

Media Concentration and the Coverage of the 2013 General Election in Kenya: Democracy at the Crossroads

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Abstract: This research explores the relationship between journalistic freedom and media concentration in Kenya through the lens of the propaganda model (Baker, 2007). The research is based on two features of the 2013 General Election in Kenya: (1) a survey of the public's confidence in the conduct of journalists during the 2013 General election in Kenya and (2) a survey of *journalists' perceptions of influence of media ownership on journalistic independence in Kenya*. This research concludes that an increase in media concentration in Kenya has led to the shrinking of the democratic space. 71 percent of the surveyed Journalists believe media diversity in Kenya is at risk whilst 69 percent believe that viewpoint discrimination is occasioned by unhealthy Media Ownership trends in Kenya. The research also indicates that the perceived climate of distrust dogging the mainstream media in Kenya has seen the public turn to citizen journalism as an alternative source of information. This survey raises further questions about future implications for journalistic independence given the dominance of media concentration in Kenya.

Keywords: journalistic freedom; democratic health; diversity

1. Introduction

The media has often been perceived as a political campaign tool to mop up support for and against influential political elites. The journalist and press critic A. J. Liebling (as cited in Baker 2007) opines that freedom of the press belongs to those who own one. This rather cynical remark makes ownership an issue of central focus in media studies today. It could also explain why politicians have often demonstrated a penchant for acquisition of media outlets to propagate their political ideologies to the electorate.

Dean Alger (1998) opines that the news media are absolutely central to the functioning of democracy today; and entertainment and other features and programs in the mass media, in the aggregate, have powerful effects on society more generally. Further he contends that how news organizations in particular are

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operated and, ultimately, who owns and controls the main media we all rely on for information, exchange of ideas and basic images are fundamental in determining whether the democratic process works as intended, or whether it falters or is subverted.

Globally, media ownership has become increasingly concentrated, dominated by a few key players. Perhaps most powerful amongst them is Rupert Murdoch, the founder and CEO of News Corporation. Recently, Murdoch became the subject of backlash from those who believe his presence is becoming too powerful given his inclination to double in European politics and beyond¹. Murdoch's move is further evidence that the mainstream news that influences the way we think, act and behave comes from an increasingly concentrated source.

Another well-known media mogul is Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (Doyle, 2002), who has a vast media empire controlling three of Italy's largest private television stations, and a further three public stations whilst in office. Berlusconi's vast media empire has unceasingly become a target of public opprobrium for its potential to sway political gimmickry in Italy in ways that weaken the public sphere and existence of a plural democracy.

In Kenya, it was observed that as early as 2009 there was a dangerous media ownership trend emerging: Media Ownership Concentration. (Mbeke, et.al 2009). Politicians increasingly patronized the media perhaps with an eye for the 2013 general election. (Mbeke, et.al. 2010) As the stakes in Kenyan politics rose, politicians increasingly took advantage of media liberalisation to directly or indirectly acquire media interests with which to secure their place in politics². During this period, content from sections of the media outlets were noted to be biased. (Simiyu, 2013)

Given the prevailing political environment and the emerging media ownership concentration, the overriding question is whether it was plausible to have the media play the most significant watchdog function in the coverage of the 2013 General Election in Kenya?

Mara Einstein (2004) opines that the more concentrated the media industry, the more the constriction of diverse public opinion across the communications landscape. Indeed, critics of the media, denounce the hegemony of the media and the ever-increasing power of the consolidated media conglomerates.

Baker (2007) contends that concentrated media ownership creates the possibility of an individual decision maker exercising enormous, unequal and hence undemocratic, largely unchecked, potentially irresponsible power.

¹ Reuters. Twist in Murdoch saga strains Britain's coalition. Retrieved from: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/sns-rt-us-britain-politicsbre85c0f7-20120613,0,1016378.story>.

² (2012). Internews in Kenya | Factually true, legally untrue: Political Media Ownership in Kenya.

Gillian Doyle (2002) avers that “political pluralism” is about the need, in the interests of democracy, for a range of political opinions and viewpoints to be represented in the media. Democracy would be threatened if any single voice, with the power to propagate a single political viewpoint, were to become too dominant.

1.1. Problem Statement

The overall research problem addressed in this study is that despite Kenya making significant strides in realizing freedom of expression in the media industry, media concentration and overbearing political regimes have often conspired to undermine journalistic independence.

Theodore Glasser and Marc Gunther (2005) as cited in Geneva Overholser and Kathleen (2005, p. 388) define journalistic independence as simply conditions in which a journalist can live and operate without entanglements that the journalist may feel as real or potential conflicts of interest.

From the foregoing, journalists must be willing, if fairness and accuracy require, to voice differences with their colleagues, whether in the newsroom or the executive suite. This stimulates the intellectual diversity necessary to understand and accurately cover an increasingly diverse society. This intellectual diversity can only be nurtured in a diverse media landscape.

Though Kenya seems to have adequate media diversity, the hidden danger is that the “diversity” that the public receives may not be genuine. Only when diverse viewpoints also come from diverse media sources and communicative power is maximally dispersed is the public interest represented in the media in the truly democratic sense.

It is against this backdrop that this study focuses on the emerging media ownership trend in Kenya and journalistic independence and how interplay of these two factors could have affected the coverage of the 2013 general election.

1.2 Objective

The specific objective of the study is to examine media ownership in Kenya and its influence on news coverage and presentation.

1.3 Hypothesis

This study hypothesizes that the privately held media outlets are more likely to constrict viewpoint diversity than a publicly held entity.

2. Conceptual Framework

This research is anchored on the Propaganda Model as propounded by Chomsky and Herman (2002). The model focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multi-level effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the path by which finances and prevailing power matrix are able to constrain viewpoint diversity and only churn out news content that best serves the interests of the owners of the privately held media outlets.

Chomsky and Herman (2002) assert that news content is the reproduction of the hegemonic interests of the elite. The majority of media coverage either ignores or diminishes news that might negatively affect the bottom line of the corporate owners of the news outlet (Houston, 2004).

Chomsky (2004) further contends that rather than function as the fourth estate, the mass media have taken on the role of mass propagandist, serving as little more than a mouthpiece for the government and the corporate elite

Parenti (1997)¹ argues that the mistakes of the media cannot all be innocent in nature. He outlines six key tools the corporate mass media use to stay on message, specifically the message that suits their corporate masters. These include:

1. Suppression by omission: "Manipulation often lurks in the things left unmentioned." (Parenti, 1997, p. 1)
2. Attack and destroy the target: "The media move from ignoring the story to vigorously attacking it." (Parenti, 1997, p. 2)
3. Labeling: "Media people seek to predetermine our perception of a subject with a positive or negative label." (Parenti, 1997, p. 2)
4. Face-value transmission: "One way to lie is to accept at face value what are known to be official lies, uncritically passing them on to the public without adequate confirmations." (Parenti, 1997, p. 3)
5. False balancing: "Both sides are seldom accorded equal prominence." (Parenti, 1997, p. 3)
6. Framing: "By bending the truth rather than breaking it...communicators can create a desired impression without resorting to explicit advocacy." (Parenti, 1997, p. 3)

Parenti (1997) avers that these six tools ultimately help avoid displeasing those in political and economic power (Parenti, 1997). McChesney and Nichols (2002) opine that it is this shift in emphasis that ultimately poses a direct threat to the expansion of the democratic space in societies.

¹ <http://www.michaelparenti.org/MonopolyMedia.html>.

McChesney (1999) argues that any inquiry into how media ownership in monopoly capitalism inhibits the capacity of citizens to attain a democratic genuinely egalitarian participatory democracy must include studies of how a system-wide propaganda that favors the system itself is maintained. McChesney (ibid) argues that Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model is essential insofar as it provides a framework of filters for understanding how news systems operate to produce opinions that favor the political economic status quo. Looked at from this perspective, it will be foolhardy for one to argue that bias in media content is more of an individual journalist's liberal bias than a corporation's conservative bias. Suffice to say that such a view completely ignores those that journalists work for.

Granted, reporters could be as liberal as they wished however; this would not change what news they could be allowed to report or how they could report it.

Many journalists in Kenya allege that their inaction to point out electoral malpractices was informed by the fear of their conduct in the 2007 post poll chaos which they (journalists) were largely indicted for fuelling tensions in the electorate. Ahead of the 2013 general election, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) jointly with the Media Owners Association (MOA) and editors developed and signed a code of conduct¹ to guard against their journalists fanning violence, as happened in 2007. Media outlets were asked to avoid reporting in a manner liable to incite the public. By extension, media outlets were also asked not to conduct their own vote tallies as they did in 2007, but instead to rely on the IEBC official tallies.

However, some of the guidelines relating to hate speech and incitement in the said document are ambiguous. Such ambiguity could provide a fertile ground for an overbearing political regime to constrict journalistic freedom. In fact, such hastily developed electoral guidelines actually inhibit the presentation of controversial issues of public importance to the detriment of the public and in degradation of the editorial prerogative of broadcast journalists. It is plausible that constrained by such policies, journalists could condone acts of politically inclined individuals who profess to do something for an honourable, publicly declared motive while really doing it from a disreputable hidden one.

Henry Maina of Article 19 (Kenyan Chapter) opines that it is incumbent upon journalists of repute to point out yawning gaps between a society's democratic ideals and its practice. He sees media's inability to probe/take to task Kenya's Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) over the polling procedure and allegations of vote-rigging as irresponsible journalism.² Such journalism is characterized by partisanship and/or brown envelope syndrome.

¹ Media Council of Kenya: Guidelines for Election Coverage in Kenya, April, 2012, Retrieved on 12/4/2013 at 1.38am from <http://www.mediacouncil.or.ke/Media-Laws/View-category.html>.

²<http://allafrica.com/stories/201303290100.html?viewall=1>.

According to Shitemi Khamadi of Internews¹, an international media development organization, it would seem that the biggest concern in Kenya today is the willingness of individual journalists to kowtow to corporate and government interests given the fact that media organizations are owned and controlled by some of the largest and richest corporations which are in turn owned and controlled by individuals who double in politics. It would thus be difficult for such media moguls to employ or keep in their employment journalists who consistently cover news in a political tone that they do not like. This could perhaps explain why journalists in the employment of such media outlets allegedly left so many things unsaid and said many things inaccurately.

According to McQuail (1987) organizational imperatives tend to override personal preferences, except at the highest level, and media organizational “policy” is more collective than an individual phenomenon. Such “policies” are more often than not determined by an organization’s political allegiance. These ensure that only those journalists with similar political orientations are hired in their organizations. Besides, given the fact that most journalists are in the middle class, they are likely to be subservient to their benefactors read employers.

Gans (1979) opines the middle-class position of the journalistic profession is a guarantee to their subservience to the capitalistic system. In this regard, journalists see and interpret the world through similar lenses much the same way with those of the real holders of power. Herein, the real holders of power are media moguls who also double as powerful politicians and who have created monolithic media empires with a view to propagating their political ideologies to the public. Chomsky (2002) concurs with this view when he opines that because much of the mainstream media is owned by corporate conglomerates, the media’s coverage of political issues often reflects these corporate interests. They do this by deliberately outlawing opinions that media owners do not like.

McQuail (2005) avers that diversity of media content stands in opposition to monopoly, uniformity, conformity and consensus. But is the liberalization of the airwaves a panacea to such maladies? This is not necessarily the case. Political elites may buy existing media and/or establish new ones to ensure that what is referred to as “media landscape” is skewed in their favour.

McQuail (2005) doubts the efficacy of privately held media outlets in serving the public interest. McQuail (2005) argues that such media are likely to be in the monopolistic ownership of a capital class, nationally or internationally organized and serve the interests of that class. In this respect, the media works ideologically by disseminating the ideas and world views of the ruling class, denying alternative ideas which might lead to change or to growing consciousness of the proletariat.

¹ Ibidem.

Althusser (1971) as cited in McQuail (1987) points out that the ideology so disseminated is a pervasive and deliberate cultural influence which serves to interpret experience in a covert but consistent manner.

Critics of consolidation aver that concentration and conglomeration of the media lead to undue political influence. Baker (2007) argues that the recent concentration of media ownership and thus of economic power in ever fewer corporations is inimical to—and if not checked will eventually destroy—the proper role of a free press in a democracy. He asserts that a single media entity could potentially provide an elaborately diverse system of viewpoints, but these viewpoints would run the risk of sharing crucially similar elements, since they are indeed products of the same source. So, although diverse viewpoints might satisfy the public, the hidden danger is that the “diversity” they receive is not genuine. Only when diverse viewpoints also come from diverse media sources and communicative power is maximally dispersed is the public interest represented in the media in the truly democratic sense.

Baker (2007) captures this affront to democracy when he opines that media concentration is a major impediment to the provision of quality media product as well as to the accomplishment of the democratic standard concerning classless dispersal of communicative power. In media concentration, as media firms unite and profit becomes the main priority, the quality of the product and the numbers of viewpoints represented are perilously constricted.

Baker (2007) focuses tightly on the fact that media concentration will bring unequal democratic power to the large corporations that own many of the media outlets. His view is rooted in a normative theory of democracy that values democracy as an end, not merely as a means, because democracy embodies the values of equality and autonomy. Increased concentration leads inevitably to a public loss of democratic power.

Bagdikian (2004) opines that such concentrated ownership ultimately gives media moguls more power than exercised by any despot or dictator in history. He notes that the steady increase in media power enjoyed by media conglomerates has translated into a steady accumulation of power in politics.

Croteau and Hoynes (2001, p. 37) suggest that the structural constraints created by the primacy of business concerns have prevented the media from “promoting active citizenship, education, and social integration” through their messages. Instead of media that is diverse, innovative substantive, and independent, we have media whose content is homogenized, imitative, trivial and constrained. Such ownership abrogates the right of journalists to operate professionally. As Gans (2003) argues, journalists find themselves in a situation of “disempowerment,” precisely due to the corporate and commercial imperatives of the industry. The humanity of

journalists is evident in some content, as much when they break with the official line as when they consciously convey propaganda.

Gans (2003) contends that inasmuch as we see flushes of journalistic autonomy existing, and some journalists even daring to challenge the edicts of the filters, the stark reality is that the predominant corporate organizational structure forces journalists to work under very severe restrictions that do not allow the media to be structurally free or operate outside the interests of the elite. Media owners have latitude to appoint and promote staff to ensure that the media they own reflects and promotes their views. Indeed, one of the key concerns at present concerning the media, as it interacts with ownership, is that it does not serve the principles of democracy because a small number of owners may constrain viewpoint diversity through deliberate exposure of consumers to a limited information choice.

This is in part informed by the fact that mass media production is primarily a business, and that the metrics for a successful business are different than those for a successful democracy. In short, the interests of the media producers may not intersect with the interests (or at least the ideals) of the consumers. As an example of this viewpoint, James Squires (apud Miller 1998, p. 21), former editor of the Chicago Tribune, has referred to the modern press as “no longer an institution dedicated to the public interest, but rather a business run solely in the interest of the highest possible level of profitability.”

In order to protect their incomes, journalists often adopt different attitudes that will have different effects on them as determined by the political economy of the media. Consequently, journalists generally tend to be socialized with certain values that will enable them to work and move up in their profession, or that they will tend not to show their own values if they are different. Moreover, according to Herman, “what journalists do, what they see as newsworthy, and what they take for granted as premises of their work are frequently well explained by the incentives, pressures, and constraints incorporated into such a structural analysis.” (Chomsky & Herman, 2002, p. xi)

Kuypers (2002) affirms that the media demonstrates an effortless readiness to press forward with its own principles concerning appropriate public policy (p. 202). Kuypers (2002) believes that the whole purpose of mass media is to employ frames through the use of “certain keywords, metaphors, concepts, and symbols” (p. 199) which work together to create the relevancy of one issue over another.

Kuypers (2002) found out that press coverage ran under the mask of an explicit agenda whereby the media manipulates its own people on contentious issues.

2.1. Media Ownership, Concentration and Political Patronage in Kenya

Kenya has a robust media landscape. Lately, there has been a tendency towards media concentration. In particular, cross media ownership has been noted. Media Max, a group associated with Uhuru Kenyatta, has taken over The People Daily of veteran politician Kenneth Matiba, K24 TV and the Kikuyu language Radio station Kameme FM, both formerly owned by media entrepreneur Rose Kimotho. (Mbeke, O. P; et.al. 2010) TV Africa Holdings is also owned by the Kenyatta family. In 2007, TV Africa holdings bought STV from renowned journalist Hilary Ng'weno and now it uses the channel to transmit Al Jazeera. The latest addition to Media Max is Milele FM.

Kalee Ltd, associated to Deputy President William Ruto has, Kass FM; Kass Weekly; Kass TV. Kass FM, a station named as guilty of inciting violence in the 2007 post poll chaos, Kass FM, has allegedly sold a 49 percent stake to William Ruto. (Nyanjom, 2012) The latter is also associated with Change FM, a radio station that broadcasts to a largely Kalenjin audience in the expansive Rift Valley region of Kenya¹.

Charity Ngilu, a former Cabinet Minister and one of the allies of Uhuru Kenyatta has also acquired Mbaitu FM/SioKimau, a Kamba FM station broadcasting in upper Eastern Kenya.

Three other allies of Uhuru Kenyatta have invested in the media industry in Kenya. These include Najib Balala who bought Sheki FM and Pilipili FM that broadcasts in the coastal town of Mombasa. Ali Mwakwere owns Kaya FM, which he aggressively used at one time to re-gain his seat in a by-election in 2011.

Kenya Prime Minister Raila Odinga also owns an uptown FM station, Radio Umoja, which targets the youth. A political ally of Raila Odinga, Jakoyo Midiwo, on his part owns Lake Victoria FM².

Other media outlets include KBC the state broadcaster that owns over 20 radio stations while Nation Media Group (NMG) owns seven newspapers, several magazines. NMG also owns Nation Television (NTV). According to Othieno Nyanjom (2012)³, previously, NMG was perceived to be against the Moi regime, and in time, for Kibaki. Othieno further states that it is unsurprising that NMG supported Kibaki's re-election bid and his Party of National Unity (PNU) in 2007, in fact, an NMG director was at the heart of the PNU campaign effort.

¹Retrieved on 12/4/2013 at 2.40am from http://www.journalism.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=51&catid=166&id=3741&view=article.

² Ibidem.

³ Op.cit

The Standard Group (SG) whose largest shareholder is Baraza Limited¹ (owned by the family of former President Daniel Moi, who in 2002 endorsed Uhuru Kenyatta to vie for the country's presidency). Othieno (2012) further points at anecdotal information which suggests that Moi controls an estimated 85% of the company (much of it through proxy), thereby making other shareholders functionally inconsequential. See table 1 below on the list of known and likely Kenyan Political Links with the media.

Table 1. Known and likely Kenyan political links with the media

Registered Frequency Holder/Station ID	Likely Political Link
MediaMax – The People, K24, Kameme FM, Meru FM	Connected to President Uhuru Kenyatta.
Regional Reach Ltd – Kameme FM	Rose Kimotho, sold to Media Max, company associated with President Uhuru Kenyatta
STV Holdings – STV Sold to TV Africa Holdings,	Associated with President Uhuru Kenyatta
Digitopia – Milele FM, Anguo FM	Granton Samboja, a prospective Taita Taveta politician (Milele FM sold to MediaMax, a company owned by Uhuru Kenyatta.
Pili Pili FM	Associated to Najib Balala, a political ally of President Uhuru Kenyatta.
Eastern Broadcasting Corporation Ltd– Mbaitu FM; Syokimau FM	John Musyimi; Mbaitu FM linked to Charity Ngilu, presidential aspirant (Mbaitu FM and Syokimau FM, sold to MediaMax; owned by President Uhuru Kenyatta.
Mau West Development Initiative- Mururi FM	John Muthutho, a political ally of President Uhuru Kenyatta.
Radio Salaam	Associated to Yusuf Haji, a senator and political ally of President Uhuru Kenyatta.
Radio Africa Ltd – Kiss FM; Kiss TV, Radio Jambo, XFM, Classic 105	Kiprono Kittony, son of former Maendeleo ya Wanawake chair Zipporah Kittony, distant relative of former President Moi.
Kalee Ltd – Kass FM; Kass Weekly; Kass TV	CK Joshua, probable associate of Deputy President William Ruto
Elgonet Communications Technologies Ltd -	Joan Chelimo Poghismo, wife of Information and Communications minister Samuel Poghismo who is a political associate of Deputy President William Ruto.

¹ Op.cit

Golden Dreams – Content production	Alfred Mutua, gubernatorial candidate, Machakos
Media Seven Group Magazines	Hannington Gaya, a political ally of Raphael Tuju.
Neural Digital Broadcaster Ltd –Radio Umoja; Radio Nam Lolwe	Peter Oluoch, connected to parliamentarian Jakoyo Midiwo, first cousin to Prime Minister Raila Odinga
Bondo Community Multimedia Centre – Radio Maendeleo	Anthony Munyao, associated to Raphael Tuju, presidential aspirant
Fish Media – Fish FM	Reuben Kigame, gubernatorial candidate, Vihiga County
Sauti ya Mwananchi Radio and TV Ltd	Joseph Koigi Wamwere, ex – parliamentarian.
Sauti ya Pwani	John M. Musyimi, a political ally of President Uhuru Kenyatta.
Sauti ya Rehema – Sayare FM; Sayare TV	Rev. Eli Rop, Board of Directors previously included Prof Margaret Kamar, parliamentarian and wife of former parliamentarian Nicholas Biwott.
Southern Hills Development Agency – Kaya FM	Mandale Warrakah/Rose Mwakwere, brother and wife of minister Chirau Mwakwere, a political ally of resident Uhuru Kenyatta.
Royal Media Services Ltd –Citizen TV; Citizen Radio and 11 vernacular radio stations	Samuel K. Macharia, previous parliamentary candidate Gatanga, links to various senior politicians

Source: Othieno Nyanjom (2012), Internews in Kenya, Factually true, legally untrue: Political Media, unpublished Research paper

3. Research Methodology

This is a survey research. Two separate surveys will be conducted with a view to ascertaining the:

(1) publics' confidence in the conduct of journalists during the 2013 General election in Kenya and (2) journalists' perceptions of influence of media ownership on journalistic independence in Kenya.

There will be piloting of the structured interview to a small representative sample after which journalists will be interviewed between 10th April 2013 and 20th April 2013.

In the first survey, a survey of voting-age people will be carried out in five counties in Kenya. An eleven-item closed-ended questionnaire will be developed and administered to one hundred respondents in towns from five Counties in Kenya. The Counties to be covered by the study are: Mombasa, Nairobi, Kisumu, Nyeri and Uasin Gishu. This provides for adequate national demographic configuration for the study.

Within each of the five zones a total of 20 persons will be selected to respond to the question items in the questionnaire. The respondents will be selected based on a dimensional sampling approach to make sure that dimensions of sex, age and education, and SES would be represented.

The study will be carried out with the help of five trained research assistants. However, the research frame will make reference to events six months before and two months after the general election. This is the period immediately before and after the elections when the memory of the media coverage was more likely to be fresh in people's minds.

In the second survey, journalists working for the mainstream media outlets in Kenya will be interviewed to establish whether there was a plausible link between ownership of the media outlets and the manifest bias in the news content.

Participants will be obtained through snowballing. A total of one hundred (100) journalists from both the print and broadcast media participants will respond to a series of questions rated using a Likart Scale model. All the respondents will be assured of complete anonymity to facilitate candid answers.

4. Findings

4.1. Public Perception of Media

The initial question that the respondents were asked was whether they were generally satisfied with the media coverage of the 2013 general election.

To what extent were you satisfied with the amount of media coverage of the 2013 general election?

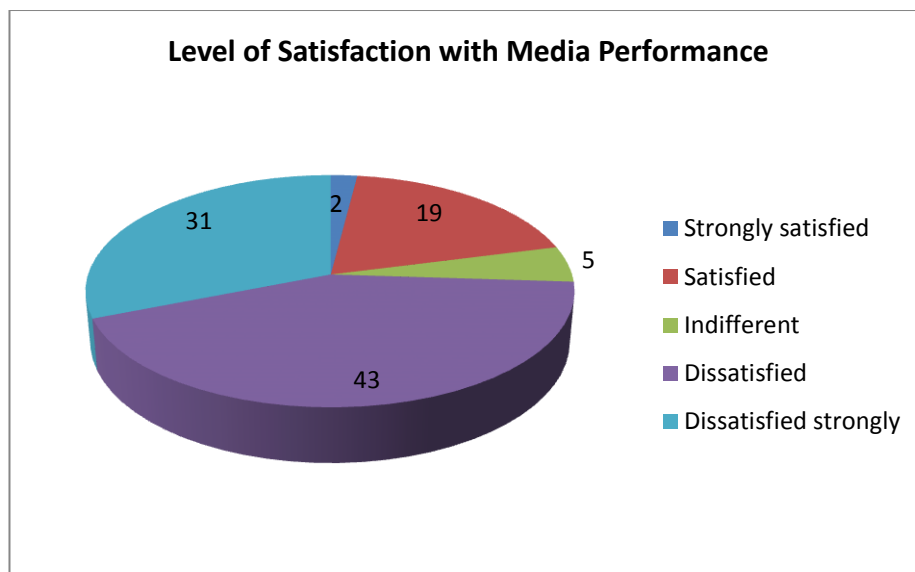


Figure 1

The findings indicate that 21 percent of the respondents were generally satisfied with the media performance of the 2013 general elections whilst 74 percent of the respondents were generally dissatisfied with the performance of the media.

In order to assess the reachability of the print and broadcast media the respondents were to respond to the following question: Between broadcast media (Radio/TV) and print media (newspapers/ magazines), which of these media gave you a more comprehensive account of the 2013 general elections?

The findings indicate that 66% of the respondents agreed that broadcast media gave them a more comprehensive account of the 2013 general elections while 32% of the respondents paid tribute to print media. The remaining 2% of the respondents felt that none of the above media was satisfactory in the coverage of the election.

It can therefore be concluded that more people in Kenya get their news from radio and television compared to newspapers. See figure 2 below.

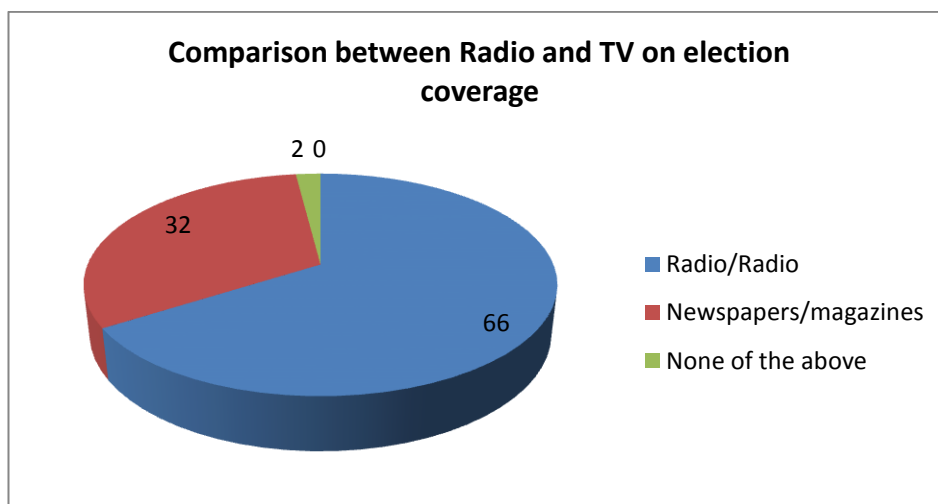


Figure 2

The research also sought to find the perception of the public confidence and trust of the performance of the publicly owned/state radio and TV stations. In this regard, the respondents were to rate the performance of public broadcasting (KBC Radio and TV) stations in the coverage of the 2013 elections in terms of public confidence and trust. See figure 3 below:

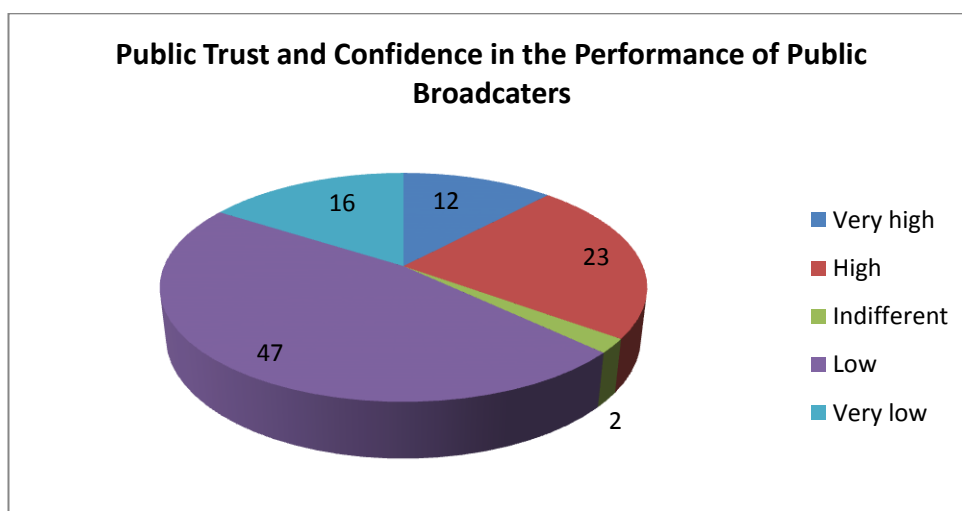


Figure 3

The question above is crucial and the responses indicate a general climate of distrust of the public media. Only 12% of the respondents rate the public broadcast media very high. In a contrast between high and low, 23% of the respondents rated

the performance of public broadcast media in the election high whilst 63% of the respondents perceive the state media in terms of low performance in election coverage. 2% of the respondents were indifferent to this question item.

When asked to assess the coverage of private Radio and TV stations in the coverage of the 2013 election in terms of public confidence and trust, the findings clearly showed that there was insignificant difference in the public's lack of confidence between the private and the public media: 64% and 63% thus raising questions as to the existence of an unholy alliance between conglomerates and an overbearing political regime. See Figures 3 above and figure 4 below.

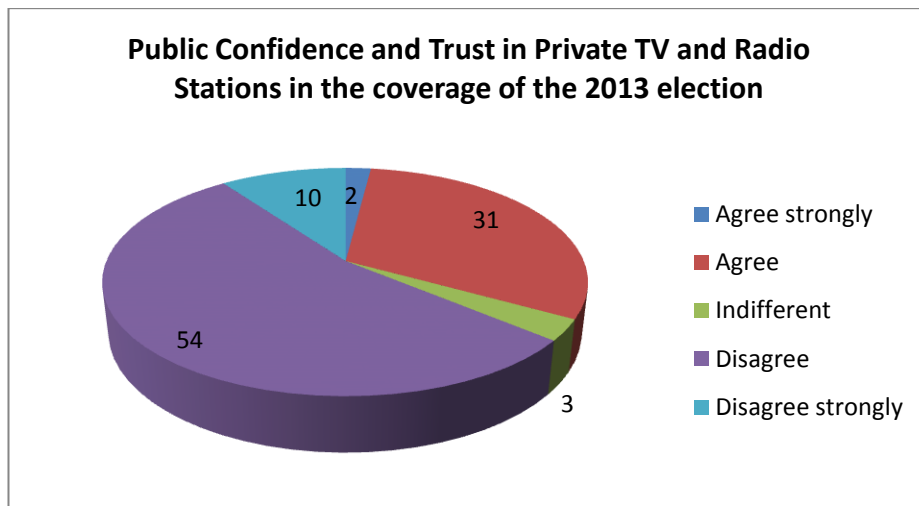


Figure 4

With regard to the public's evaluation of the performance of the print media in the election coverage over half of the respondents felt that the print media's performance was below par. See figure 5 below.

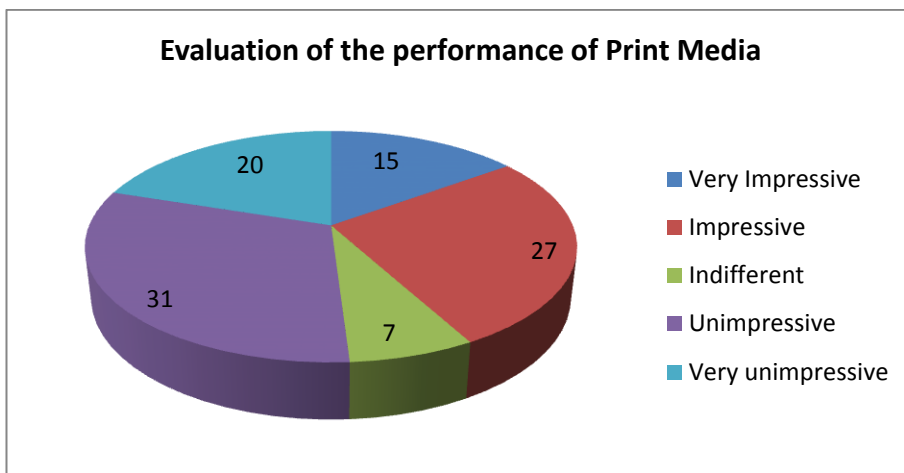


Figure 5

This question is crucial in respect to the public’s confidence in the performance of Kenya’s print media. The survey shows that 51% of the respondents think that the print media was unbalanced.

There is also a cloud of distrust by the public regarding the freedom of journalists.

Majority of the respondents were of the view that the journalists did not enjoy reasonable press freedom during the coverage of the 2013 election. See Figure 6 below.

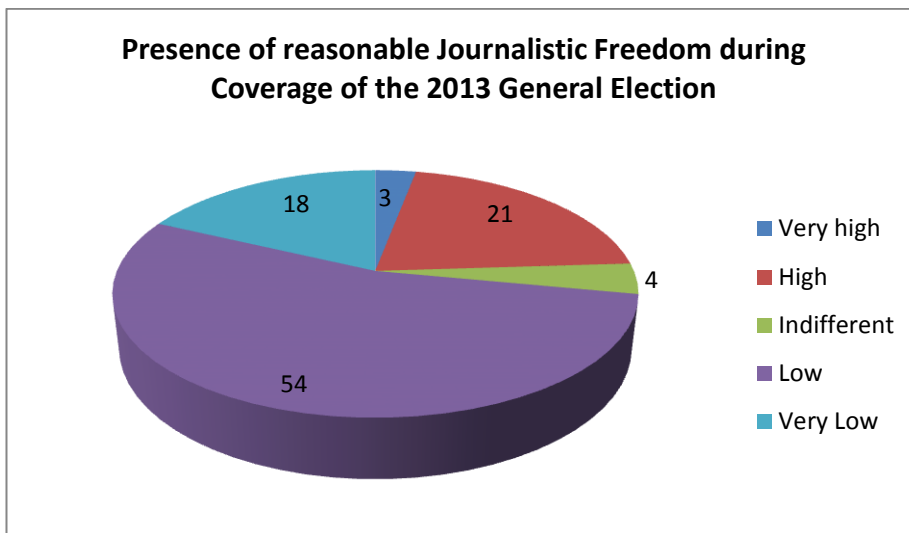


Figure 6

The above findings indicate that only 21 percent of the respondents think that journalists were working under conditions of reasonable press freedom during the 2013 general elections while 72 percent claimed there was no reasonable press freedom.

Even though most respondents would not have a very comprehensible or detailed understanding of how journalists work, there was a widely shared perception that the conditions for freedom of expression in Kenya were largely unfavourable to journalists.

Quite crucial too was whether the principle of equal coverage of political parties and candidates was adhered to by media establishments in the 2013 general election. The findings indicate that there was a general perception in the public that the media's coverage was skewed to favour certain political parties and individuals.

Only 6 percent of the respondents agreed that there was equal coverage of political parties and candidates during the 2013 general elections.

However, - respondents (77 percent) said there was not equal coverage of political parties and candidates by media practitioners during the election. There was a general perception that the media were not providing a balanced, fair coverage of different political options other than that of Jubilee and CORD coalitions. See Figure 7 below.

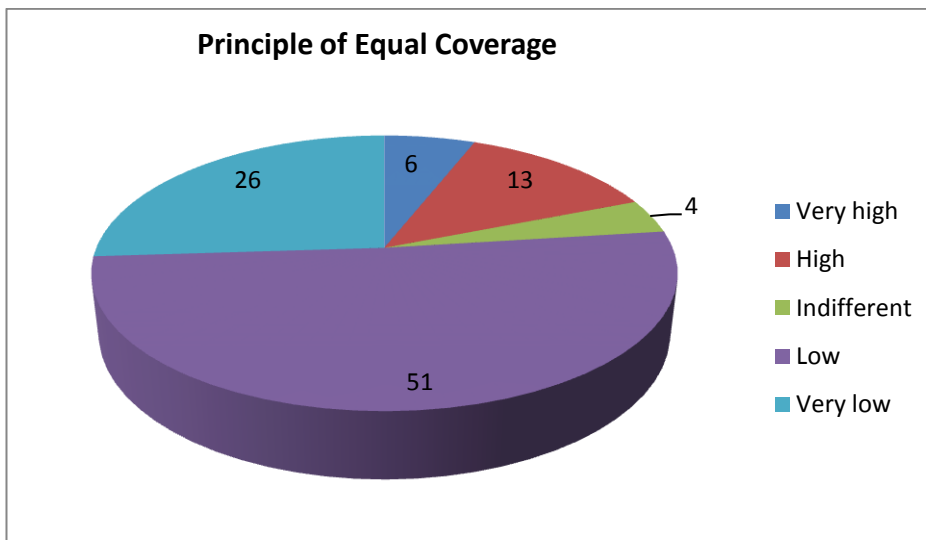


Figure 7

When asked to rate the perception of bias in the media's handling of the election, 63% of the respondents thought that there was presence of bias. See figure 8 below.

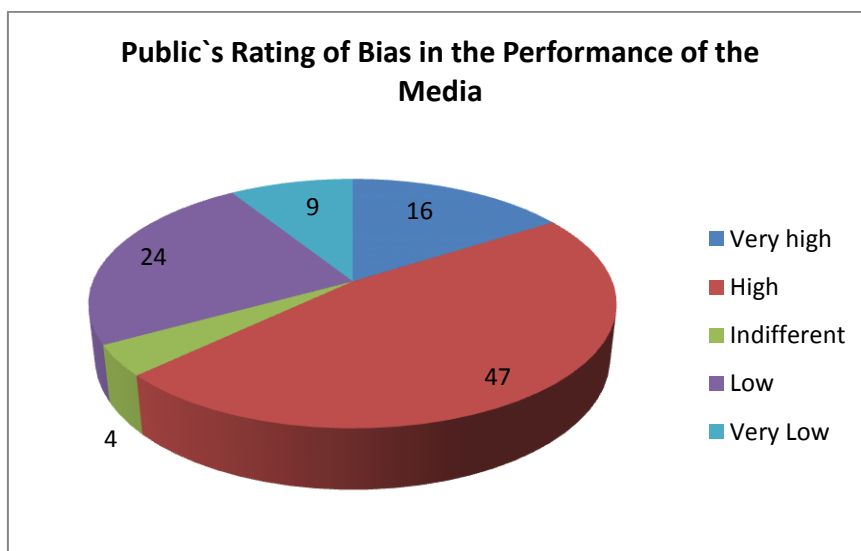


Figure 8.

The research then sought to know the source of the bias in the coverage of the election. In this regard the following question was asked: Was there bias in the media content? If yes, what was responsible for the biases in news and other reports by the media during the 2013 general election?

The findings indicate that most respondents (55 percent) identified ownership and control structure of media organizations as a major reason for biased reporting during the 2013 general elections whilst 22% of the respondents blamed the scenario on the brown envelop syndrome in the media circles. 23% of the respondents identified irresponsible journalism for bias in news and other reports during the 2013 general elections. On the issue of public confidence in the media performance in the 2013 general election in Kenya, the respondents were asked to state the degree to which they think that the media in Kenya probed the results of the elections as announced by IEBC.

The findings show that out of the respondents, only 14 % said media probed the results of the elections as announced by the IEBC. 84% of the respondents claimed that the media did not probe the election results as announced by IEBC despite widespread charges of vote count anomalies. See figure 9 below.

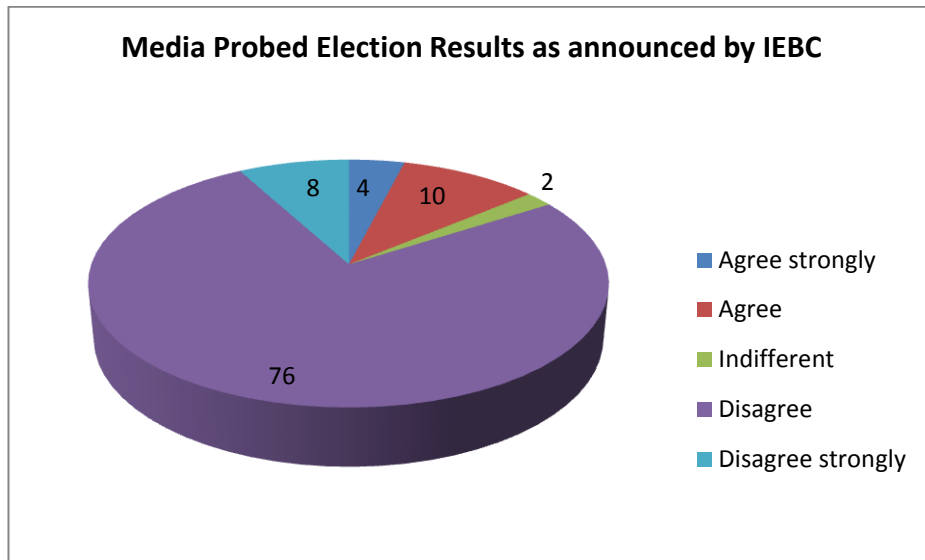


Figure 9

This research also intended to assess the role of citizen journalism in the communicative landscape in the country. In this regard this research asked the following question: To what extent do you agree that the citizen journalism played a positive role in the coverage of the 2013 general election in Kenya? See Figure 10 below.

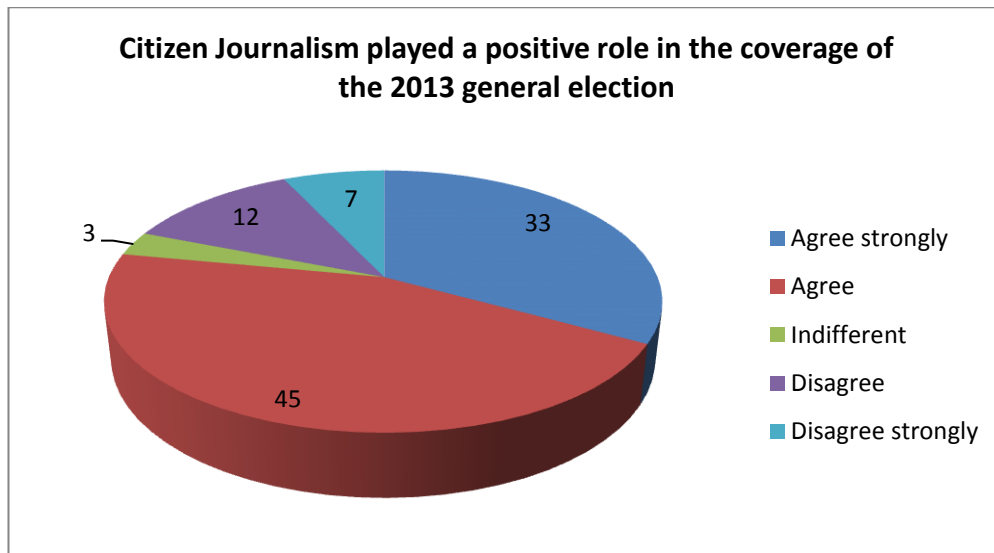


Figure 10

The findings show that majority of the respondents agreed that citizen journalism played a positive role in the coverage of the 2013 general election in Kenya. 78% of the respondents agreed that the new media is instrumental in the coverage of the 2013 election. 19% of the respondents disagreed whilst only 3% of the respondents were indifferent.

4.2. Journalists Perception of Media Ownership on Journalistic Independence.

A seven-item closed-ended questionnaire was developed and administered to one hundred (100) journalists on a snowballing basis. This was deemed the most appropriate method given that some media houses had forbidden journalists in their employment from granting any interviews on matters touching on the conduct of their organization in the coverage of the 2013 general election. The researcher and the research assistants had to thus purposively identify a few journalists who led them to other journalists willing to grant the researchers an interview in privacy.

When asked of their perception of how important independence of media was in enhancing democratic life (Q1), an overwhelming majority (98%) of the surveyed journalists across the three newspapers felt that independence of media is important to democratic life.

However, when asked to rate the journalistic independence given to express their own individual position when commentating on the 2013 general election in Kenya (Q.2), 66% of the respondents felt that they had no independence to express their views on the general election. Only 33% of the respondents disagreed whilst only 1% of the respondents could neither agree nor disagree with this statement. See figures 11 below.

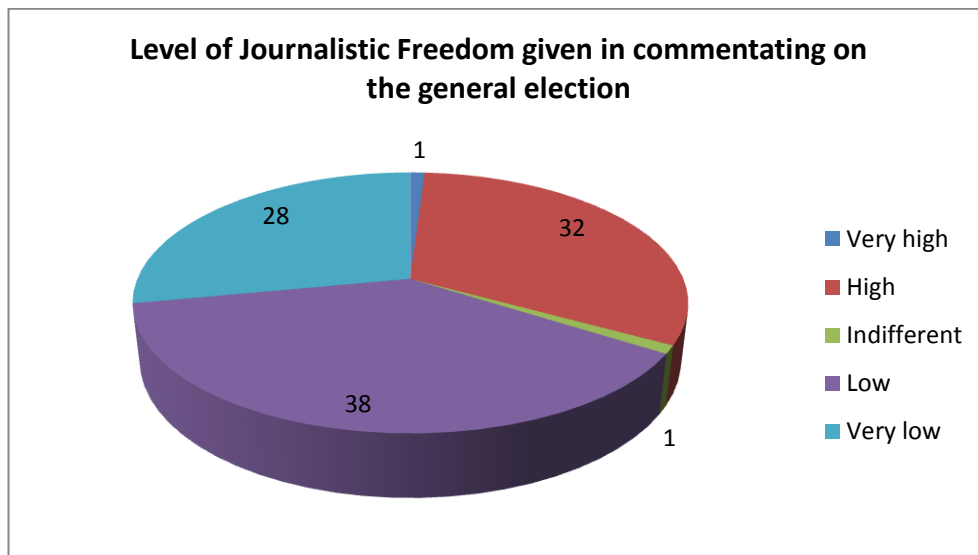


Figure 11

When asked (Q.3) whether the owners of their respective media organizations did influence the editorial content during the coverage of the 2013 general election in Kenya, more than half of the respondents (51%) agreed that media owners influenced editorial content in the coverage of the 2013 general election whilst 41% of the respondents felt that the media owners did not influence the editorial content. See figure 12 below

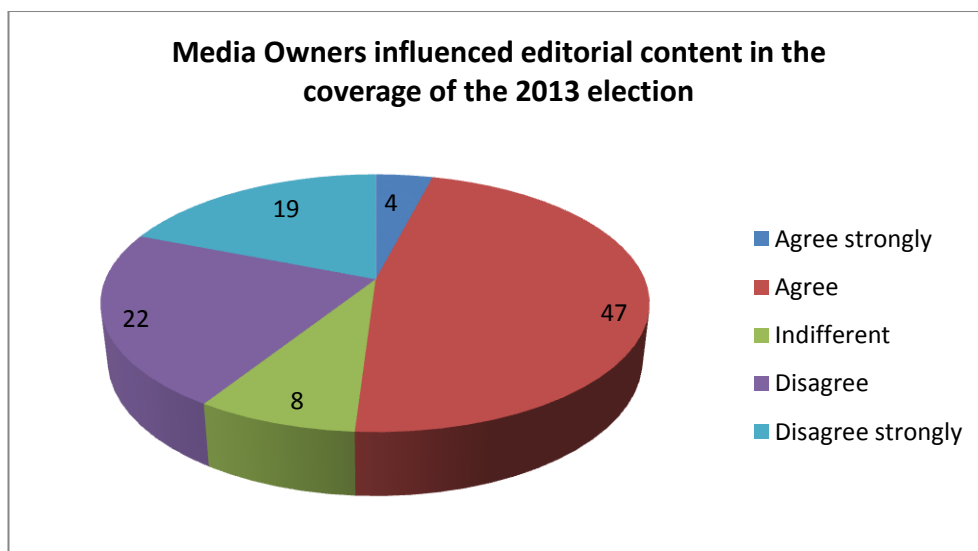


Figure 12

Further, this research sought to know whether there was a significant shift in the respective media outlets` editorial policy during the election period compared to other times (Q.4). 53% of the respondents felt that the editorial shift was high while 45% thought that the editorial shift was absent.

Two respondents could neither agree nor disagree.

In exploring the question of media diversity in Kenya and its impact on journalistic work (Q.5), the following question was asked: To what extent do you agree that Kenya has adequate regulations to protect diversity in broadcast media?

The findings indicate that majority of journalist believe that media diversity in Kenya is threatened. See figure 13 below.

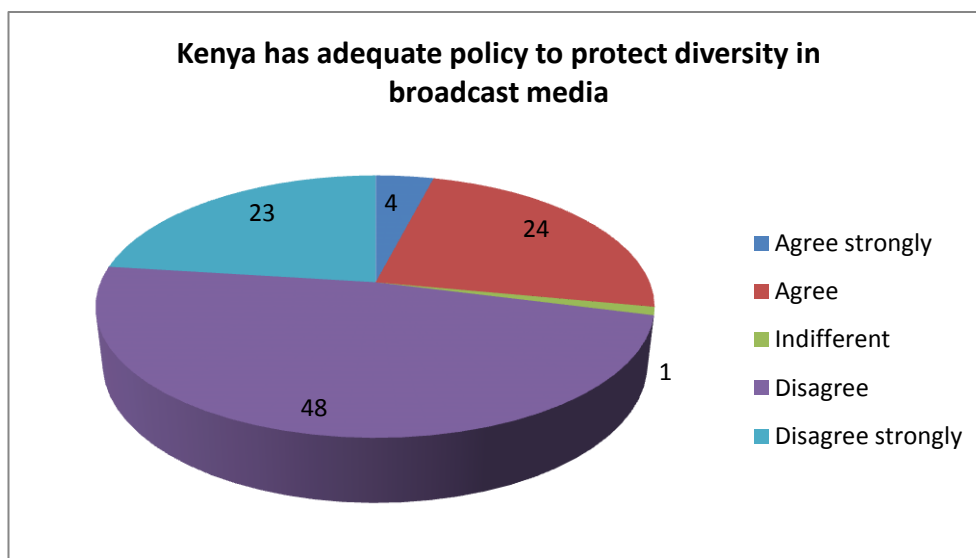


Figure 13

Only 28% believe regulation to protect diversity in Kenya’s broadcast media is adequate. Considering that 71% of those surveyed do not believe that Kenya has adequate media diversity and agree that legislation is needed to protect diversity is indicative of a worrying trend insofar as journalistic freedom is concerned.

This survey also looked at private media ownership and what this means for journalistic independence (Q.6). Journalists were required to rate the extent of their agreement with the statement: Media Diversity is at risk in Kenya due to media ownership trends. Figure 14 below.

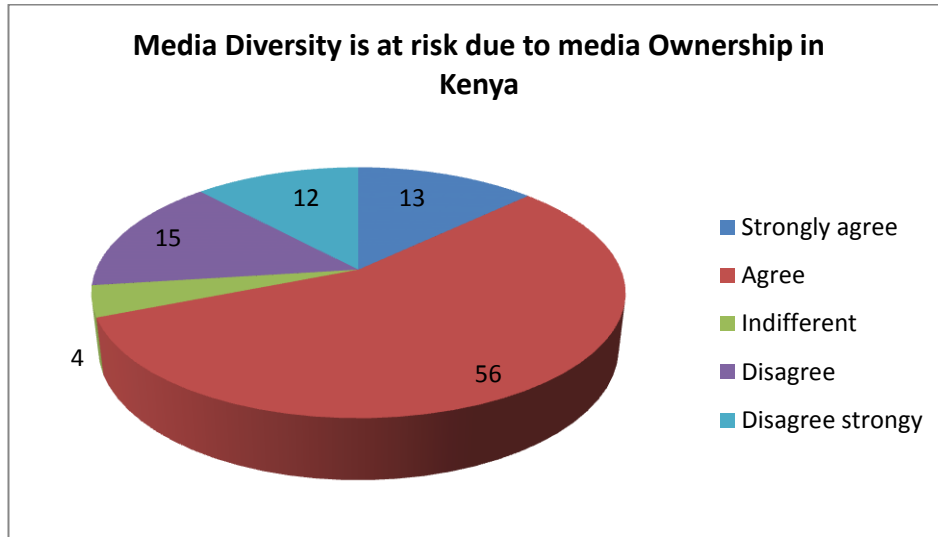


Figure 14

Again, over 69 percent believe that diversity is at risk due to trends in ownership. There is no denying that this raises some very serious questions that the country must begin to address.

In order to find out the perception of the respondents regarding the role of the new media in Kenya (Q.7), the research asked the respondents to state the extent to which they agreed with the statement that the citizen journalism protects media diversity in Kenya. See figure 15 below.

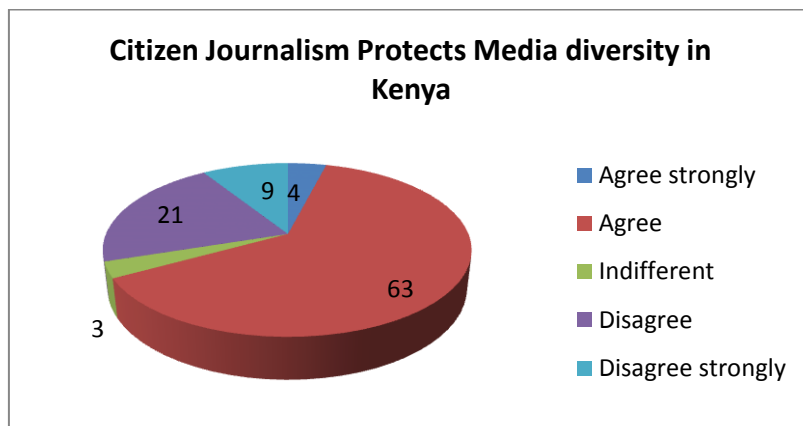


Figure 15

The research established that 67% of the respondents agree that new citizen journalism is helping to protect diversity. While 3% were indifferent. A further 30.4% disagreed with the view that citizen journalism protects media diversity in Kenya.

Finally in assessing the role played by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), respondents were asked to rate the level of confidence that they had in the performance of MCK before and during the 2013 general election in Kenya (Q.9). See Figure 16 below.

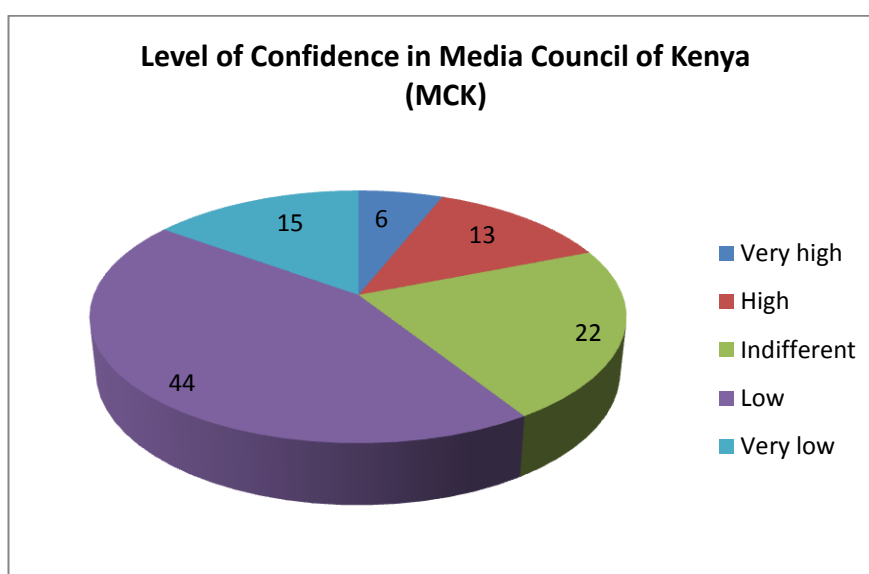


Figure 16

The findings show that only 19 percent of respondents rate MK in terms of high performance. This research could not independently verify why so many respondents (22 percent) were indifferent to this question. However, considering that 59 percent of the respondents rate MCK in terms of low performance it is perhaps indicative of MCKs inability as a media regulator to act independently. This is disquieting insofar as regulation of quality of journalism in Kenya is concerned.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The thrust of this study was on the responsibility of the media in the monitoring election processes. The findings clearly showed that there was an insignificant difference in the public's lack of confidence between the privately held media outlets and the public broadcaster (64% and 63% respectively) in covering the

electoral process. This finding negates the hypothesis that the privately held media outlets are more likely to constrict viewpoint diversity than a publicly held entity. This finding raises the question as to the existence of an unholy alliance between conglomerates and an overbearing political regime.

Secondly, the research indicates that the majority of the respondents (in the two surveys) attribute the perceived bias and partisanship to media ownership concentration and an overbearing government. This observation reflects Chomsky and Herman's argument that news coverage tends not to question information from the powers that be (read as government), rather these media outlets serve as megaphones for governmental and corporate propaganda (Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

Thirdly, dissatisfied by what appears to be an increasingly partisan media, the electorate has looked toward citizen journalism to fill the information gaps left by the mainstream journalists in Kenya. Suffice to say that citizen journalism has not only unsettled the practices of journalism but is positively changing them for the good.

This study proposes several recommendations to protect viewpoint diversity and journalistic independence. The first recommendation is the need to provide clear guidelines for monitoring hate speech and incitement in Kenya's broadcast and print media. The guidelines as currently constituted are ambiguous and thus provide a potential ground for an overbearing political regime to further constrict journalistic freedom.

Secondly, the government must enact policies to guard against unhealthy media ownership trends that may eventually suffocate viewpoint diversity in news coverage.

Thirdly, there ought to be safeguards for editorial independence. In this regard, declarations contracts must be signed by both editors and media owners to ensure that the latter do not interfere in editorial matters.

Fourthly, there is a clear need for promotion of citizen journalism in order to expand the diversity of information choices for the public.

Finally, there is need for a public audit into the conduct of MCK in the period leading to and during the 2013 general election. Currently, it would appear that MCK is either a captive of MOA or at best a facade for continued partisan interests. More importantly, there is need to review the Media Act to produce a more effective framework for MCK operations. MCK must get government funding without strings attached to make it independent of the colossal MOA.

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