

## **An analysis of Botswana-China relations in the Botswana print media**

*Kgomotso Moahi*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*Africa-China relations have been topical since China opened up to the world in the late 1970s. Various views have been expressed by global media, analysts and academics about the motives, agenda and form of the relationship between China and Africa. The media not only reflect social reality but actively shape perceptions and views of readers on a wide range of topics, and as such, they form a very important site of data in the study of Africa-China relations. Some research has been carried out to determine how Africa-China relations are depicted in the media in African countries, the US, Europe, and China. This study therefore contributes to this body of scholarship on the depiction of Africa-China relations in the media by assessing how Botswana-China relations are portrayed in the Botswana print media. The study was done through content analysis of stories and features appearing in four newspapers. The findings of the study show that the coverage of the Botswana-China relations cannot be neatly categorized as either positive or negative, but as a complex of contrasting views, depending on the topic covered, with some aspects of the relationship positively represented while others are negatively represented by the local press. Thus, one can argue that the exponential rate of Chinese involvement in Botswana over the past few years has been received with both optimism and skepticism by the print media. The study also assessed what Africa-China issues have more coverage than others, and found that the issues that receive most coverage in the media are economic, and are mainly about the conduct of the Chinese in the construction, retail, and manufacturing sectors.*

**Key words:** Botswana-China relations, print media, content analysis, media framing model

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<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Library and information Studies, University of Botswana  
Email: moahikh@mopipi.ub.bw

## Introduction

Africa-China relations have become topical in the global media as well as in academic, political and economic discourse. Since opening up to the world after 1978, China's economic development has been phenomenal and, subsequently, China has intensified relations with African countries. The predominant narrative is that China engages in economic, social and political relations with countries in the African continent to gain access to its vast reserve of natural resources, and to compete with the United States of America and other Western countries over these resources. Its policy of non-interference in sovereign issues has engendered criticism from Western countries where the policy is viewed as way of ensuring a foothold in African countries. Although most of the literature on Africa-China relations and media discourse takes a somewhat negative view of the relationship, Sautman and Yan (2009) found that African views were not as negative as those portrayed in the Western media, nor as positive as the Chinese suggest. Apart from the popularised view of China as either predatory towards the African continent or the best thing to ever happen to the continent, there are less polemic views that recognise that, as in any relationship, there are bound to be successes and challenges.

As far as Botswana-China relations are concerned, varied statements attributed to political leaders, academics and members of the public regarding the relationship point to the complex nature of the relationship, and these serve as motivation for academics to engage in studies that would help us better understand these relations. Anecdotally, the prevalent sentiment is that the Botswana-China relationship is a problematic one, characterised by negativity. However, a conclusion made at a workshop on Botswana-China relations held at the University of Botswana pointed to the need to carry out an empirical study of this relationship to better understand it (Moahi and Youngman, 2013). This study therefore is a first step towards implementing the suggestions made at the workshop and aims to conduct a detailed analysis of how Botswana-China relations are portrayed in the Botswana print media.

## Background

Newspapers tend to frame stories by selecting which facts to include and emphasise, what sources to cite, what kind of headlines to employ, and what issues are important (Tiegreen and Newman, 2008). Therefore journalists can influence readers' views on a particular topic by how they frame the story. A number of content analysis studies have been carried out on Africa-China relations as depicted in the media. For example, Wekesa (2013) used a media framing model to investigate the image of China in East Africa. The study sought to determine whether the image was positive or negative, weak or strong. He found that certain aspects of the relationship were positive and others negative; overall the image was positive, especially in relation to economics. Olorunnisola and Ma (2013) studied the way China's relationship with Africa is framed in a number of media outlets in Nigeria, South Africa, USA and China. Through content analysis they found that the *Business Day* newspaper in South Africa and *This Day* in Nigeria framed China as a partner, but also as a new and controversial power. The *China Daily* in China employed the partner and refutation frames while the *Wall Street Journal* in the USA employed the competitor and watchfulness frames. Wasserman (2012) found that the portrayal of China in the South African media ranged from positive to neutral to negative. He determined that "China's engagement with Africa cannot be simplistically reduced to binary terms – good or bad, exploitative or development partner – but

rather a cautiously optimistic attitude” (sic) (Wasserman, 2012, pp.351). Olorunnisola and Ma (2013) see the attitude of the African media towards China as “uncertain” and wonder therefore whether African countries have strategies or policies to benefit from their engagement with China.

The Botswana-China relations have been categorised into five dimensions: diplomatic and political cooperation; economic relations; education, health and cultural cooperation; peace and security; and community relations (Youngman, 2013). These dimensions are an adaptation of the four areas that the Chinese government has identified for enhanced cooperation with African states (Youngman, 2013). According to Youngman, the dimension that gets the most press attention in Botswana print media is economic relations and their impact on community relations. Thus, the recent focus in the media has been on the Chinese role in the construction industry and the retail sector, bringing into sharp relief the difficulties arising out of these activities. Sautman and Yan (2009) state that opposition politicians in Botswana and the papers that favour them tend to foreground the problematic nature of the Botswana-China relationship. However, in recent times the leadership of the country has also come out strongly against the disappointing work done by Chinese companies on various public sector projects. The conclusion in general is that the Botswana media carry stories that encourage negativity towards China and the Chinese. This can be attributed to the possibility that Botswana feel threatened by strangers and perceive themselves as a nation under siege from foreigners (Marr, 2012). An analysis of the media discourse on Zimbabweans in Botswana led Marr to conclude that Botswana are an anxious, xenophobic nation; they harbour the fear of unfair competition and of invasion by foreigners. Thus, in Botswana, anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that the role of China in Botswana is viewed negatively. It has therefore become imperative to consider empirical evidence to ascertain if indeed this is the case. Hopefully, this study will show how the Botswana-China relationship is portrayed in the Botswana print media through a content analysis of media reports.

### **The print media in Botswana**

The Botswana print media includes a number of newspapers and periodicals. Of interest to this study are the newspapers. There are a total of 15 newspapers, out of which 14 are privately owned, whilst one, the Botswana *Daily News* enjoys 100% government funding. According to Rooney (2012), the privately owned newspapers are aimed at markets differentiated according to demographics. Thus there are “serious” newspapers that target the more educated reader, examples of which include the *Weekend Post* and the *Sunday Standard*. There are also mid-market newspapers that target readers with moderate education levels and these include the *Botswana Guardian*, *Mmegi*, the *Botswana Gazette*, *Echo*, *Global Post*, the *Monitor* and the *Telegraph*. At the end of the spectrum are the “tabloid” newspapers that concentrate mainly on sensational, human-interest stories. Newspapers in this category include the *Voice* and the *Midweek Sun*. Most of the 14 privately owned newspapers are weekly, except *Mmegi*, which comes out on Tuesday through Friday, and on Monday as the *Mmegi Monitor*. The *Daily News* is a government owed daily newspaper that comes out on Monday through Friday.

### **Objectives and methodology of the research**

The aim of this study as indicated was to conduct an analysis of the coverage of China in the Botswana print media to determine how Botswana-China relations are represented. The objectives were to understand what issues or topics are covered in the media; whether the coverage is negative or positive; what issues/topics are negative or positive; and identify the main narrative that emerges from the coverage of Botswana-China relations. The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the issues/topics covered in the local media?
2. Is the coverage positive or negative?
3. Which aspects of the Botswana-China relations are positively portrayed and which aspects are negatively portrayed?

Although most Botswana newspapers are available online, not all of them have maintained comprehensive searchable archives; some of them are new and do not go back far enough in time. Two newspapers, the *Sunday Standard* and *Mmegi*, had searchable online archives that went as far back as 2004; the other two newspapers, the *Daily News* and *Botswana Guardian*, had searchable archives, but they were limited to the period 2012 to 2014. While the *Daily News* does have archives that go back far, they are not indexed in a way that facilitates a search using keywords and one has to go through each issue to check if there was coverage of China. Despite these limitations the four newspapers were selected and searched using the keywords ‘China’ and ‘Chinese’.

The researcher selected stories that dealt with Botswana’s relationship with China, and reports that covered the activities of the Chinese in Botswana. Stories that focused on China exclusively, such as stories about China and pollution, China and its internal politics, and China and its economy, were not used.

Searching the *Sunday Standard* resulted in a total of seventy-eight (78) stories, of which 18 were discarded, and sixty (60) were used. Of the 205 stories retrieved from *Mmegi*, 109 were discarded and ninety-six (96) used. Of the eighty-seven (87) stories retrieved from the *Botswana Guardian*, sixty (60) were discarded and twenty-seven (27) were used. In the *Daily News* 308 articles were retrieved and 231 discarded, 77 stories were used. Stories were discarded mostly because they were duplications, and also because some mentioned the word China yet they were not about China. A total of 260 stories was used in the study.

The study used content analysis to identify the topics and the framing employed. The frames were determined through a process of reading the stories and articles to determine the themes that emerged. These themes were listed, and later grouped into broad thematic areas or frames, which were divided into the negative and positive. Frames are “conceptual tools which the media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information” (Domingo and Heinonen, 2008). Journalists employ frames to influence interpretation of texts presented in their writing. These frames may be of two types, episodic and thematic (Tiegreen & Newman (2008). Episodic frames provide a report of event (s) without much contextual information or background; thematic frames focus on the context to provide a framework for the reader to interpret the story or text. For example a story on illegal practices of Chinese traders would also contain some background information and quotes of authority figures to suggest that there is a pattern of similar activities in the past, thus portraying Chinese traders in a bad light. In addition, the study used quantitative analysis to characterise the types of topics covered in the stories.

## **Results and discussion**

### **What topics are covered in the Botswana print media?**

The author read through the stories and identified a number of topics. The topics covered in the newspapers were identified as shown in Table 1 below. However, the categories overlap and therefore stories that have been designated as diplomatic/political may contain references to trade, finance, economic, business activities, construction and infrastructure, and so on. Also the figures

are disaggregated by newspaper, not to make any comparison since the periods covered differ, but rather for an appreciation of the topics covered.

**Table 1: Topics covered by newspapers, 2004-2014**

Newspaper	Topics	Numbers
<i>Sunday Standard</i>		
	Diplomatic/Political	10
	Arts and culture	11
	Crime and impropriety	20
	Construction and infrastructure development	6
	Education/Scholarships	1
	Community relations	5
	Business activities	2
	Immigration/business permits	1
	Trade/business/finance relations	10
<i>Mmegi</i>		
	Diplomatic/political	20
	Arts and culture	6
	Crime and impropriety	6
	Construction and infrastructure development	15
	Education/Scholarships	4
	Community relations	11
	Business activities	7
	Immigration/business permits	3
	Trade/business/finance relations	14
<i>Guardian</i>		
	Diplomatic/Political	5
	Arts and culture	1
	Crime and impropriety	6
	Construction and infrastructure development	11
	Trade/business/finance relations	2
<i>Daily News</i>		
	Diplomatic and Political	38
	Arts and culture	3
	Crime and impropriety	2
	Construction and infrastructure development	9
	Education/Scholarships	2
	Technical cooperation/assistance	8

Overall, nine topics were covered seen in Table 1 above, and explained below. Stories on **Diplomatic and political relations** included reports of high level visits, and events where the Botswana leadership and/or the Chinese diplomatic officials present made speeches. These speeches emphasized the nature of the friendship and partnership between the two countries, and traced the development of cooperation between the two countries, and what could be expected in the future. Some of the stories reported on the expression of disappointment at the business practices of the Chinese by both ruling and opposition Members of Parliament (MPs). Also covered were parliamentary debates, which debates asked questions and raised concerns about the activities of China’s foreign policy and Chinese business activities. There were 78 stories that covered diplomatic and political issues.

**Construction and infrastructure development** appeared in 41 stories that covered controversies surrounding the perceived “dominance” of the construction sector by the Chinese and, importantly, their performance on major government projects. There were statements reportedly made by politicians on this matter and on conflict between contractors and government

agencies and departments that had commissioned the work. The stories also carried reports about the role of the designers, consultants, contractors and those who are tasked with supervising projects.

Stories on **Crime** included reports about the Chinese as both victims and perpetrators of crime. The majority of stories focused on the criminal activities of the Chinese. There were also reports of unethical behaviour such as corruption, collusion and bribery attributed to Chinese business people, as well as to local leaders. The poaching and smuggling of animal products such as elephant tusks and rhino horns also featured prominently. Altogether, there were 38 stories on crime in the four newspapers.

There were 28 stories on **community relations** between the Chinese in Botswana and their hosts which focused on their lack of integration into the host community, how they treat their workers, and their involvement in charitable activities.

Twenty six (26) stories reported on **trade, finance and business relations** and specifically focused on how the Botswana-China relationship has led to more trade, business relations and financial assistance, and could potentially lead to more.

Twenty-one (21) stories covered **cultural exchanges**, and included visits by journalists, artists and officials to both countries, performances by visiting troupes to China and Botswana, as well as important Chinese activities.

There were eleven (11) stories which covered **Business activities** and reported on the impact of Chinese businesses on Botswana, especially how their participation in some sectors reserved for citizens had brought unfair competition and put locals out of business. Some stories reported on how the police and labour officials raided Chinese businesses, targeting those who trade without licenses and those who deal in counterfeit products.

Stories on **education and scholarships** covered the granting of scholarships for Botswana to study in China. There were 7 such stories.

**Immigration issues** were also covered and included statements made by political leaders on the proliferation of Chinese in Botswana without work and trade permits. 4 stories were identified.

### Is the Botswana China relation portrayed positively or negatively?

To determine whether the coverage was negative or positive, the researcher read and analysed the stories to identify how they were framed and the issues covered. Seven frames were identified as shown in Table 2 below. A comparison of the newspapers would not serve any purpose since the periods under scrutiny were not the same due to problems of ease of access to their archives, as explained earlier.

**Table 2: Frames used in newspaper stories 2004-2014**

Frames	Frequency
Partner/friendship	80
Alternative/ new power/Exemplary	5
Opportunity	46
Benefactor	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>

Controversial	53
Competitor	8
Crime catalyst	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>

The table above shows that there were 154 stories that portrayed China positively under the frames of Partner/Friendship, Alternative New Power, Opportunity, and Benefactor. Ninety-seven (97) stories were included under the negative frames of Controversy, Competitor and Crime catalyst. These frames are discussed in the sections that follow.

***China as a development Partner/Friend***

In general, and especially in the early stories (from 2004) found in the *Mmegi* newspaper in particular, there was a positive framing of Botswana-China relations. Most of these stories quoted both Chinese officials and Botswana leaders affirming the relationship and its impact on Botswana’s development. In these stories, the journalists provided background information that showed the extent to which China played the role of partner. For example, a story of the visit by the Chinese Envoy to Jwaneng Mine reported that China is the second largest buyer of Botswana diamonds in the world (*Sunday Standard* Reporter, 2014). This story highlighted the fact that Botswana’s economy depends on diamonds, and given the world economic meltdown of 2008 that resulted in a reduction in the world’s demand for diamonds, China’s increased demand for diamonds would contribute to Botswana’s development. China was seen as playing a critical role in Botswana’s diamond sector as a market for both polished and rough diamonds. Stories appeared with headlines such as “Botswana cut diamonds elicit excitement in Chinese market” (Mokgoabone, 2009) and “China asks Botswana to increase diamond exports” (Dzimiri, 2010). Local diamond polishing companies were reportedly forging partnerships with Chinese retailers selling to the Chinese market, and this was described as evidence that China’s demand for diamonds had a positive impact on the economy and employment creation in Botswana.

There were reports of visits by Botswana leaders and legislators to China who were quoted making positive statements about the relationship between the two countries, and stories that focused on the friendship between the two countries. China was described as a development partner and friend by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2004 (*Mmegi* Reporter, 2004). This trend would continue even in later years. For example, an interview with a Chinese Embassy official who was coming to end of his term of office in Botswana in the *Sunday Standard* of 2010 reported the envoy’s experience of living and working in Botswana as a positive one. Another example can be found in an interview given by the Chinese Ambassador on China’s friendship with Botswana (*Sunday Standard* Reporter, 2013), where he described the friendship as a long standing one that had seen the levels of trade between the two countries grow. This particular story showed that even in the midst of problems besetting the relationship, the Chinese valued the friendship and partnership with Botswana.

***China as an alternative to the West and as Exemplary***

In such stories, the focus was on the difference between Chinese aid and assistance and that offered by Western economies and institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Chinese emphasized mutual understanding and non-interference in sovereign issues, whereas the West and its financial institutions were seen to attach conditions on aid. An example of stories that portray China as an alternative to the west include an interview with former President Festus Mogae in which he reportedly stated that doing business with the Chinese was better since the Chinese treated Botswana as an equal partner (Xinhua News Agency, 2006). Another story reported on the signing of a RMB 50 million aid grant, with a quote by the Minister of Finance that Botswana appreciates China's assistance in spite of Botswana's attainment of middle income status (BOPA, 2014). Indicated in the story is the fact that China was providing assistance to Botswana notwithstanding the country's classification as a middle income country that does not qualify for aid grant. Thus China was represented as an attractive partner because it was willing to cooperate on economic and cultural matters, to provide grants, soft loans and to encourage its state owned enterprises and privately owned companies to do business in Botswana, without conditions. Such was the extent of the relationship that the Minister of Finance was quoted telling parliament that Chinese projects had created over 2000 jobs (Mmegi Reporter, 2006). China was also portrayed as a successful country worthy of being emulated. For instance, the then Vice President stated that: "China is a model of success that Botswana would like to emulate because of its unwavering support for Africa's development agenda". In another article, Van Rensburg (2004) suggested that Botswana could follow China's way out of poverty, by adapting the Chinese models presented at a conference in Shanghai, although he conceded that it would not be "easy or attractive" given Western-led concerns about Chinese leaders' control and infringement on human rights.

### *China as opportunity for new business, finance, trade and investment*

Newspaper items appearing during the years 2004 to 2008 were characterised by reports of the opportunities presented by China's growing interest in Botswana. The Chinese were reported to be eager to do business in the country. The potential for trade with Botswana was such that finance would be availed not only by the Chinese government, but also by commercial banks and financing houses, notably, the Standard Bank of China and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. Chinese banks were reported to have positioned themselves to facilitate trade between China and Botswana, and they later on financed large scale projects such as the *Morupule B* power station. Botswana investors were urged by a "renowned expert on Africa-China relations", to prepare for Chinese sovereign wealth funds that are chasing investment opportunities across the African continent (*Sunday Standard* Reporter, 2008). Earlier, Konopo (2006) had conducted an interview with James Jiang, Head of Trade, Sales and Supply Chain, Standard Bank who talked about opportunities of trade from China during a Botswana-China business forum in Gaborone. The visit by a Chinese Minister of Agriculture to Botswana was seen as an opportunity for China to assist Botswana's agriculture sector to improve food security (BOPA, 2012). Chinese newspaper journalists also expressed the possibilities of potential trade in base metals and mineral resources during an interview with the *Sunday Standard* (Gabolale, 2006). Also, China's economic growth was portrayed as representing an opportunity that Botswana could exploit (Maswabi, 2013).

### *China as benefactor*

China was represented as benefactor in a number of stories that covered events such as signing of various agreements between Chinese and Botswana officials; potential assistance in agriculture (one of the areas that Botswana has identified as a means of diversifying the economy away from minerals); sponsoring the building of primary schools; donating computers to schools; donating medical equipment; availing medical expertise to assist in Botswana hospitals; empowering poor Botswana who could not hitherto afford the cheap clothing, cars and electronic products that they sold; they were also applauded for setting up their businesses in remote areas; job creation in the retail and construction businesses; interview with James Jiang, Head of Trade, Sales and Supply Chain, Standard Bank who talked about opportunities of trade from China during a Botswana-China business forum in Gaborone and their response to the Presidential initiative of poverty alleviation. Selabe (2009) reported on the signing of the 2010-2013 memorandum of understanding for cultural cooperation agreement, which was reported to be “part of a trailblazing Sino-Botswana relationship that dates back to 1975...” (Selabe, 2009). In other reports, Chinese leadership and businesses provided information on what Botswana may expect from China in the future, an example of which was the offer of assistance in agriculture and more aid for Botswana (Dzimiri, 2011). In a number of reports of speeches made at official gatherings, the Chinese diplomatic staff was quoted on how China would assist Botswana. For example, during a speech made at his welcome party, the Chinese Ambassador announced a plan by the Chinese to build two more schools in Botswana (Ramasu, 2013). A number of Botswana Health Ministers lauded the contribution made by Chinese medical teams to Botswana. In 2011, a Health Minister acknowledged that since 1985 when the medical teams first came to Botswana, they have provided much needed medical expertise and equipment (Disang, 2011). The Chinese community in Botswana also made significant contributions to the President of Botswana’s poverty eradication drive. A charitable association of the Chinese community in Botswana has donated blankets to the needy, built schools and other facilities for Botswana. Other forms of assistance include reports of Chinese scholarships tenable in China and various donations from the Chinese Embassy. The *Daily News* published 20 stories that cover donations by the Chinese community as well as the Chinese Embassy in a 3-year period from 2012 to 2014. The Chinese community was commended for assisting government to alleviate poverty and suffering (Masolotate, 2014). The papers have also reported extensively on the Confucius Institute at the University of Botswana. For example, the opening of the institute has reportedly generated a lot of interest in the learning of Mandarin. *Mmegi* reported that “Botswana show impressive interest in Chinese”, a statement attributed to the Director of the Institute in an interview with *Mmegi* (*Mmegi* Reporter, 2013). “For when China rules the World” was a story about the teaching of Mandarin at a local private school and the belief expressed by the school’s principal that Mandarin is one of the languages of the future (Moeti, 2013).

### ***The Chinese as controversial***

The controversies involving the Chinese included their involvement in big construction projects and retail businesses. The main focus was on conflicts between Chinese contractors and government agencies regarding projects that were not completed on time, whose materials and workmanship were questionable, with cost overruns resulting from project delays. These projects included the construction of a power plant in Palapye, known as Morupule B; construction of the main international airport, Sir Seretse Khama airport; construction of stadia in the towns of Lobatse, Gaborone, and Francistown. Earlier, there had been concern about construction of secondary schools in the southern and north-eastern parts of Botswana. There were reports of

contractors bribing officials and colluding with them to secure tenders and defraud government (Kelebogwe, 2012). Parliament was reported to have raised concerns about the Chinese contractors who seemed to be getting preferential treatment in the award of tenders even when they did not deliver as expected (Motsamai, 2014). There were also reports of tension and mistrust between the Chinese contractor who was awarded the tender to build the Morupule B Power Station and Botswana Power Corporation. Later, when the power plant was completed and seemed to have problems, government awarded the tender for operation and management of the plant to a German company (Mmegi Reporter, 2014), something that also raised conflicts and tensions. Criticism of the Chinese contractors was made by legislators on both sides of the political divide, such as reports of a Government Minister who had “joined the chorus of Democrats in slamming Chinese contractors workmanship” (Kologwe, 2013), showing that there was loss of favour for Chinese contractors who used to be awarded most of the tenders to do major projects by the government. The papers reported that Chinese contractors were criticised by policy makers from both the ruling Botswana Democratic Party and opposition parties for building sub-standard projects that had to be redone after completion. There were reports of ruling party legislators calling for Chinese contractors to be blacklisted – “Some legislators aligned to the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) had reportedly called for the blacklisting of construction companies belonging to Chinese nationals, and the legislators were unanimous that most Chinese construction companies had a reputation for delivering sub-standard projects” (Modise, 2013). Kgologwe reported in the *Sunday Standard* (2013) that the ruling party legislators had joined “the chorus of Democrats in slamming Chinese contractors’ workmanship [...] once considered the darling of Botswana, the Chinese are quickly losing favour with the ruling party with its leader leading the pack [...]”.

Other controversial issues included the Chinese nationals’ reluctance to integrate into their host communities and their inability to communicate either in English or Setswana with the locals. Also reported was the unwillingness of Chinese business people to allow local businesses to operate from Chinese-owned malls and plazas resulting in the Minister of Trade and Industry refusing to grant trading licenses for the Pula 70 million Francistown Oriental Plaza unless Botswana are allowed to trade in the facility (Mmegi Reporter, 2012, see also Mathangwane, this volume). They also focused on the treatment meted out to workers by Chinese business owners, indicating that the Chinese tend to flout the country’s labour laws and take advantage of loop-holes and the desperation of locals for work – headlines such as “Shop assistants in Chinese stores maltreated?” appeared (Mmegi Reporter 2009). The story “MPs spot Chinese beating up Botswana employees” reported fights between Chinese business owners and their workers in Francistown, the second largest city in Botswana (Mmegi Reporter, 2010).

### ***The Chinese as catalyst for crime and impropriety***

There were stories that seemed to suggest that some Chinese people were perpetrators of crime. Reports included accusations of attempted bribery of government officers, selling of counterfeit products, with the main focus being poaching of wildlife animals for their horn products. A number of stories suggested that the presence of Chinese investment in Botswana had led to an upsurge in elephant poaching. For example, statements made by wildlife officials at a conference on poaching and animal products smuggling linked the rise in elephant poaching to the activities of the Chinese (Bosaletswe, 2013). Claims were made that the growing economic relations between Africa and China have fuelled the poaching and killing of wildlife animals for illegal sales of ivory and rhino horns. The World Wildlife Fund is of the view that China’s growing trade in African countries

such as Botswana poses a threat to wildlife as business people also engage in illegal sales of animal products and bribe wildlife officials to turn a blind eye to Chinese sponsored poaching activities.

Chinese business people have been portrayed as peddlers of counterfeit products known as “di fongkong”. For example, a story about how the Chinese traders were forced to take their fake Chinese DVDs, CDs and other counterfeit goods from the shelves (Mmegi Reporter, 2009), and there were many headlines such as “police about to arrest Chinese kingpin trading in counterfeits” (Pitse, 2013) and “Botswana fast becoming world centre of Chinese imported counterfeits” (Bosaletswe, 2012).

### *The Chinese as unfair competitors*

The emerging narrative was that through unfair competition, the Chinese had displaced local entrepreneurs (Mmegi Reporter, 2013), to the extent that they sold counterfeit German print outfits, putting local tailors out of business (Mmegi Reporter, 2013). Some retail businesses have been reserved for citizens, but it is reported that the Chinese businesses have taken advantage of the loop holes in the law to set up clothing, food, and electronic businesses (Mmegi Reporter, 2014). The reports also alleged that government officials had not been vigilant enough to ensure that the Chinese did not obtain permits and licenses for businesses reserved for Batswana. There were stories of the government’s intention to enact trade laws that would ban the Chinese from trading in the clothing sector (Mmegi Reporter, 2009). A story in 2011 reported that the government had decided to act against Chinese nationals who were trading without licenses by cancelling residence permits for 30 Chinese nationals and deporting them. – “this comes in the wake of a joint operation by Immigration, Trade and Industry, Botswana Police, Customs and Excise as well as Botswana Bureau of Standards launched last month targeting Chinese business operations to assess quality of their goods and tax returns among others” (Modise, 2011).

### **Discussion**

Peng (2004), quoted by Wekesa (2013, p.16), stated that “many images of China exist depending on which issues and individuals are involved.” According to Wekesa (2013), analysis has found that China has both a favorable and unfavorable image in East Africa. Hanauer and Morris (2014, p.xii) conclude that “African perceptions of China include a mix of approval, apathy, and contempt”. This is indeed the case in the newspapers that were surveyed.

China in Botswana is portrayed as presenting an opportunity for the country to develop its infrastructure and trade avenues. China has been portrayed as a more accommodative development partner when compared to other jurisdictions in the West. The Chinese have brought consumer goods within the reach of less affluent Batswana. China’s development path has been portrayed as worthy of emulation. The Chinese state has played a role in the education of Batswana through scholarships and cultural exchanges. However, problems in implementation of large infrastructure projects have brought to the fore views that the Chinese undercut other contractors for business in the tendering process and they are able to do this by using their own cheap labour and cheaper materials. Questions have also been raised about the business practices of Chinese nationals in Botswana, especially those in the retail sector. Whilst some people see a positive impact for many Batswana nationals who could not previously afford certain consumer goods, and which they can now afford in Chinese shops, others have lamented the fact that the Chinese have put citizen entrepreneurs out of business, and are selling goods of an inferior quality.

The findings of this study are that the Botswana-China relationship as portrayed in the Botswana print media cannot be categorically placed as either positive or negative. The image

portrayed varies according to the issue and the period in the Botswana-China relations. The relationship can be said to have gone through up and down phases that are typical of any relationships. First, there was a period of optimism in the early years (2004 to 2008). Thereafter as the relationship progressed, and Chinese nationals set up businesses in earnest, cracks began to develop and negative aspects of the relationship began to show. However, even as the fissures developed, there were attempts by the parties to repair them as best as they could, hence the existence of both negative and positive stories. This is what is portrayed in the print media in Botswana.

### Conclusion

The study conducted a content analysis of stories, reports and features found in a select number of Botswana newspapers on the Botswana-China relationship. The results of the study indicated a relationship viewed positively as far as the importance of China to Botswana and the potential of that relationship for Botswana's aspirations. It showed a largely positive view of the relationship in the diplomatic and political dimensions in the early years when the relationship was moving beyond technical and cultural assistance into economic and financial spheres. Although there were also indications that there was some negativity due to socio-economic challenges and problems relating to the Chinese in Botswana, there is evidence that Botswana had benefited from Chinese investment and aid, and that it could still continue to benefit. The results show that the people to people, cultural and technical exchange activities were positive. However, there was some skepticism expressed in certain quarters, and certain aspects of the Chinese people's conduct in business and economic areas were viewed negatively, and these tended to spill over into other dimensions such as the political and diplomatic and community relations. Overall, the print media portray a relationship that has promise and potential, but which requires more work on both China and Botswana to ensure that mutual understanding and mutual benefits are achieved.

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