

Emergence of Ethnopolitical Journalism in Kenya: Lessons from the 2017 Televised Political Analyses Shows

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ABSTRACT:

This paper critiques ethnopolitical journalism in televised political analyses of the 2017 electoral process in Kenya. Ethnopolitical journalism is a reporting model characterised by a focus on ethnicity when analysing and describing political situations; leading to ethnic identity formation in the society that places mass media at economic vantage point. Motivated by mediatized ethnicity, Kenyans find themselves perpetually under normalised ethnopolitics and ethnopolitical journalism is a major strategy in the mainstream media. Fourteen televised political analysis shows; from major television channels were examined. The analysis targeted prioritised and dominant topics of discussion, the composition of the panels; the most discussed presidential candidates and the moderator's leads toward a particular direction during the analyses. The findings show that in all the televised political analysis shows, all members of the panel are drawn from the five ethnic groups. Moreover, all priority topics target the two supposedly major political sides (NASA and Jubilee); whose principals and deputies come from the five ethnic groups. It was also noted that every discussion from different Television channels are narrowed deliberately by the moderator to discuss about Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta, thus, ignoring all other presidential candidates, their political parties and areas considered their strongholds. These findings reveal the media's deliberate choices of house styles and reporting models during the electoral periods in Kenya. The study concludes that media has been the high priest of ethnicity normalization culture that has shaped the political mindset of Africa to the extent of undermining its transformative leadership. The findings add to the research critical of media practice and political economy of mass media reporting during electioneering periods.

Key Terms: Ethnopolitical Journalism, Ethnopolitics, Horserace Journalism, Mediatized ethnicity, Televised

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INTRODUCTION

There is a new form of journalistic practice that this paper unveils called ethnopolitical journalism, which is—a form of journalism where media experts focus on ethnicity when doing selections and choices, analysing and describing political situations leading to ethnic identity formation and ethnic behavioural patterns that work to the economic advantage of the media. This utilisation of ethnicity as a resource for political behaviour manipulation and or for political entrepreneurship that leads to dominant ethnic groups excluding minority groups from national politics is what is referred to in this paper as ethnopolitics. However, the media has no regard for communication outcomes provided their financial goals are achieved, and their existence is sustained through relevant power relations; the so-called political economy of media. In the political economy of communication (Golding, & Murdock, 2000; Mosco, 2008; Hardy, 2014), the media transform their news into services of exchange value. In the argument of Moehler and Singh (2011), public broadcasters are not to operate like private media because of the nature of their funding. The state owns and finances the public service broadcasting.

Conversely, a person owns a private broadcaster and therefore, it is through personal initiatives such as advertisements and promotional selling that they get funding (Arens, Weigold, & Arens, 2012). This makes the private broadcasters to work harder and broadcast while employing many creative strategies to maximise profit through advertising, some of which compromise journalistic professionalism. Moehler and Singh (2011) demonstrate that the normative roles of traditional media are to educate, to inform and to entertain, which are basic human needs. Contrariwise, the private broadcaster has the freedom to expand these roles to survive in the industry (Arens et al., 2012). There are commercial establishments whose big exploit is the preferences of the

public including investigating allegations of corruption, theft, and election fraud (Oberiri, 2016). They also offer more entertainment and leisure programming than the public broadcasters, who major on the informational and educational role. In this paper, it is demonstrated that media, especially private conglomerates have a massive following in Kenya and as a result, they allow potent forces that include public opinion, elite groups and political factions to shape their practice. Analysis of televised political reviews during the 2017 electoral process reveals a high magnitude of Ethnopolitical journalism that heavily considers ethnic house style in all its forms and manifestations.

Advertising and Ethnopolitical Programming

Ethnopolitical programming is programming for audience accumulation with ethnopolitics as the major audience mobiliser. The media are communication bridges and sources that can reach a broad audience and are thus, called mass communication exemplified by radio, television, magazines and newspapers and lately, all new media tools housed by the internet and all internet enabled gadgets (Owen, 2018; McIntosh, & Shawn, 2017). Connecting with a media outlet is the best way to do promotion and develop a brand in politics and cultural change platforms (Sonderman, 2014). According to Bagdikian (2014: 185), 'Advertising is the art of arresting the human intelligence just long enough to get money from it'. Indisputably, since media became 'mass media', it has become the most sought after highway for companies to let their target audience know about their products and services. Arens, Schaefer and Weigold (2017), however argue, that advertising advanced so quickly and the techniques involved enticing and shaping ideas for consumerist ideals and turning luxuries into necessities. The same way, contemporary practices have discovered how media can be of significant impact on political advertising. During the 2017 elections in Kenya, mainstream

news media scrambled for audience accumulation and in every media, there was reliance on ethnopolitical programming.

Audience as a product

The information we get from the media is not free. They commodify and sell audience for advertising to be able to foot their bills. Stiglitz (2017) and Stroud (2011) agree that as the market competition increase, there is motivation in the mainstream media for massive expenditures on promotional business. It is the increase of political market competition that prompted the mass media to extend their strategy during the 2017 elections in Kenya. Just like many companies spend millions to win the hearts of the people and influence their choices towards products, during electioneering period, politicians and political parties and factions graduate their spending on political promotions, which are done through mass media. Researchers have also argued that media attract higher funds because of control of programming and coverage of key events and programs that attract many people and since media depend on advertisers (in our case political advertisers), advertisers can exert undue influence on the media whether knowingly or tactically (Cawley, Avery, & Eisenberg, 2011). Since the media considers the audience as a product for sale, Cissell (2012), Clark and Vinish (2014), and Fotis (2015) concede that the products that the media sells to their advertisers are the audience (voters during electioneering period).

If the argument of Cissell (2012) is to go by, then the media sells space to political advertisers based on the audience they can reach and this means the more the audience you can cover or reach the more the willing political advertisers to place their advertisements in a media and this means more revenue for the media houses. Advertising and promotional peak times are very critical to mainstream news media because they do not make money by selling

newspapers or by subscriptions the citizens make. Chomsky (2013) asserts that:

... Media corporation sell a product... They don't make money when you buy the newspaper. They are happy to put it on the World Wide Web free of charge. They actually lose money when you buy the newspaper (Chomsky, 2013).

Chomsky is outright that in the business world, there must be buying and selling. That means if the advertiser is the buyer, they must be buying some product and that product that the media sells Chomsky expounds on this asserting that the audience is the product. You have to sell a product to a market, and the market is, of course, advertisers (that is, other businesses). Whether it is television or newspapers, or whatever, they are selling audiences. Corporations sell audiences to other corporations; just the same model applies in the political economy of media; media (a corporation of a kind) sells audience to political agencies (other corporations).

Audience as consumers

Bagdikian (2014) looks at the audience as both the consumer and the product. He argues that media is always under pressure to change content by dumping and shaping content to fit the interest and the expectations of a defined audience demographically. As results, he avers that the content of the media is not treated as importantly as the target person. Hague (2016) has argued that this is where the philosophy of giving the audience what they want may not be the end because the media houses target the audience who can afford the advertised products and this turns out as giving the audience their due expectations and being accountable to the advertisers' money. In this line of thought, Bagdikian (2014: 133) concludes that 'programming is carefully noncontroversial, light, and nonpolitical'. This line of thinking falls within the targets of political advertising and explains why media results in

Ethnopolitical journalism during elections as seen in this paper.

Belch and Belch (2014) aver that advertising falls into two categories: the paid and earned advertisements. However, these two can only apply to mainstream media advertising because the rise of the internet has led to the adoption of engine optimisation (Mendez, 2010), Facebook placement advertising and pay-per-click advertising and YouTube advertising. The internet has also provided a platform for the traditional media to be online; for instance the online radio, online television, online newspapers, and online magazines (Bartman, 2016). In earned advertising, there is involvement of the word of mouth, consumer reviews, and free spots with media outlets. This is done through; for example, placements during local programs or a mention in a newspaper article.

A more critical analysis of the value of paid and earned advertising can be traced to the argument of McChesney and Schiller (2003) that promotion in noncompetitive markets provides a way to protect and expand financial institutions without relying on demand and supply laws. Earned advertising is free because it depends on consumers for the spreading of the information regarding the product or service. This is done verbally, via internet sharing and reviews on blogs as well as sourcing information from experts and opinion shapers. However, earned advertising in Ambarish and Kaiser (2014) position, go beyond the advertiser's expectations in the form of what is said because, in the case of negative reviews, the advertiser risks losing their reputation. This is, however, not so in politics because political mistakes are glorified and function to give a political player more publicity which results in political mileage. Political communication is ubiquitous in television platforms. Television was an invention meant to sell to people products at the comfort of their homes, and any other role was an afterthought

(Hague, 2016; Oberiri, 2016). Television remains the best platform to sell political ideas, persuasions and political PR to people, and as they consume the political product, the media is always on the receiving end—and the politician as well.

Political economy of ethnopolitical programming

Ethnopolitical programming therefore brings on-board power relations between the political advertiser, the news media corporations and the audience. The news media during this time are in need of the high supply of advertising revenue in the political market. The political agencies are in high demand for promotion as a product to the audience. The news media rely on the audience first a product to be sold to political advertisers and second a consumer for the information supplied by the political agencies. During elections, therefore, political advertising market is not only ripe but also strategic. Therefore, programming during electioneering period has to be done with the audience in the mind and advertiser in the strategy. During the 2017 elections in Kenya, the media did not perform poorly in the political economy of ethnopolitics. The strategically programmed televised political analyses are a site to understanding how ethnopolitical journalism played out in Kenya.

Methodology

The researcher selected 14 television shows, from the top four (4) national television channels; namely, NTV, KTN, K24 and Citizen TV. The media brought together panellists as experts in 2017 political situation. Sampling spanned between November 2016 and October 2017. The videos were uploaded on YouTube immediately on the day of the show or the day after the airing, and this could mean either the day indicated could be one day before or the stated date as the researcher checked on the day the media houses uploaded the file. Each video is analysed by first looking at the television channel, the moderator, the

panellists and the way they handled topics based on their political affiliations. The researchers in this section analyse a transcription of five digital videos of television shows from YouTube of the period ten months before elections. The digital videos of televised political analysis shows spanning August 8th to October 30, 2017, are transcribed and analysed in the following section. The post-August 8, 2017 elections outcome came with mixed and synergised reactions with NASA losing and Jubilee winning according to the results announced by IEBC. Propaganda, open hatred, ethnic attacks and narratives of frustrations were hyped implicitly on mainstream media and explicitly on social media. The tensions went even higher with the Supreme Court nullifying the elections, the protests and shootings that left people dead, the NASA boycott of elections and economic sabotage, the formation of National Resistance Movement and the swearing-in of Raila Odinga as people's president.

Pre-election Televised Political Analysis Shows

Video 1: Cord, Jubilee and the 2017 Election

The K24 TV show *Alfajiri* aired a political analysis panel on November 16, 2016, which was moderated by Ian Wafula (K24 TV journalist), featuring expert guests; namely, Stephen Karani, Cornelius Serem and Sylvanus O. Osoro (all were introduced as legislators). The panel was representative of the two sides of the political divide by then (Jubilee and Cord) and mostly the three ethnicities battling for political power (the Kikuyu, the Kalenjin and the Kisii); the Kisii representing the Western block, the Kalenjin representing the Rift Valley block and the Kikuyu representing the central block (Mt. Kenya region) block. The constitution of the panellists already indicates a careful selection and consideration of ethnicity of the experts paying cautious attention to political composition and situation in the country, a practice this study refers to as ethnopolitical journalism. The panellists did not disappoint because, in their views, the panellists disagree on the

issues raised based on their political affiliations, giving an indication that as early as 2016, the media had already started setting the ground ready for ethnopolitics and the way 2017 elections needed to be handled. The debate was aired at a time when electioneering campaigns were about to kick off for 2017. The editorial question posed for the viewers to answer was 'do you believe there is a deliberate plan by Jubilee government to postpone the elections to 2018?' The question was informed by claims from CORD politicians that the Jubilee government was planning to have 2017 elections postponed to 2018 for their advantage.

Video 2: NASA Politics

The show, duped *Opinion Court* on Citizen TV takes place on December 15, 2016; the day Kalonzo Musyoka's Wiper Party delegate's conference was held, and they announce that they have joined with NASA ahead of 2017 general elections. Hussein Mohamed was the moderator with panellists Edward Kisiang'ani (introduced as show's resident panellist); Senator Omar Hassan (Senator, Mombasa County), Godfrey Osotsi (Secretary General Amani National Congress) and Senator Moses Kanjwang (Senator, Homa Bay County). The first question posed by the moderator is 'Do you think that finally, NASA is moving a step closer to political reality?' In this show, it is evident that the media as early as 2016 had already started narrowing their scope of 2017 political discourse to NASA and Jubilee with the main character being Uhuru and Raila. This horserace journalism approach would continue till the end of the elections, and by the end of it, media is the high priest in ordaining ethnopolitical oligarchy as it has been their practice since independence and therein lies their political economy.

Video 3: What the NASA Threats mean to Kenyans in the 2017 General Elections

Kenya Television Network (KTN) in one of their 2017 show seminal *Choice 2017* on May 18, 2017, aired a political

analysis show in which Akisa Wandera (KTN journalist) was the moderator. The show panellists were Richard Kavemba Mutinda (Political Analyst and declared Jubilee Supporter), Bonke Komwai (Political Analyst affiliated to Jubilee), Cavince Odoyo Owidi (Political Analyst Affiliated to NASA) and Peter Mathuki (Wiper Party affiliated to NASA). From the onset, it is clear the choice of the panellists carefully considered their geopolitics with a Luo (Bonke Komwai) and Kamba (Richard Kavemba Mutinda) who are supporting Jubilee and a Luo (Cavince Odoyo Owidi) and a Kamba (Peter Mathuki) supporting NASA coalition. It is an example of a panel on a national television consisted of experts who are affiliates of the two political sides. It is this consideration when making choices for national television shows on political analyses that this study is keen about; the house style for the editors seems to consider a consistent demographic based on presupposed ethno-political characteristics. Like in the previous analysed shows, the mainstream media is very definite in its narrowing for Kenyans, two political sides that they want them to consider as 2017 elections agenda; NASA and Jubilee.

Video 4: Elections Preparedness Show

This political analysis show took place on July 26, 2017, on K24 TV and was moderated by K24 Journalist Fredrick Njiri. The panellists are Owino K'Otieno (Sarah Ngombe MCA, NASA), Alex Mwathi (Wazalendo new leadership for change CEO) and Dr David Matsanga (Resident Panellist). As usual with other media houses, the panel members are selected deliberately to represent political affiliations thus NASA (Owino K'Otieno) and Jubilee (Alex Mwathi) and Dr David Matsanga who an openly-proclaimed Jubilee supporter). It is worth noting that Dr David Matsanga, being a resident panellist ought to be neutral but he cannot in a media house which is owned by the Kenyatta family, which is Jubilee affiliated. Going back to agenda setting by Matsanga, he justifies Uhuru's absence on claims of

political affiliations; that Linus Kaikai cannot be neutral since he was once an ODM candidate affiliated to NASA and for Joe Ageyo, simply because he is a Luo by ethnicity, they had to find a way of pinning him. This is the backbone of the ethno-political analysis, where analysis is based on ethnicity.

Video 5: Do you think the Country is ready for Elections?

On August 1, 2017, K24 Faceoff was at it again with a political analysis show whose title was a question; *do you think the country is ready for elections?* Fredrick Njiri (K24 Journalist) moderated the show. The panellists were Dunstan Omari (Lawyer and Political Analyst, NASA Supporter), Dr David Matsanga (Political Analyst and Jubilee Supporter) and David Murathe (Jubilee Vice Chair) who was absent with an apology. The moderator Fredrick captured the expectations of the debate in the opening statement that presented three headliners: the released opinion polls, claims of the government using the military to steal elections and the murder of IEBC ICT director. The two panellists are opposed on their opinions on the validity of opinion polls and the issues surrounding the murder of acting ICT manager, Chris Musando as well as the claims of the military being deployed in elections. Given that these issues were working politically for the benefit of one side and the loss of the other, the debate outcome was predictable. The sad thing is how K24 a national media could go too far in entrenching the ideals of Jubilee simply because Uhuru Kenyatta owns it by hiring a resident panellist who is openly apolitical.

Post-Election Televised Political Analysis Shows

Video 6: Election Results Analysis: Evaluating the Low Turnout in the 2017 General elections

While Kenyans had voted and been waiting for the results on the night of August 8th, KTN *Kivumbi 2017* was following with some experts. Linda Ogutu, a KTN journalist moderates the show. The panellists are Lonah Irungu

(Introduced as a Communication Strategist), Kamotho Waiganjo (Introduced as a Constitutional Lawyer) and Felix Owuor (Introduced as an Electoral Law Expert).

Notably, the selection of the panel considered the existing environment given that this was the elections day, the expert titles had to provide the panellists with an aura of expertise. However, the geopolitics of the panellists was silently shouting given that the television chose the individuals from Kikuyu (Lonah Irungu and Kamotho Waiganjo) and a Luo (Felix Owuor). One would ask why is it that the media cannot find a political analyst from outside the big five ethnic groups? It is a deliberate choice that is meant to set the agenda and advance ethnic propaganda model in the news media operating within a capitalist economy and making news content that favours the interests of political elites (who primarily come from the prominent five ethnicities) and economic elites.

Video 7: These Are the Battle Grounds to watch analysis at KTN Kivumbi 2017

Alongside Aug 8, 2017, was this extensive screen analysis which was supposed to introduce statistics to generate more ideas for debate. The presenter of the show (her name not mentioned) adds '*Kenya goes to the ballot on August 8, 2017. Who is likely to go home? Who will get a new job? Our Kivumbi 2017 panellist let you know what to look out for*'. She describes votes across a few counties analysing the results of both NASA and Jubilee coalitions. From the analysis, she sets the agenda that the election is about two political sides and candidates, whereas there were eight candidates in the presidential race. The presenter talked about Raila and Uhuru until in the middle of her analysis when she remembered that the presidential candidates are, and she stops to state 'not two, but eight'. The presenter is sincere given that the analysis provided highlighted on two presidential candidates while ignoring the others. She is also advancing the agenda and puts it as

an expert that viewers should narrow their agenda to two presidential candidates and that the other six presidential candidates matter less in this election. This way the media functions to advance horserace journalism and ethnopolitical journalism in all their forms and manifestations.

Video 8: Debunking the NASA Hacking Myth

On August 9th, one day after elections the K24 *Evening Edition* held a post-election political analysis moderated by Eric Njoka (a K24 TV Journalist). The panellists were Mr George Njoroge (IT Forensic Audit Expert), Harrison Kinyanjui (Introduced as a Political Analyst) and George Kithi (Introduced as a Political Analyst). The panel was convened on August 9, 2017, after the NASA team disputed elections results before they were announced, claiming that the IEBC server had been hacked and tallies altered for their disadvantage. From the beginning, the show is out to disapprove NASA claims, and there is no one representative of NASA voice in the panel. The panel starts by playing a video clip where NASA team, led By Raila Odinga are giving details of their claims of IEBC server hacking. In this analysis show, we witness a pre-planned show meant to make things clear but from the perspective of one side of the political divide. As mentioned earlier, the mainstream media after elections started drumming for their political parties and knowing who owns K24, and this is not a surprise.

Video 9: A Nation Divided: Kenya on edge as NASA maintains Election Stolen

On August 14th, one week after the August 8th elections, Larry Madowo moderated the NTV Decision 2017 show. The discussed the status of Kenya amid divisions along geopolitical and ethnic lines. The panellists are Scheaffer Okore, Joseph Semekha, Gabriel Mutuma, Dr Lukoye

Atwoli (from NTV Eldoret) and Abubakr Yusuf (from NTV Mombasa). The panel is ethnically and politically divided. For the first time, we hear the voice of a person who is not from the big five ethnic groups in Kenya – Abubakr Yusuf. The question for the panellist posed by the moderator was, ‘what do you make of NASA telling people not to go to work tomorrow?’ The panel, in less than 4 minutes, in an interview of close to one hour (51 minutes), degenerated to an ethnic angle of analysing the issue affecting Kenya. The question, which was supposed to examine a boycott call by NASA, deteriorated to discussing Raila Odinga and the Luo people. This show was characterised by emotive ethnic attack and brought on-board panellists considering their political affiliation and ethnopolitics which function to spark ethnic conversations.

Video 10: Which way forward for Kenyan media on Election Coverage

The NTV *Decision 2017* on August 14th held another show and Mark Maasai (NTV Journalist) was the moderator. The panellists were Macharia Gaitho (NTV), Charles Kerich (Editor-in-Chief Radio Africa), Dennis Onyango (Head of Raila Secretariat) and Patrick Gathara (Columnist/Cartoonist). The panel was constituted of media personalities representing mainstream media with Denis Onyango (from NASA) as a complainant in the case of unequal coverage. It was to be a sobriety show to discuss the place of media in elections coverage as well as give a self-assessment of the way they covered the 2017 elections. This self-assessment analysis show puts the media at the centre of political communication and as an agenda setter during the electoral period. However, the benefits from the political economy hinder its mandate, and the means they use to sustain their benefits have dire consequences that the media is unable to control such as fake news and blame on their side.

Video 11: Resolving Election Standoff

The Citizen TV *Opinion Court* show is held at Citizen TV on October 19, 2017, and is moderated by Ann Kiguta (Citizen Journalists). The panellists are Barrack Muluka (ANC Secretary General, NASA), Edward Kisiang’ani (Resident Political Analyst), Nelson Makanda (Deputy General Secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Kenya) and Kamotho Waiganjo (Former Commissioner of the now defunct Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution). Although the panel constitution is mild in ethnopolitical consideration, it still reflects the NASA and Jubilee political affiliations and the five ethnic groups that form the two political heavyweights. The moderator begins the show by restating the development at the time including the resignation of IEBC Commissioner Akombe and threats by the IEBC Chairperson, Chebukati that he would resign. She starts by asking: do you think we can go to a legitimate election next Thursday? The show lived to its promise of resolving elections standoff starting from within the studio. We see less of political attacks, and it is a model of how mainstream media televised political analyses should be—sober and solution oriented.

Video 12: To Vote or Not to Vote – Kenya’s Dilemma on October 26 Presidential Elections

On October 24th, two days to the repeat elections of October 26, Trevor Ombija (NTV Journalist) moderated NTV *Decision 2017* show with a team of four political heavyweights: Hon. Otiende Omolo (Elect MP Rarienda, NASA), Miguna Miguna (Gubernatorial Contestant, Nairobi County, and self-proclaimed NASA supporter), Hon. Mithika Linturi (Senator Meru County, Jubilee), Hon. Kimani wa Matangi (Senator, Kiambu County, Jubilee). The composition of the panellists is NASA and Jubilee. The moderator, Trevor Ombinja poses the question that sets the course of the debate as, ‘Everyone is maintaining their stands, no election or there will be elections, what is going to happen then; will there be elections’ (NTV *Decision, 2017*). In this show, the political drifts are brought bare on a

mainstream media, and this makes the narratives and attacks on social media legitimate. This was the case with all national media, acting as a conveyor belt for radically opposed politicians to air their divisive opinion while trying to feign neutrality and balance. This show serves as the worst example of a mediatised ethno-political journalism which functions to construct ethno-political oligarchy in an organic environment while benefiting from such political economy environment by pulling huge audience and generating a national debate in their reference.

Video 13: Dissecting Repeat Election Day Events

October 26th was the day set by IEBC as directed by the Supreme Court ruling to hold repeat presidential elections. Citizen TV Opinion Court holds a show which was moderated by Ann Kiguta (Citizen TV Journalist) and the panellists were Roselyn Odede (Legal Consultant and Political Analyst), Macharia Gaitho (Independent Journalist) and Edward Kisiang'ani (Resident Panellist). Again, the panellists are drawn from the two geopolitical regions Macharia Gaitho from the Central Block, which is Jubilee and Roselyn Odede from the Nyanza region, which is NASA. This implied that the resident political analyst is to balance the opinions of NASA and Jubilee affiliates.

Video 14: Which way Kenya after divisive Presidential Election

The NTV decision 2017 on Oct 30, 2017, brought before the Kenyan audience a political analysis show moderated by Linus Kaikai (NTV Journalist). The panellists were Prof Macharia Munene (Jubilee Supporter), Miguna Miguna (Political Analyst and NASA Supporter at that time), Schaeffer Okore (NASA Supporter), Charles Kajama (Political Analyst and Jubilee Affiliate), Olga Karani (Deputy Treasurer for ODM) and Gabriel Mutuma (Jubilee Supporter). The constitution of the panellists spoke volumes on ethno-political consideration and the agenda of the mainstream media on whose ecology Nation media

group operates. The Opening statement by Linus Kaikai set the agenda of the show. He described the 2017 election with such terms as 'most divisive elections' and most polarised and described Uhuru Kenyatta as having been a 'solo runner' in a historical victory. From KaiKai's statement, the ethno-political underbelly of the media is exposed. It is ethno-political because the opening statement upholds the polemical narrative that reduces Kenyan political contestation to that of two political dynasties—ethno-political oligarchies. The reactive attacks and emotional propaganda on the mainstream media functioned to divide the country more because the media did not have their view on what was conveyed through their studios to Kenyans. By allowing sports journalism-like political analysis and actively engaging in ethno-political house style in their organisation of these shows, the media can only be seen as an institution interested more on the political economy of elections and the culture that breeds ethno-political oligarchies.

Discussion

Televised Political Analysis Shows' Signatures ahead of 2017

The preparedness of mainstream media for the 2017 elections campaign period was strategic. It was clear that the media knew its position and role in the elections and thus they prepared early, considering the competition and the power relations that they were to deal with. They also were aware of the financial benefit that comes with the political economy of such momentous process ending on 8th August general elections. Two signatures are prevalent in the analysed mainstream media televised shows that indicate their strategic preparedness for their role: the brand-naming of their shows and the deployment of resident panellists as expert analysts.

Brand-naming of TV Shows Before 2017

The four leading television channels established signature names that foreshadowed that 2017 was going to be a battleground of celestial levels. In this case, NTV named theirs *Decision 2017*, KTN had *Kivumbi 2017*, K24 TV had *Faceoff*, and Citizen TV had *Opinion Court*. The NTV's *Decision 2017* implied a psychological battleground of the year while Citizen TV's *Opinion Court* signalled a psychological, legal public combat for hegemony. The KTN's *Kivumbi 2017* indicated a physical battle of the year where 'dust' is to be seen rising while K24's *Faceoff* symbolised a real face to face combat of the political titans (whether the contestants or the panellists at the show). Such brand-naming presented the 2017 elections as a filming scene or a football match where only the strongest, regardless of the process would win. This is characteristic of horserace journalism, and the televised political analyses were microcosmic of the ground battles—stage managed by media to be full of divisions, ethnic blocking based on the two political divided.

Deployment of Resident analysts

The media, having experience of the past elections and knowing their power to set the agenda for their political economy, and recognising the demand for elite political analysts who can influence decisions, contracted resident 'experts'. Examples were Edward Kisiang'ani at Citizen TV *Opinion Court* and Dr David Matsanga for K24 TV's *Faceoff*. The rest had pseudo-resident panellists who frequented the shows such as Gabriel Mutuma for NTV's *Decision 2017* and still had a noncommittal rotation of political analysts and experts in their shows like it was the case of KTN's *Kivumbi 2017*. The mainstream media took the elections period seriously and invested heavily on their shows. Going an extra mile to invest in manpower and elite experts at the time show how serious the media took the events leading to elections and their endeavour to appropriate the political economy that comes with it at all costs. The mainstream media analyses aired on television are

understood using the fourth filter of the propaganda model of communication where the media is aware of criticism as a means of discipline. As a result, the media is forced to make sure the content they broadcast does not attract in any way lawsuits, petitions, and government sanctions. The moderators of the shows and the directors are conscious of any content that could attract negative commentary on the journalists or news organisation, and they control it before it gets out of the hand. The shows also, being conducted by media houses owned by politicians had their fair share of inclinations, and that seemed to be the roles of all resident analysts.

Media Moderator and Resident Analysts Setting the Agenda

The resident analysts were hired and put on a mission—supposedly to advance the ideals and the political and commercial stance of the media house and that of the owners. For example, in the elections, preparedness at K24 television face off show on July 25, 2017 (coded video number 4) at one point Matsanga (the resident analyst from Uganda) resorted to praising Jubilee and playing down NASA. Matsanga praised Jubilee party, saying that they were doing their best to finalise campaigns while NASA is busy running to courts. He also openly accused pollster Angela Ambitho of Infotrack as having been hired by NASA to deliver a poll report favouring them. At this point, Fredrick Njiri (K24 Journalist) who was moderating the show deliberately ignored the careless derails by Matsanga and continued to pose other questions as if nothing is happening. This appears as if it was a stage-planned narrative given that Uhuru Kenyatta family owns K24—claim the Journalist did not refute in a later show.

It was clear that the television shows had a resident analyst during the 2017 electoral period who were formally

declared or by default of their frequency in the show, who alongside the moderator, set the agenda from the media studios. The stands taken by the moderators and the resident analysts were explicitly indicative of the media house political standing and inclinations during the elections process of 2017. This case is different from video number 14 show entitled, ‘Which way Kenya after divisive Presidential election’, of Oct 30, 2017, at NTV moderated by Linus Kaikai. During the show, the moderator was very keen to control Miguna Miguna and Schaeffer Okore when they tried to take the show in a different direction, which was not, probably in good taste with the audience and the media ideals. From the analyses of the audience on the media they preferred, it was noted that media houses in Kenya, since politicians own most of it have divided Kenya into ethnic and geopolitical blocks.

Media drew Panellists from two Ethnic Blocks

The media shows invited all their panellists selected from ethnic groups where NASA and Jubilee had their presidential candidates and their principles as broken down below

1. The Kikuyu: Uhuru Kenyatta—Jubilee leader
2. The Kalenjin: William Ruto – Jubilee and running mate to Uhuru Kenyatta
3. The Luo: Raila Odinga—NASA leader
4. The Kamba: Kalonzo Musyoka—NASA and running mate to Raila Odinga
5. The Luhya: Moses Wetangula and Musalia Mudavandi—NASA co-principles

From the analysis of the transcripts from the television shows, it is notable how the media consciously selected not only issues but also the representatives of critical ethnicities. These experts (also referred to as analysts or panellists) were deliberately chosen considering their ethnicity, which is notably from the leading five tribes namely the Kikuyu, the Luo, the Luhya, the Kalenjin and the Kamba. All the shows analysed the highest percentage of

panellists were selected from these ethnicities. Table 4 below is a summary of panellists in the analysed shows comparing those from the five ethnic groups with those from any other ethnic groups.

Table 1 Panellists from NASA and Jubilee Ethnic Groups

	Video	No of panellists from the five tribes	No of panellists from other tribes
1	Video 1	3	0
2	Video 2	3	1
3	Video 3	4	0
4	Video 4	2	1
5	Video 5	2	1
6	Video 6	3	0
7	Video 7	3	0
8	Video 8	3	0
9	Video 9	4	1
10	Video 10	4	0
11	Video 11	4	0
12	Video 12	4	0
13	Video 13	3	0
14	Video 14	5	1
	Totals	46	5

From table 4, it is clear that out of the 51 panellists in all shows, only five were from other tribes and out of these, two were from Uganda. In short, only three were from tribes outside Kikuyu, Luo, Kalenjin, Kamba, and Luhya. This is an indication of how media has drifted to ethnicity and ethnic considerations when choosing panellists for political analyses during electoral periods. This happens because the media purports to speak to a specific people, in this case, the majority Kenyans and to media going for a person from minority would mean having less audience and thus losing their audience base and their advertising revenue.

This phenomenon can be well explained using Mosco (2009) position on the media's political economy where he argues that 'political economy is the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources' as also described by Clay (2012).⁷ The media in constituting political analysis panellists consider at large the power relations in Kenya at that particular time, and this consideration by default leads them to ethnic choices based on the strong political blocks and thus partake in the construction and sustenance of ethno-political oligarchies through ethno-political journalism and horserace journalism.

Mosco, in the political economy of media, preferred to study social processes in the media instead of the structures and institutions. In the third entry point of the political economy of media by Mosco, he conceptualises what he calls structuration, which is derived from Anthony Giddens theory of structuration. Under structuration, the interconnections of structure and action reproduce social life (Mosco, 2009:212). Mosco examines the aspects of the structuration of the communications industry in terms of, among others, the dimensions of class, and race and ethnicities and these aspects are the ones that Kenyan media, consciously or unconsciously bring into play during elections as seen during the 2017 electioneering period. Given that these aspects mutually or individually constitute categories in terms of structuration processes (Mosco, 2009:239), the resultant phenomena from media choices are their focus on social movements and hegemonic processes during the electoral period (Saul, 2010). This is significant in the Kenyan panellist-choice phenomenon, as it constitutes the idea of agency, social process, and social practice into the analysis of structures (in this case political and ethnic structure). The political economy of media theory assumes that mass media produce content that satiates the interests and expectations of the established

powers, which in this case is the massive power and influence wielded by ethno-political oligarchies and their ethnic groups.

In the case of television shows during the electoral period in Kenya, the established power structure resides with the five tribes courtesy of media horserace reporting that capitalises on their monumentalised leaders. Moreover, out of the five filters that mass media content goes through, in the propaganda theory is the third filter that projects a hypothesis that media relies on expert and official sources provided information. Through expert sources, the media in these shows legitimised the narratives, the way they are to be understood and how far citizens could go in articulating them. These expert elites are the significant suppliers of mass media content where political analyses are a site for harnessing such information. The PEM argument is that these elites provide cheap yet highly demanded information and they include renowned leaders, politicians, government officials, and opinion shapers whose reports are viewed as credible and unbiased.

The reason as to why these elites are agenda setters with the media is the assumption that they are informed, objective and represents the interests of the masses and thus the media use them to cut cost on fact checking through research. Even when their opinions are flawed, the media poses as conveyors of information squatting under the normative disclaimer that the view belongs to the expert. This also resonates with agenda setting theory position that the mass media (both mainstream and alternative) are actively involved in setting the agenda, whether consciously or unconsciously and as seen in the case of Kenya, the mass media prioritises ethnicity; engages in ethnic horserace journalism and ethno-political journalism during the electoral period – as exemplified by the case of 2017. This media handling of social processes has created a grid mill for ethno-political oligarchy

construction, a form of political market that benefits or otherwise is deemed to benefit a few ethnic groups while the rest are left out.

Media drew Panellists from Two Geo-political blocks

Another important characteristic with the sampled television shows is the geopolitical consideration whereby they selected representatives based on the regional blocks they come from. The choice balanced well the Jubilee blocks (Central, Upper Eastern and Rift Valley Regions) against NASA affiliated blocks (Coast, Lower Eastern, Western and Luo Nyanza Regions). The media is well aware that the audience is not only a consumer of their information but also the product for sale (Bagdikian, 2014). Since media is always under pressure to manipulate content and align it with the interest and expectations of audience demographically, the content is not treated with sensitivity compared to the audience. What this implies is that media has the NASA and Jubilee blocks in their interest first before the content of the show.

Scholars such as Hague (2016) resonate with this line of thought, as they contend that giving the audience what they want (content) may not be the end, because the media houses target the audience that can afford the advertised products, and this turns out as giving the audience their due expectations and being accountable to the advertisers' money. The media in 2017 election period seemed to have classified Kenyan audience into two, the Jubilee, and NASA. The media houses had to balance the two 'most important' clients and ensure they give the critical mass of their audience their expectations and satiate their wants. Given that much of the advertising and promotion by the media came from the two political bodies, the media had no option but to be accountable for the advertiser's money and resources by serving them diligently.

However, the agenda-setting theory raises a concern with the way mass media shapes public opinion and concludes that this becomes detrimental to the society because mass media has proved not to reflect reality, but shape and filter it to their advantage. This is so because mass media concentrates on a few issues and subjects that coerce the public to think that the selected few issues are the most important, even when they are not. It is significant to note that during the 2017 electoral process, for fairness and justice, Jubilee and NASA were not the only political parties of a coalition of parties and their two presidential candidates were among other six candidates. The media, however, decided to do injustice and filter the two, their stronghold blocks and their ethnicities. This strategy resulted in ethnic mapping and consequently strengthening the tower of ethnic oligarchy in Kenyan political ecology, which in this study was branded Ethno-political Oligarchy.

Conclusion

The political analyses shows sampled from the four leading national televisions during the 2017 electoral period reduced the whole elections agenda to an issue of Jubilee and NASA; Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga. . Further, it was noted that *all priority topics targeted these two supposedly major political whose principles and deputies come from the five ethnic groups*. The panel discussions were also about the geopolitical dissections of Kenya into strongholds of Jubilee and NASA, and this boiled down to be the battle of five most populous ethnic groups by number—the Kikuyu, the Luo, the Luhya, the Kalenjin and the Kamba from which the two ethno-political oligarchs draw their principles. It was also noted that every discussion from different Television channels are narrowed deliberately by the moderator to discuss about Raila Odinga and Uhuru Kenyatta, thus, ignoring all other presidential candidates, their political parties and areas considered their strongholds. These findings reveal the

media's deliberate choices of house styles and reporting models during the electoral periods in Kenya. In this light, it is noted that the mass media has been the high priest of ethnicity normalization culture that has shaped the political mindset of Africa to the extent of undermining its transformative leadership. The findings add to the research

critical of media practice and political economy of mass media reporting during electioneering periods.

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