Media and National Development: Bechmarking Socialization and Agenda Making Process of the Kenyan Media towards the Kenyan Vision 2030

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Abstract: The aim of this study was examine the role of the Kenyan media towards the achievement of the Kenyan vision 2030. It looked at the role of t h e media in the national development establishing a relationship between the media and the achievement of the Kenyan Vision 2030. The study was set to test the assumption that the role of media in Kenya in national development relies majorly on their sovereignty, independence, and the ability to effectively communicate in a proficient manner: objective, unbiased, just and professional information to both government and the general public. The study therefore seeks to answer the following question: How well has the Kenyan media contributed to national development and the achievement towards the Kenyan vision 2030?

The study focused on only four areas of the media: Radio, television, print and the internet; examining the role of the media in the following arms of development: political, economic and social development in Kenya.

The study reviewed theories relevant to the study and key secondary data, opinions and facts relevant to the study. It followed a purely qualitative approach based on content analysis of local and of studies conducted elsewhere.

Keywords: Development, Socialization, Media, Mass communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The media plays a big role in the achievement of the Kenyan vision 2030. The Kenyan Vision 2030 is the country's development programme covering the period 2008 to 2030. Its main aim is make Kenya an industrialized country, the quality of life of its citizens by the year 2030. This is based on three pillars: the economic pillar, the social pillar and the political pillar. In other words it's about national development, based upon improving the political, economic and social lives of the citizens. The impact of the media in national development relies on: the media themselves, the societies in which they operate, and the audience they reach. These factors are not static but they are dynamic. The media in draconian states, for example, are not likely to exercise the same persuasion as those in autonomous societies. Kenya is a fairly democratic country however even in democratic governments, factors, such as technological advancement, the intended audience and the message manipulates how far the media impacts on the society.

The fact that every medium has a message, its target audience and aims at influencing behavior in terms of the attitudes, perception and the mind set, gives it a vantage point to influence development in a nation. The media communicates to its audience, creating a shared meaning through sending and receiving of information. Knowledge is power therefore the media is vital for understanding and providing knowledge to the people (Baran, S 2002). Through communication the people get to be aware of and value their environment, in addition communication paves way for relationships among individuals and societies. Whatever form communication may take, it is meant to convey information from one party to another. Key factors to effective communication comprises of; the source, message, medium, receiver and effects

(Mcqual D, 1986). For significant influence to be achieved on the audience there is need for Mass Communication. Mass Communication is the communication between a mass medium and its audience (Ibid, 2000).

The media entails numerous ways through which communication is carried out. The influence of the media towards national development is crucial and requires attention from scholars. However, it is significant to understand what is meant by the term "national development" so as to be in a position to merge media to national development. The Oxford dictionary 2001 looks at development a new stage in a changing situation. According Fowler F.G (2001) To "develop" is to become more advanced. Eapen K.E (1973) looks at national development in terms of three key pointers: economic growth, self-reliance, and social justice. National development involves factors like :political, economic and social factors. Development should factor in economic structure, social environment and political maturity. We cannot talk about development without factoring in the people, because national development targets the citizens since human development is the overall objective of national development. With reference to UNDP Human Development Report of 2002, it looks at national development in terms of, right to knowledge, improved nutrition and medical services, protection from crime and violence, political freedoms and free participation in community activities.

Media is seen as a crucial factor to national development because of its capability of influencing public opinion. Such that the power to influence public opinion should be handled responsibly and with utmost care because it can turn out to be negative if it will be biased sensationalist and careless in handling matters. Media freedom is compulsory, if it is to play an active role in national development. In 2013 the Kenyan media zealously fought for the freedom of the press by opposing a media bill that was geared to set up a communications and multimedia appeals Tribunal with powers to impose penalties on journalists and even powers to stop a journalist from working (AFP November 1, 2013).

2.   PROBLEM OF THE STATEMENT

Media are crucial in national development since they influence public opinion, behavior and attitudes of the public. There are factors significant in the performance of the media towards national development, which are worth being looked into. Media freedom and independency are crucial for agenda setting and socialization if national development is to be achieved.

3.   OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper was to establish, how well has the agenda setting process and socialization in Kenyan media contributed to national development and the achievement towards the Kenyan vision 2030.

4.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of the media in national development:

For the media to fruitfully contribute to national development, there are certain roles expected of them. These roles include; providing checks and balances in democracy (Fourth Estate), setting the public agenda, gate-keeping, watchdog, and force multiplying (William G 1994).

As the fourth estate the media guards the public interest and acts as the watch dog on governments activities. It offers checks and balances on the governments activities, its only through the media that true modern democracy is defined. Media tends to bind all kinds of power center in any democracy. "Only through the media can the governing communicate with the governed in any mass sense." (Nash K 1994). Media should ensure the government of the day is accountable and public's interest is protected. For instance in Kenya, hardly a day passes without the media highlighting corruption in the government. Corruption continues to negatively affect key aspects of the nation's life, such as health-care deteriorates and infrastructures failing (Karongo C 2010). Many innocent children are denied access to education due to corruption (The Standard December 17th 2009). Kenyans continually are faced with greedy public officials who are willing to go to any extent to enrich themselves at the expense of the tax payer who they are mandated to protect. The gap between the rich and the poor is overstretched. It is on realization that we tend to appreciate the efforts of the media as the fourth estate which checks and counterbalances the "powers" of executive, legislature and judiciary.

Agenda setting is one of the most important roles of the media. Agenda setting is looked at as the practice whereby the media establishes what the audience thinks about and worries about. (Wilson J & Wilson R 2001) the public operates on

the principal of reacting to the pictures in their head as opposed to real events (Lippman W 1922). According to Cohen's about the press "it (the press) is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." (Cohen B 1963).

According to Rogers E.M & Dearing J.W (1997), the media agenda tends to affect the public agenda at one level and the public agenda in return affects the policy agenda. Editors and broadcasters are instrumental in deciding what goes to the to the public and vice versa. In other words when it comes to agenda setting the press has given itself the mandate of selectively choosing what to the audience will see and listen to. It is a situation where by the agenda primers (media) feeds the agenda adaptors (consumers) with information they deem fit (Ghorpade S 1986). According to research Mcombs et al (1997) the media agenda has great influence on the public, since the public's perception and opinions will take the Medias presentations of facts. This was well illustrated with the Chapel Hill voters of North Carolina, whereby when they were asked to name the most significant issues of the day, their responses somehow were similar to what was being covered in print, radio and television in the past few days.

There are significant news stories that are aired regularly on various topical issues such as politics, crime and insecurity, grand corruption and other local and international information. the publics have a right to know about all this issues, debate on them and find solutions to what ails the nation as a whole (Kinyamu .M. 2013). When the public talk about some of these issues for a day or even for days they are consciously or subconsciously guided by what is making news in the media. The media presents to the public information that is going locally or internationally. For instance in February 2015, the media informed the public about Ababu Namwamba a member of parliament who was the chairman of powerful parliamentary watchdog committee on finance, who was accused for receiving bribes to alter documents that may have incriminated some powerful people in government. The public cannot know such information without the aid of the media.

5.   MEDIA, SOCIALIZATION AND AGENDA SETTING IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mass media as an   agent of socialization entails forms of communication designed to reach large audiences without direct face-to-face contact between those creating/conveying and receiving messages. The Kenyan media has played a big role in socialization by trying to introduce viewers to possible ways of appearing, acting and thinking as far as the Kenyan vision 2030 is involved. Many Kenyans either do not know or are ignorant of the Kenyan Vision 2030 but through the media many have come to understand what is entailed in the Vision 2030 and how it will impact them.

The Kenyan media has a greater opportunity to educate and make the masses aware about the development plan of the Kenyan vision 2030. The audience get to know about new technology, beliefs, values, and expected norms through the media.

The media's role in national development can be approached in different angles such as political, economic and social perspectives. Politically the media's role can be looked at in terms championing for democracy and good governance, political transparency, foreign policy, human rights, war on terrorism, and public relations. Economically the media can play their role in enlightening the audience about new and existing economic policy and growth, issues to with economic empowerment, promoting advertisements and tourism, business and investment. Socially the media should cover and communicate social issues that ails the society such as corruption, criminal violence, communal conflicts, prostitution, war on drugs, population control, education, food security, and public health.

Media and Political Development:

The media can affect politics and culture, supporting institutional change and development. Political pillar is one of Kenyan Vision 2030 and it is aimed at realizing an autonomous political structure based on issue-based politics that minds the rule of law, and shields rights and freedoms of its citizens. Transforming Kenya politically is its goal into a state in which equality is embraced, regardless of one's race, ethnicity, religion, gender or socio-economic status. Above all respecting and harnessing the diversity of its peoples' values, traditions and aspirations for the betterment of its entire people.

Communication through media aids expression of ideas and opinions, and boosts development of the society by being a platform for free expression w h i c h allow all the stakeholders to debate and come up with solutions for political problems.

The wake of political satires as evidenced in various media stations in Kenya such as K24's XYZ, Nation's "Bulls eye" and Citizens "Truth meter" is a proof of a matured democracy and lack of intimidation from the governments' side. Where by the citizens are allowed to air their views even criticize there leaders in a humorous way without being victimized. Free, fair and accurate media is essential to a healthy, functioning democracy. Media should make sure that the public makes informed electoral choices, and being on the look out to make sure the rule of law is upheld, and that the mechanisms designed to check abuses of power can function properly. With reference to the past March 2013 general elections in Kenya, media houses were witnessed inviting various political analysts to chat the way forward for Kenya and for the first time in Kenyan History presidential aspirants were put to task, to proof to Kenyans they are the leaders they would rather have, live on air during the presidential debates. Such that at the end Kenyans were left to decide whom they would prefer to lead them. In general the Kenyan media acted as "facilitators to check dictators, arrogant leaders and political elites that think they can get away with their action." (Edwards V 2000).

Political transparency and democratic accountability in imperative to national development. According to Balkin J.M (1998), political transparency encompasses three political virtues; informational, participatory and accountability. The Kenyan media has tried to make the political system more transparent by helping people understand the operations of government, participate in political decisions, and hold government officials accountable. For instance in June 2014 the Nation Media Group (NMG) on the case touching the Vice President of Kenya William Ruto, obtained documents that confirmed more than 25 million shillings hard earned tax payers money, was paid out to Vista Jet, the company that provided luxury jet service to the Deputy president and his entourage of 15 in the 4 countries tour. The government through the Information Permanent Secretary Dr. Bitange Ndemo denied spending such an amount and instead accused the Nation Newspaper of distorting facts. It is however important to take into account that the media can be manipulated by politicians by bringing about new issues that are geared to divert the audience attention to other political issues (Balkim J.M 2000).

Human rights such as: right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of association, and the right to a fair hearing, are the   rights   which   every human being is entitled to enjoy and to have protected as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). By giving voice and information to the people, the media automatically protects the freedom of speech. The media can always point out and made open issues that undermine any single human rights to expose the ill that may take the nation back to an era that never respected human rights. For instance in August 2012, the Kenyan media was at the fore front reporting the killing of a Muslim cleric Aboud Rogo Mohammed at Kenyan coastal city Mombasa, in what seemed as an assassination.

Media and Economic Development:

Media can boost economic development by promoting good governance and empowering citizens, so that economies can function better. The Georgia Economic Developers Association (GEDA 1999) defines economic development as "a sustainable process of creating economic opportunity for all citizens, stimulating business investment, diversifying the public revenue base, and enhancing quality of life (GEDA 1999)".

For economy to grow, it requires an enabling environment for businesses and investments to flourish. The media can support this by providing an atmosphere healthy for trade, through creating a transparent and accountable business climate by informing the public so that the investors and prospective investors can have a real picture of what is going or what they are getting into. Indeed the media in Kenya has tried to play this role adequately. In Kenya at least almost every television station gives business news showing the current status of business in the country and even comparing it with the global situation. Almost all news papers too have business segments that provide accurate financial information to potential investors, local and international economic issues, currency markets, local and international trade.

The media can however help or scuffle the enabling environment that aids economic growth. The Kenyan media have specialized in screaming headlines concerning insecurity state in the country and the portrayal of the National Government inability to provide security. Such like reporting could be act as a catalyst known to scare away investors, who are potential components necessary for Kenya to achieve its development plan of vision 2030. Resulting to retrogressive production and services, capital flight and disinvestment. Despite the commitment of the media to getting the story right if not logically balanced such stories results to a crashing effect on national economy.

Economic empowerment for citizens is important for one to say that a nation is developing. In Kenya the poor and women are usually the economically disadvantaged groups. The media should strive to improve a high quality of life by enhancing the ability of the poor and disenfranchised members of society through making their voices heard. They have the obligation to expose the living conditions of the poor and the oppressed, so that the leadership would feel some pressure to act. The media can also help in sensitizing government programmes on poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, so that public services are made more responsive to the poor. Research has shown that that women's access to the media is associated with better income and education, in addition to better health and fertility outcomes (Thomas D etal 1991).

The use of media all over the world has not only reduced the gap of information, but has also contributed to the economic growth of nations. Communication, contributes to the rapid economic development (Hornick R 1988). The robust media industry in Kenya is translating to good government revenue and in return making the economy grow.

Media and Social Development:

The World Bank defines social development as "development that is equitable, socially inclusive and therefore sustainable (Internet edn 1999)". The social economic pillar of Kenya's Vision 2030 states that Kenya aims to build a just and cohesive society with social equity in a clean and secure environment. Social development inspirers the disadvantaged to fully participate in development processes. The can give a helping hand in social development by helping the society tackle ills such as: corruption, criminal violence, communal conflicts, public health and related other issues.

The media can expose corruption in both the government and even the private sector. Section 35 of the Media Act (Cap 3 of 2007) and Article 34 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 visualizes a media that can without restraint broadcast and bring the public up to date on issues of public interest. Therefore, the media exposés should enlighten the public and not only enlighten but also inspire a reaction from the public. Bringing the public's attention for instance on the high level of crime and corruption perpetrated by officials or government itself. According to Ogosoo (1999), media can take action against corruption in both tangible and intangible manner. It is the media's key role to educate society about corruption, and secondly, as a watchdog, to expose the acts of corruption (Ogosoo O 1999). Since media can be a course for changing behavior since individuals care so much about their reputation.

6.   FACTORS INFLUENCING MEDIA ROLE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In Kenya media owners dictates the general editorial policy, the financial factors control how far is far in relation to investigative journalism and sponsors determine the cultural/sports events.

According to Fog. A. (1998) certain factors are detrimental to the role of media to national development. Factors such as sensationalism which may blur the audience from being enlightened and knowledgeable in issues such as policy making participation (Media rights monitor 2000). In Kenya as early as December 2006, Sang, who was a journalist and also a supporter of the opposition party Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), supposedly came up with a network which its objective was to gain power in the Rift Valley Province part of Kenya by engaging in crimes in opposition to the faction of the then ruling party, Party of National Unity (PNU). Through sensationalism Sang allegedly planned and organized crimes against PNU supporters through his radio show on when and where to commit attacks (Hague justice portal.net 2013). An event that nearly brought Kenya to a standstill.

Propaganda can also act against the media's role to national development. Propaganda can serve to rally people behind a particular cause, but it is abused when used to exaggerate, misrepresent or even lie about important issues. The Kenyan media has not used propaganda to its fullest to rally people behind the vision 2030.

7.   CONCLUSION

The relationship between the media and national development in Kenya is positive since the media operates in free independent environment. The media represents an instrument for influencing public opinion, attitudes and behaviors of the public, good governance, nation building and progressive policies.

The public out of ignorance or either subconsciously do not know that there is someone who dictates to the them what they read, watch and think about. The media picks the stories and the work of the public is to review them. through

freedom of speech and communication the public receives information that is newsworthy and are allowed to process the information without governments influence.

The Kenyan media plays a crucial role in national development and achievement of vision 2030. Its role covers the political, economic and social spheres. The Kenyan media should set the public agenda and act as the gatekeeper of public issues, perform the watchdog role especially in political transparency and fight against corruption. As the fourth estate, the Kenyan should continue providing the checks and balances in relation to the three branches of government, as created by the Constitution. Kenya is an existing example of a post-colonial society experiencing ethnic and religious diversities, therefore making the media particularly significant in facilitating nation-building.

Factors such as the freedom of communication and a conductive peace full environment with no government interference have been an important factor that has helped the Kenyan media to play an effective role to the achievement of vision 2030 and national building. However despite these factors the Kenyan media needs to contribute more if its role to national development is to be recognized. This can be made possible by influencing events in the society through productive propaganda concerning national development and the vision 2030 and avoidance of sensationalistic journalism that distorts the truth instead of exhibiting facts.

8.   RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Kenyan media to succeed in contributing toward the achievement of vision 2030 the Kenyan media must be more professional and objective. Media bias should be avoid since they negatively impact on the media contributing to national development. In other words the media should be more responsible and hold itself accountable.

The media should not be in the hands of selected few since it would lead to monopolization of information, lowering credibility and exposing the media to influence when it is supposed to be free without influence to carry out its role perfectly.

9.   SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH

With social media currently getting even more popular, it can become an effective tool for fast tracking national development agendas because its audience get to know what is happening at a more faster way. The flow of information is quicker as compared to traditional media. Therefore further research should be carried out to determine how social media in Kenya can be used to effectively influence the achievement of the vision 2030 and how its flaws can be mitigated and instead be used to actualize national development agendas.

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