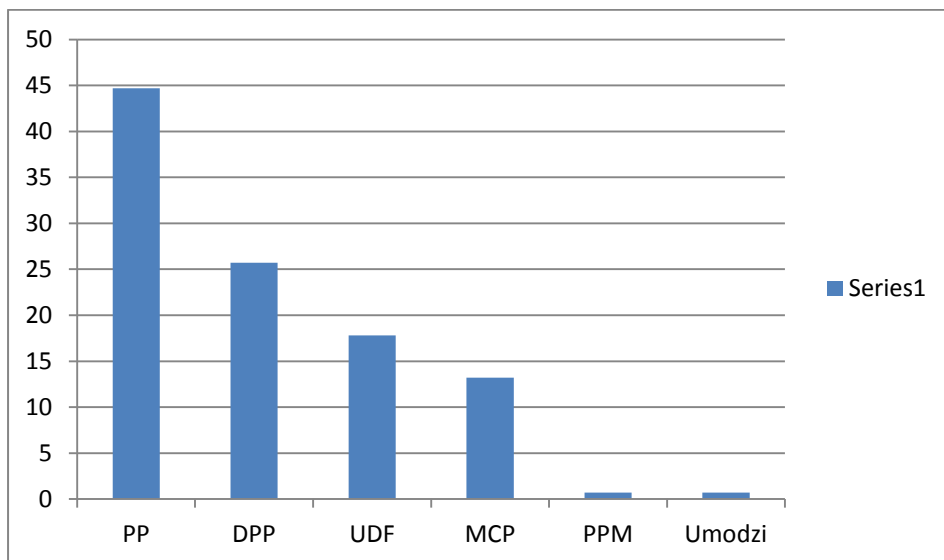

Figure 8: Presidential aspirants mentioned on Facebook

The Facebook chats were broadly neutral (17.8%, N=27) followed by those which were ProPP (17.8%, N=27), ProDPP (11.8%, N=18), ProUDF (N=7) then MCP (N=9). .
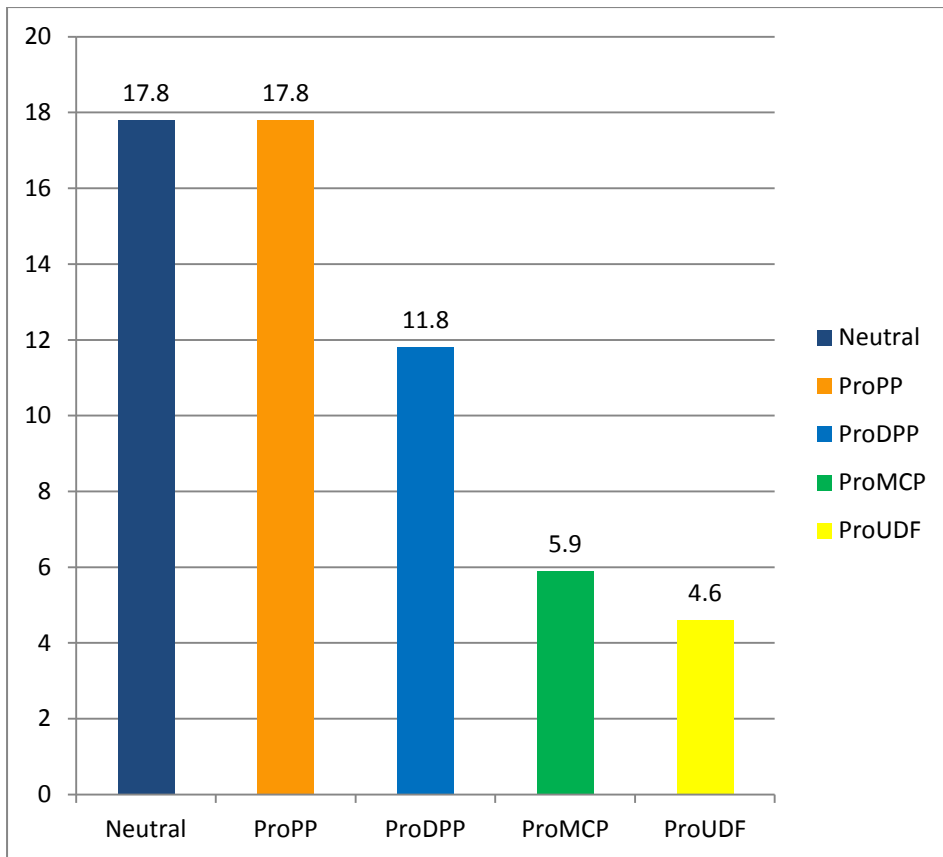
Figure 10: Where tone registered - positive coverage of parties on Facebook

Where the chats were anti most were aimed against PP followed by DPP and Anti-UDF then anti-MCP. This is not surprising given the main issues which dominated all the media that was monitored.
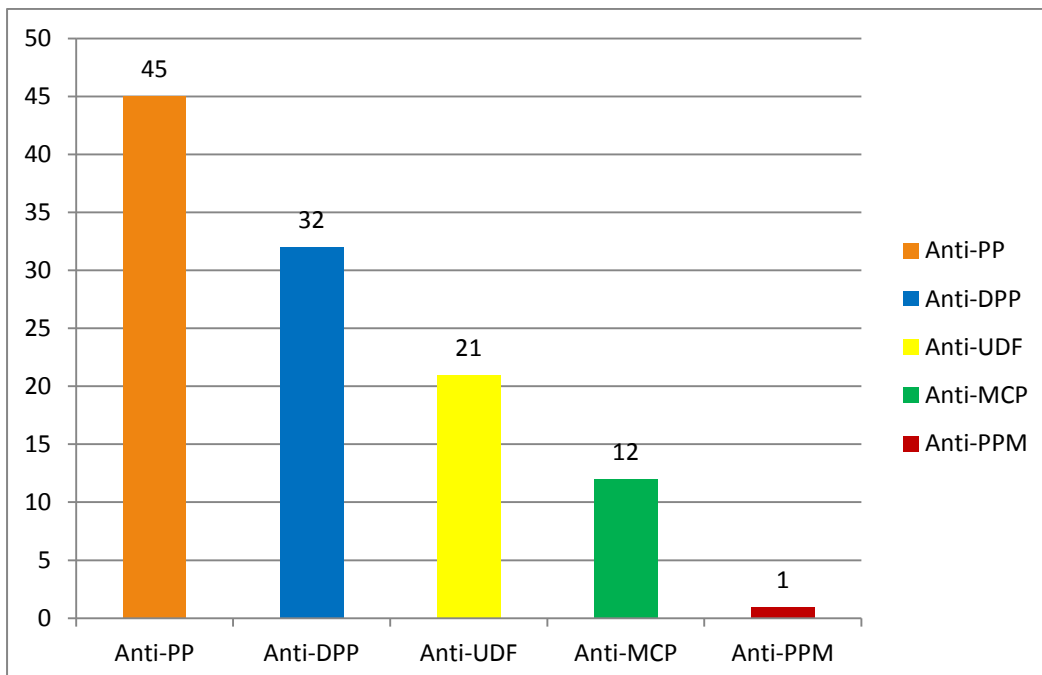

Figure 11: Where tone registered - negative tone coverage of parties on Facebook

The main issues dominating Facebook chats were the economy (22%), electoral process (20%), Cashgate or theft from government coffers (14%), law and order (11%) and agriculture (10%).
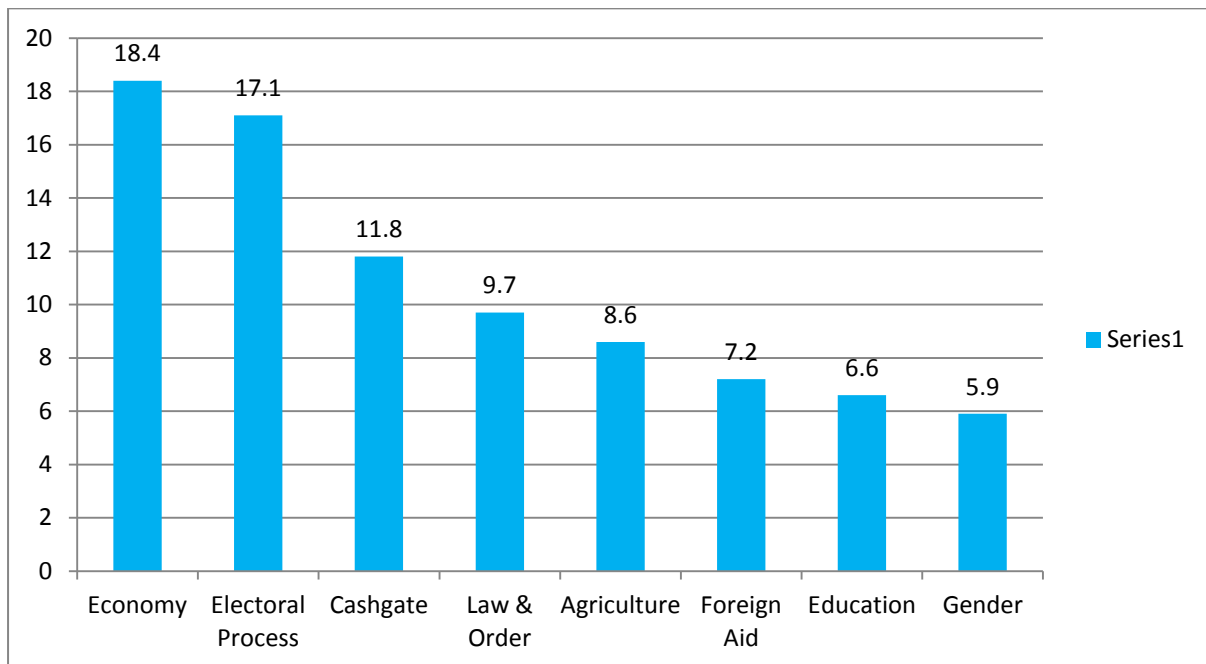

Figure 13: Non-pary/politicians issues trending on Facebook

4.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Overall, but with some notable exceptions, the majority of the news coverage we monitored we found to be broadly neutral in tone, though the coverage on the state radio and television stations showed a bias in favour of the PP both in terms of number of items and tone.

- When referring to a specific election, the media gave by far and away the most coverage to the presidential race, and within that mostly mentioned the PP presidential candidate; this was the case whether the tone was neutral, positive or negative (however, as the party in government, this is only to be expected).

- The local government elections were not covered to any great degree anywhere but coverage was implied in the overall 'horse race' coverage between the parties.

- The issues covered tended to reflect what the parties were focussing on. Although we have noted that both the state radio and television stations gave less coverage to Cashgate and other corruption issues than did other broadcasting stations.

- Since the conclusion of this monitoring period on 2nd April, MBC has given the Malawi Election Commission an undertaking that it would strive to report the election campaign in a more even-handed way. The Second Report will provide evidence as to whether or not this has been the case.