

**THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL JOURNALISM IN SHAPING THE POLITICAL  
AFFILIATIONS AMONG KENYAN YOUTH**

**BY**

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## **1 DECLARATION**

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted in another University for the award of a degree.

### **Student Declaration**

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## **2 DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to my parents; John Muturi and Cecilia WAmbui and my siblings Mary Njeri, Joseph Gathii and Ian Ndung'u who are my greatest inspiration.

### **3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First, I thank God who has given me the wisdom and the strength to be able to carry out this research. Secondly, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Madam Elizabeth Oluoch who has guided me in writing this research project and for his continual support.

Thirdly, my sincere thanks goes to my parents who have given me financial and moral support, they have been a source of encouragement. Lastly I would like to appreciate all my course mates, group members and friends who have supported in one way or another to make this research a success.

## **ABSTRACT**

It is almost a guarantee that in every bulletin, political stories are always given priority over other stories. This is important because in simple terms politics have a direct impact on people and therefore political reporting should be a pathway towards a better understanding of politics which should lead to proper decision making. However, do these intense political reporting shape the political landscape in Kenya? Do political reporting have any tangible influence in helping Kenyan youth make decisions on their own particularly on matters of leadership and governance? This research therefore aims at showing the relationship between political journalism and the political affiliations among Kenyan youth.

In this research, I will look at the diverse sources of information ranging from radio, television, newspapers and the internet as influencers of decision making. By looking at these diverse media, it will help me get diverse views on the issue under discussion which is essential in meeting my objectives. Also, I will look at the coverage of the stories based on the pillars of information, education and entertainment.

The study will focus on the Kenyan youth for three key reasons which are: The youth in Kenya hold the majority votes and therefore lack of proper and adequate information on political matters may lead to poor decision making among them and therefore poor leadership. The Kenyan youth are also very vulnerable to political swaying since most of them do not have adequate knowledge on political matters and therefore cannot make concrete decisions on their own. Lastly, the youth are being groomed to take up the mantle in the days ahead and therefore adequate and credible information on leadership and governance is essential for them so that the leadership of the future impacts positively on the people.

Therefore, I will use the students of Maasai Mara University as my sample population.

In this study, I will apply random sampling technique to gather information. This method will work well since it will help in gathering diverse views which will help me make some general remarks before moving to the specific objectives. My sample size will comprise of 100 students of Maasai Mara University since they fall within the youth category of 18-35 years old and have the ability make decisions on their own. During the time of data collection, I will use Interviews and Questionnaires as my data collection instruments. In the case of interviews, I will conduct one on

one interviews with different people of both genders to get first-hand information on their take on matters of political journalism and political affiliations. I will use questionnaires to get information from many sources particularly where confidential information is required.

Once the data is collected, I will keenly record it on the tables while identifying the variables in the data. I will apply statistical formulas in analyzing and making calculations of the data collected while giving meaning at every step. After the analysis, I will present the information on pie charts and histograms and explain the findings comprehensively. Key findings will also be shown and keenly explained to give meaning. I will then publish a final report containing the key findings, conclusions and recommendations before I present it to the supervisor.

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## 1. CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Background of the study

Political journalism is a broad branch of journalism that includes coverage of all aspects of politics and political science (Brendan and John, 2014). Political journalism is also defined as the coverage of civil governments and political power, (Wells, 1934). This brief definition raises many questions in itself and before making further progress, it is worth defining the terms journalism and politics as they will be used throughout the study. Journalism is the practice of gathering, analyzing and disseminating information to a large heterogeneous and anonymous audience in a timely version (Peil, 2006). It is through this process that journalists get the information relayed to the target groups through different media such as mainstream, print or online platforms. The main role of the media therefore is to inform the public by giving accurate information rather than injecting their opinions to their audiences. Social responsibility theorists argue that the goal of mass media should be to improve society, not merely to give people what they want (*Perse, 2001*)

Politics refers to the process of making decisions applying to all numbers of each group (Habermas, 2006). It also refers to achieving and exercising positions of governance or organized control over human community (Mackenzie, 1967). Tied together, political journalism simply means media reporting of the organized control over the human community. Political journalism must therefore be handled with a lot of caution since it directly affects the human community involved. It is from the numerous political journalism that public opinion is formed, which is defined by Graber (1982) as a group consensus about matters of political concern which have developed in the wake of informed discussion. From the preceding statement, it is clear that political choices are achieved after some exposure to recurrent and reliable political news which give the audience a deep view of the status quo and help them make informed decisions. Therefore, for political journalism to have a lot of positive impact, news framing by the media should be avoided at all costs. Entman (1993) defines news framing as the selection of some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation. If all media houses were to frame their stories, the truth of the matter would not be revealed since many media houses seem to have taken sides and their reporting would be only but campaigns for their candidates. This



statement is highly inspired by Somerville (2012) whose report observes that media outlets are under the control of politicians and leading business persons through proxy or covert ownership.

From the points given above, it therefore calls for keen observation of the journalistic code of conduct whenever one handling matters of politics as it should be done in any other field. Citing from the Social responsibility theorists, the media should make room to express ideas and present content for undeserved groups in society (Perse, 2001) In this case, rather than airing the will of the most powerful and popular, the media should also give the views of the less fortunate in society which is an issue rarely covered in most of the media which is in contrast with the public representative role of the media. However, the media today seems to represent the will of the ruling class while suppressing the efforts of the lower class in the chase for equality, a statement echoed by Lasswell (1927) who says mass communication is a tool for manipulation and social control. Mass media have been noted to have effects across a broad range of contexts (McGuire, 1986) among them advertising and political campaigns. The fact that media reporting has impact on the audience calls for impartiality in reporting so that the public is fed with credible and unbiased content.

From a global perspective, political journalism takes a center stage in most media houses and routine publications. Similar to other places in the world, news coverage according to (D.M McLeod, Eveland and Signorielli, 1994) affects solidarity and consensus during crisis and political protest. This point helps cement the idea that political journalism is vital in determining the course of a nation, in that poor or biased political content by the media may lead to chaos. Roberts and Maccaby (1985) observe news and public affairs information is often the focus of cognitive effects in that it concerns information acquisition. This statement points out the importance of the media in relaying matters that directly affect human beings. Global politics are important in determining the world economic progress among other crucial factors in society. For this case, political reporting in different global media giants is detailed to an extent that it leaves the audience with a good grasp of information to make good decision which is worth applauding. However, what is of interest to one nation may not have the same impact to another and this makes global political coverage less important to the unconcerned parties. This notion is deduced from Cotton (1985) who observes that people with already made up minds on some political views will not be easily

persuaded otherwise, a point which raises questions about the impact of the media in changing the political affiliations

The global media houses such as Cable News Network (CNN) British Broadcasting Corporation and Al Jazeera also cover live interviews on political matters and invite questions and opinions from the audience something that largely contributes to political affiliations based on the ideologies and competence exhibited by the candidates. It is from such duties that democracy is seen and Graban (1993) observes that media is perceived powerful and democratic nations tend to uphold press freedom. For instance, CNN covered multiple debate sessions in 2016 between the US presidential aspirants Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton a forum which led to a one on one interaction between the two and their supporters, a task that was done fairly and impartially and which by extension must have contributed to the election outcome. However, the spread of propaganda among these giant media houses is also evident and this creates uncertainty in the public. We may be of the opinion that live political debates help instill some knowledge in us but Walker and Bellany (1991) observe that even when people encounter messages that might affect them, they tend to interpret the messages to reinforce their existing beliefs and attitudes. This statement is reiterated by Kraus (1962) who says that political candidate supporters are more likely to believe that their candidate was the winner in presidential debates, no wonder Mark Schuman (2016) observes the media as 'fractured'. Even though most of these media houses claim to be independent, the bottom line is that some are commercial broadcasters whose sizeable amount of income is generated from politically motivated activities and therefore absolute freedom is an illusion.

In Kenya, the local media give priority to political stories which are deemed important to the Kenyan citizens. The political news stories and political debates held show some level of progress in enlightening the electorate on political matters but the level of awareness is still low as observed by Jumia Travel Report (2015) that lack of awareness and knowledge is hampering growth in Kenya. Looking at the national televisions in Kenya, they are not fully independent and thus vulnerable to political manipulation and this acts as a pathway to disseminating biased information that may affect the political landscape (Somerville, 2012). There are also too many radio stations in Kenya most of which air their content in vernacular and since Kenyan politics are majorly ethnic driven, it becomes an uphill task to air fair and credible information that can warrant concrete

decisions. On press freedom, the Committee to Protect Journalists report of 2015 observed that Kenyan officials were increasingly crafting legislations that undermine freedom of expression.

The status quo is that many Kenyans can access information on different issues through different media. However, the information disseminated is framed to yield a certain response that is intended to portray the positive side of a one party or another (Entman, 1993). Despite the major progress in the media world coupled with numerous technological advancements, the mindset of many Kenyan youth on matters of politics has not changed much. As Raphael Obonyo (2016) observes, the youth have not crafted the strategies to participate effectively in elections to influence policies. Young people who are well informed are easily lured to make hasty decisions to support politicians or deny them their support based on some reasons that this study aims to establish even after getting sufficient political information from the media. This could be a clue that the youth, even at an early stage have already made up minds, a statement supported by Walker and Bellany (1991) and Cotton (1985). With already decided minds on the political progress, it becomes extremely difficult for political journalism to change such perspectives. So, the question really is, does political journalism affect the political landscape among the youth of Kenya?

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

It is a big problem in Kenya to have a committed media that airs political news day in day out and yet the events that the electorate and political fanatics portray do not reflect a good understanding of the political processes. As Kraus (1962) denotes, supporters of different candidates are most likely to believe that their candidate won a presidential debate interview, this statement portrays the ingrained tendency among the Kenyans who blindly support candidates not based on their performance but on some other reasons that this research aims to establish. This is particularly a problem because we are living in a changing world where there is continuous change of ideas and leadership styles, and when we refuse to buy new ideas, new and better ways of leadership that fosters transparency and participation, then we will be hampering the growth of this nation.

Furthermore, Somerville (2012) acknowledges that most of the media houses in Kenya are owned by politicians and business persons and therefore the journalists may as well tailor their political stories to satisfy the interests of the owners. This statement is further reinforced by the Committee to protect journalists report (2015) which shows that media houses are increasingly being manipulated by advertisers, politicians and key shareholders to tone down criticism against government, political or business cronies.

If different media houses package their messages to reach only specific political groups rather than the general public, then this will be a stumbling block towards establishing a united Kenya. The media's negative influence was experienced in the 1994 Rwandan genocide after radio was used to incite one group against another. A small scale of the same was experienced in Kenya during the 2007/2008 post-election skirmishes when some media aired inflammatory political messages that incited ethnic groups against each other and this is enough reason to put some control in the media particularly on matters of politics.

### 1.3 Objectives

#### General objective

1. To find out whether political journalism contributes to political party affiliations in Kenya

#### Specific objectives

1. To establish the relationship between too much political content and public opinion
2. To find out how agenda setting on politics shapes the political landscape in Kenya
3. To find out the role of the media in educating the electorates

### 1.4 Research questions

1. Is there a direct relationship between too much political content and public opinion?
2. Does agenda setting in politics help determine the political landscape in Kenya?
3. Is the media playing its part in educating the public on political matters?

## 1.5 Justification

Political journalism is important in disseminating information on political matters which are essential in the running of the society. This study will be of benefit in gauging the political content aired so that fair and accurate content is aired. It will also be of benefit in that it will help media houses not to fall victim of political influence which makes them become partisan in their reporting. This study will therefore be of great benefit in reaching the public with accurate and reliable political news to help them make decisions on their own. The study will benefit the Kenyan youth who rely on the media for political news and at the same time form a chunk of the Kenyan electorate. In this case, they will be able to get diverse and independent views from the media which will enable them make better political choices. It will also benefit the media in that they will choose to air political content intended for the general public and not for a segment of the population. It will also enable media houses to seek political expertise in explaining political matters so that from that the electorate can make choices based on the facts depicted.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

This study will focus on Maasai Mara University students in Main campus, Narok County. The area of study will be in the University premises. To get diverse information, I will use a student population of 300 students who will represent both genders and in general represent the Kenyan youth. This is because the population is mainly comprised of young people who form a large portion of the electorate, and have easy access to information from diverse sources.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The political sphere plays a vital role in almost all aspects of human life and this makes it an inevitable area of study particularly when tied to journalism. From very diverse views, some people argue that politics plays no role in certain acts like bringing up their children and providing the basic necessities. While this may be considered true, false or simply a point worth arguing, it again points us to the fact that the basic needs of education, health and even shelter are the impacts of the government policies towards its citizens. Failure of the parent/guardian to comply with such policies will lead to some punishment, again exercised by the judiciary which is a state machinery and a product of political formation. It is through such facts that various researchers and scholars have studied vastly on politics and the media. In this case, I will show the relationship between this topic and other topics studied earlier while paying keen attention to the specific objectives of the study.

### 2.2 Theoretical Review

#### **Lippmann's theory of public opinion**

This theory was brought forth by Walter Lippmann in 1921. The theory proposes that people form opinions based on what they see in the media. Lippmann's thinking was about the dynamic relationship between the press and public opinion. His views on the press and public opinion revolved around a central tenet of progressive thinking that an informed public would reach informed conclusions. His theory categorized the public as one that was unable to process information or behave rationally (*The Phantom Public. 1925*).

Lippmann used the 1914 Great war as his case study where Englishmen, Germans and Frenchmen lived on a remote island that received mail once every two months. When the mail arrived in mid-September 1914, they learned how their respective countries had been involved in hostilities. This

prompted them to start a war, when for several weeks, they had lived as friends before the mail arrived.

According to Lippmann, the real environment in which humans live is too big, too complex and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. As a result, citizens are forced to rely on what they can create for themselves trustworthy pictures of the world beyond their reach. Naturally, the mass media plays a critical role in the construction of these pictures. Lippmann's theory of public opinion however elicits some gaps in several cases. The theory is mainly focused on one way flow of information with the assumption that the citizens do not have a chance to participate in the content creation and dissemination, which contradicts what we have in the media today. The audience is no longer passive as Lippmann puts it but is actively involved in critiquing the content aired. The theory also fails to consider the role played by the opinion leaders and societal elites who play a significant role in determining the public opinion not necessarily through the media but through personal contacts with the citizens in the political rallies and other forums.

### **The agenda-setting theory**

This theory was founded in 1959 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, both Associate professors of Journalism at University of North Carolina. This theory purports that the media sets the agenda of the day. The theorists put it that in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters display an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only the about a given issue but also the importance to attach to that issue. By reflecting what a candidate is saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues i.e. set the agenda of the campaign.

McCombs acknowledges that the pledges, promises and rhetoric encapsulated in news stories, columns and editorials constitute much of the information upon which a voting decision has to be made. In addition, he says that most of what people know come to them as second and third hand from the media or from other people. Through this, the duo explained that so much takes place between the coverage of an event and the dissemination of the same, and the editing process adds or subtracts something the media wants the public to know or not to know respectively, and this may lead to a controlled way of discussing an issue.

Although the evidence that mass media deeply changes attitudes in a campaign is far from conclusive, that evidence is much stronger that voters learn from the immense quantity of information available during each campaign. People vary greatly in their attention to mass media political information and this idea dilutes the notion of media agenda setting. Some people, normally the better educated and most politically interested actively seek information, but most seem to acquire it without much effort, (Belerson, 1967). Belerson also found that those with greatest exposure to mass media are most likely to know where the candidate stands on different issues.

In a separate study on agenda setting in England, Trenaman and McQuail (1959) found from the General Election in England that voters do learn. They approvingly learn, furthermore in direct proportion to the emphasis placed on the campaign issues by the mass media.

The agenda setting theory is of key importance to this study in a manner that it helps in understanding how the media treats some messages so as to elicit some sort of response from the public. It is also helpful in determining the extent to which the media can influence people and the type of demography easily influenced by the media reporting.

This theory closely relates to this study in that the society today is made up of a technologically media oriented environment with lots of information on political matters. This theory will therefore help in laying the basis of finding out whether the availability of the political content from the media plays any role in shaping the public opinion on political matters.

### **The knowledge gap theory**

This theory was founded in the 1970s by Philip J Tichenor, a professor of journalism and mass communication, George A Donohue a professor of sociology and Clarice N Olien , instructor in sociology; all the three researchers at the University of Minnesota. The theorists believe that the increase in knowledge in the society is unevenly acquired by every member of society. They alluded that people in higher socio-economic status tend to have better ability to acquire information than those in the lower socio-economic status, which then creates the parity in



knowledge between the two groups. In their research, the theorists came up with two groups of people; one that has better educated people who know more about most things and a group with low education who know less. Lower socio-economic status people defined partly by educational level have little or no knowledge about public affair issues, are disconnected from news events and important new discoveries and usually aren't concerned about their lack of knowledge.

The theory states that as the infusion of the mass media information into a social system increases, higher socio-economic status tend to acquire this information faster than the lower socio-economic status population segments so that the gap in knowledge between the two tends to increase rather than decrease. Simply, as the access to mass media increases, those particular segments of population inevitable gain information faster and hence the wide gap with the lower economic status of the population. The theory purports that the attempts to improve people's lives through the mass media does not always work the way it is planned. They state that the mass media might have the effect of increasing the difference gap between members of the social classes mentioned. In this context, the mass media does so little to bridge the social classes that are established, instead, the media further separates the two sides through the content it offers such that each side is satisfied with what it receives.

This theory however, fails to consider the modern ways of communication such as the social media that relay information to all classes of people simultaneously and make them equally aware thus reducing on the knowledge gap. The knowledge gap theory is relevant to this study in that it will help determine the educational role of the media in to the audience and the impact this education has on political decisions. It will also help us understand whether the media is closing the gap between classes or widening it.

### 2.3 Conceptual framework

Walter Lippmann's theory of public opinion formation is founded on tenets such as the total reliance of the media by the public to form their opinion. The theorist also believed that an educated public would form an informed conclusion based on the information they acquire from the media. Lippmann's concept can be summarized using the following illustration:

### **Figure 1 shows a graphical representation of public opinion formation**

In the illustration above done by Pew Research Center on the 2012 Presidential elections between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, the graphs show the biases of the cable news coverage on Presidential candidates which translate to the public opinion formation. This graph can best explain the phrase ‘bad news sells’ in that at all instances stories aired with negative tone are in most cases high. With CNN, news with a positive tone on Obama was lower at 18 per cent as compared to the 21 per cent with a positive tone. The same trend was witnessed with Romney where positive news stood at 11 per cent as compared to 36 per cent of negative reporting. Of the three stations, MSNBC portrayed the highest positive news of Obama at 39 per cent while Fox portrayed the highest positive reporting of Romney at 28 per cent. Putting in mind Lippmann’s theory where the public totally relies on the media for political news, the public would form an opinion to vote for Obama based on how the media reports about him.

In this case, the media is the independent variable with the mandate to feed the public with whatever information it deems right, and this prompts the public to form their opinions. The public forms the dependent variable which relies on the media to form opinions.

In his study on the role of the new media in politics, Coleman (1999) points out that the new media is not important in the subversive service of the free expression under conditions of authoritarian control of the means of communication. This therefore gives the media the power to influence public opinion. Dahlberg (2001) pointed out that in media, the communication benefits are expected to come from greater roots participation and input and the strengthening of local political communities. He also says that there is perceived benefit to deliberate democracy made possible by improved technology for interaction and exchange of ideas in the public sphere. , Bentivegna (2002), describes some obstacles that the media may encounter in knitting public opinion and she shows that the Internet has not been fully explored in fostering democracy which would have limited the effects of the mainstream media.

The agenda setting theory purports that the media sets the agenda of the day. This theory by Maxwell McCombs (1959) shows that the media chooses the stories to give emphasis through

repetition or in depth coverage and these stories end up in the lips of the public. The theory can be summarized into the following illustration.

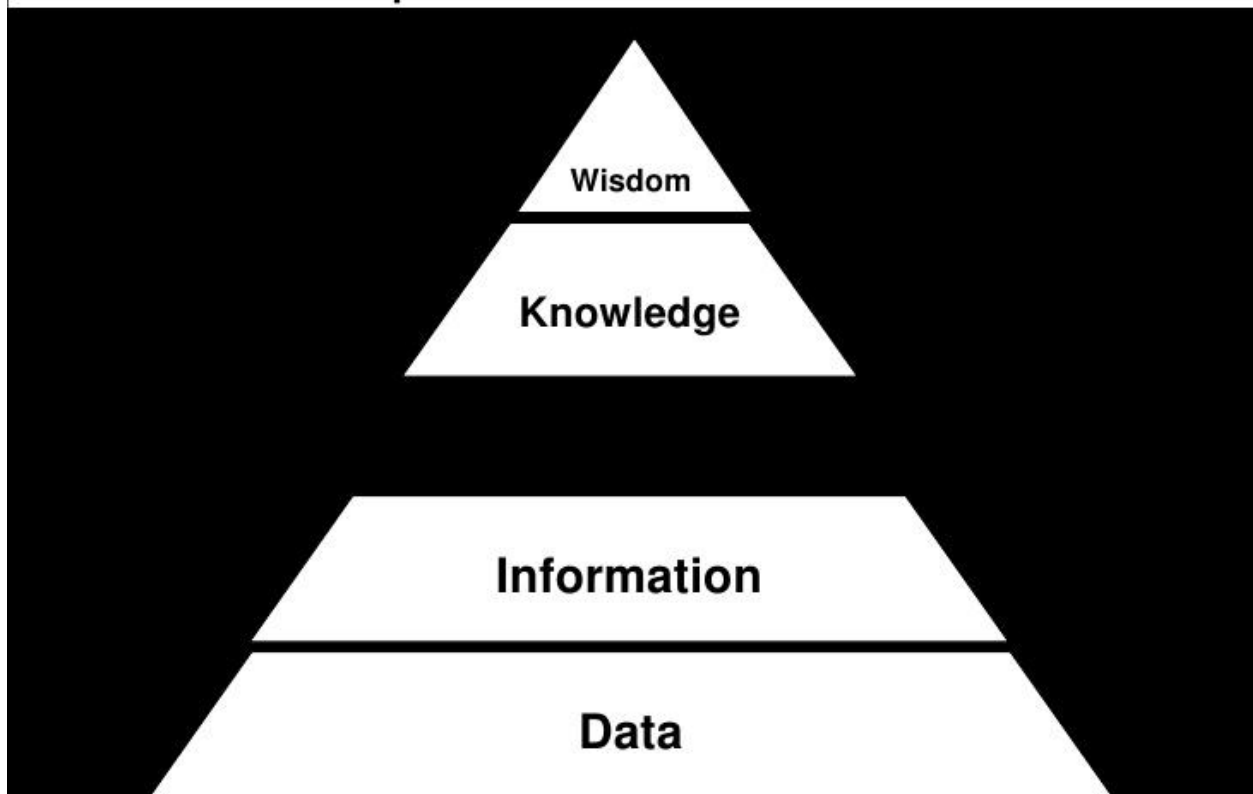
**Figure 2 shows a model of agenda setting theory**

In Figure 2, the agenda setting achieved in three spheres. The first sphere represents reality which is the information obtained as it is. The information may be on politics, Economics, Science and Society. When this information is selected, and edited by the journalists, it turns from reality to form the media reality or the media agenda as shown by the red sphere. When the media reality is passed to the public, yields a perception that relates to that of the media, which is called the public agenda or the public perception of reality. Also, through direct discussions of realities in the media, the public is able to derive an impression of the media information and not the reality.

From figure 2, the real stories or what is called reality is a dependent variable which depends on the media to give it meaning. The media is an independent variable which stands on its own to give meaning to whichever type of story and thus influence the public agenda. The audience or the public forms the mediated variable since their response is based on how the media chooses to tell the story. The publics' response or action depends on how the media chooses to tell the story.

This theory is backed by many scholars such as Trenaman and McQuail (1959), who in their study of Mass media and Election concluded that voters do learn matters politics from the media and their talk is based on what is written in the papers and what is spoken on radio. Lang and Lang (1962) also acknowledges that the media forces attention to some issues which build up the public images and political figures. It is through such reporting that some politicians in society are seen as outstanding than others. Cohen (1971) notices that the press could not be successful much in telling people what t think, but it is successful in telling its readers what to think about.

The knowledge gap theory popularly known as Tichenor and his colleagues' hypothesis o 1970 suggests that knowledge is not distributed equally throughout society. This theory attributes these variations to the wide socio economic classes. The theory is summarized with the following illustration.



**Figure 3 shows the hierarchy of knowledge**

From the figure, knowledge exists in different levels with the foundation part of it being the data which. It is from the data that people acquire information, and the sources of information are limited between classes. Due to these limitations, whereby those individuals from lower socio economic status have limited access to information while those from high socio economic class have large access to information, a gap is created between the two groups. This is what is called the knowledge gap. This group hinders the lower socio economic group from acquiring knowledge and wisdom and encourages those in high socio economic levels to acquire knowledge and wisdom. In this context, the socio-economic status is the dependent variable such that whoever falls on the higher side of it gets knowledge while whoever falls short of it does not. The independent variable is the knowledge which can be attained when one reaches a certain level of socio economic status.

As Lang and Lang (1962) acknowledges, people learn from the media and their exposure to the media contributes to the level of knowledge they acquire. People who are well off financially tend to have a bigger exposure to diverse information sources and thus learn more than their counterparts in the low socio economic state. Walker and Bellany (1991) show that young people tend to have an already made up mind and this attributes to the level of knowledge they have about a particular subject. It is the gap that will enable them to stick to their original beliefs or change to new ones based on how they are exposed to media knowledge. This sentiment is also supported by *Cotton (1985)*.

#### 2.4 Review of variables

The topic of study is the impact of the media on determining the political landscape in Kenya. It is worth noting that here exist to core influences that rely on each other for an action to be done.

The Kenyan youth form the dependent variable where they rely on the media to form most of their decisions. As Brendan Nyhan (2016) notes in his study on political journalism, most reporters are unfamiliar with what they include in political reporting and this determines the spin of the actions of the recipients. Through the use of the vast media platforms in Kenya, the electorate, majority of whom are Kenyan youth get to know what is happening and are able to decide on who to elect. However, their over reliance on the media as a sole source of information is marred with lots of drawbacks and one major one is their vulnerability to propaganda as acknowledged by Habermas (2006). The same sentiment is echoed by *Raphael Obonyo (2016)*.

The media on the other hand stands independent. It is relied upon to give un opinionated information to a heterogenous audience while upholding the values of fairness and impartiality. The media is charged with collecting information, editing the information based on its editorial guidelines and disseminating the information and it is independence that allows it to bring in the aspect of agenda setting, McCombs and Shaw (1972). It is through the media's untold influence that regulatory authorities are keen to control the media particularly during the time of elections.

#### 2.5 Empirical Review/ Studies

In a study that majorly tackles the youth, keen considerations have to be put in place to get as accurate information as possible. The population in bracket is that of a person aged 18-35 years. While this bracket is too wide, this study will focus on 18-25 years with the assumption that it is the age bracket of students in institutions of higher learning. This group exhibits similar behaviors in response to political and technological growth. They are also most likely first timers in general election participation and can easily be manipulated by politicians and they form the backbone of the study.

Different scholars have carried out studies on the role of the media in determining the political landscape in a society. A study by Keith Sommerville (2012) shows a tendency of governments trying to suppress media freedom when elections are on the horizon. This trend points out that the media has a significant role when it comes to political matters. This study also shows that some political journalists in African countries are killed, injured or jailed during political times with statistics showing that 17 journalists were killed and 34 jailed in 2012.

Through observation, the media in 2007 played a critical role in inciting ethnic groups against each other. Today, Kenya has over 50 radio stations and over 20 television stations some broadcasting in vernacular and some are even affiliated to politicians. This observation means there is a lot of information flowing around and this limits the chances of filtering the right content. A 2016 World Bank report shows that Kenya is among the leading countries in the world in youth unemployment a worrisome trend coupled with the ethnic based politics that we are experiencing. As Rosemary Muthoni of Mens Castle (2016) puts it, this is a ticking time bomb which if not handled urgently tackled may plunge Kenya into an irredeemable crisis. Her observation is based on the increasing number of school dropouts and street children a large composition of whom are male.

Crossing the borders, during the general elections in Uganda in 2015, there was a total outage of the social media communication platforms in fear of inciting people against the government. Even though this is a negative impact of the media, a positive role comes in in form of gate keeping, public representative and fostering democracy as echoed by *Raymond Kuhn, (2004)*.

## 2.6 Critique of the existing literature relevant to the study

There are numerous topics that have been discussed that have a direct link to this topic of study. However, not all the evidence provided points to this study since there are divergent views on the same topic. Looking at the theories that have been highlighted earlier, it is worth noting that they form a bed rock in this study.

In his theory of Public opinion formation, Lippmann (1921) shows that the public relies entirely on the media to form their opinions. The theory also shows that the media tailors a message in a certain way so as to influence public opinion. To some extent, the theory is true in that a large portion of the public relies on the media to form opinions. However, the theory overlooks the role played by some societal elites and opinion leaders who also have a say in determining the public opinion.

The agenda setting theory forms another basis for this topic in that the media sets the agenda of the day and the public discusses it. This proponent put forth by McCombs and Shaw (1972) has some truth to some extent but it also contains some inapplicable observations. The theory proposes that the media assists the public in assigning some importance to certain matters. This is achieved through repetition or stressing on some news stories which raises the interest of the public.

Most of the stories aired in our mainstream media form the basis of discussion by the public or through the opinion leaders who are professionals in different fields and this makes the theory valid.

In our daily discussions on matters affecting us, we cite the media as the source of the information and this shows that the media is so relevant in determining our daily talks.

Many people will either listen to the radio, watch television or purchase a copy of a newspaper to get to know on the current trends which shows that they rely on the media for their discussions of the day.

However, the theory has got its own flip sides and they are highlighted below:

The media does not always decide on what people discuss since the information the media puts emphasis on may be targeting a section of the population which may not be of interest to the larger population.

The theory does not specify the exact media that sets the agenda. Some media such as local newspapers only reach a section of the population and therefore cannot have much impact even if



the message is repeated while other media such as National radio reach many people and it may have a lot of impact to the listeners.

The media can get people discussing on matters that disrupt public order or create tension in a region.

On the knowledge gap theory put forth by in the 1970s by Philip J Tichenor, a professor of journalism and mass communication, George A Donohue a professor of sociology and Clarice N Olien , instructor in sociology; all the three researchers at the University of Minnesota. The theorists believe that the increase in knowledge in the society is unevenly acquired by every member of society. They alluded that people in higher socio-economic status tend to have better ability to acquire information than those in the lower socio-economic status, which then creates the parity in knowledge between the two groups. Some positive criticism about the knowledge gap theory are:

The high social class members are in better financial positions to acquire more sources of information as compared to the low-class citizens which further enlarges the gap between them.

This theory is useful when a certain message is to be relayed to a certain audience. This is particularly important when a sensitive message is to be passed across without hurting or annoying a certain group.

It is true that children born in well off families have many communication tools at their exposure during the young stage and these help them acquire better communication skills and they are able to express themselves well as compared to those born in lower status families.

Like any other theory, the knowledge gap theory has its own demerits which are explained below. This theory does not consider the modern ways of communication such as the social media that relay information to all classes of people simultaneously and make them equally aware thus reducing on the knowledge gap.

The media does not widen the gap, it rather closes the gap between the social classes since the information it broadcasts does not target specific individuals. Through the Community Broadcasting Services (CBS) and other local newspapers, the whole public is made aware of what is happening.

## 2.7 Research gaps

The literature reviewed so far provides a good foundation on the study of the impact of media in determining the political landscape in Kenya. However, the literature leaves some gaps which this study aims to fill so that a conclusive result is achieved.

One major gap is that so far, the various topics reviewed have a close tie to the American political system. This is a well-developed democracy with a well-structured media and a well-informed electorate. Comparing this to the Kenyan system, it reflects a young democracy with a developing media and a poorly informed electorate which forms a wide gap worth exploiting.

The literature reviewed also brings in an aspect of time. In this context, the time the studies were being conducted are different from today. The theory of public opinion formation by Walter Lippmann was founded at a time when the radio was the sole source of information with a narrow audience reach and countless restrictions from the authorities which obviously constrained information flow. The situation is different today with numerous communication platforms and a lot of press freedom which again forms a gap in the study.

Another existing gap is that of the increased literacy levels from the time the studies were conducted to date. Obviously, the society is dynamic and this dynamism is reflected in the political structures, educational standards and governance. While many societies may have been reluctant to adopt new policies in the yester years, the society of today is enthusiastic in trying new things and methods and this brings in a completely new picture which again creates a gap worth studying.

## 2.8 Summary

The literature review provides all the background information needed to piece together the evidence so that a credible thesis is derived. This section has brought out the in-depth views of the theorists of Public opinion formation, Agenda setting and Knowledge gap whose findings are critical in determining the role of the media in determining the political landscape in Kenya. This section has also touched on the various criticism that the theories are subjected to and this has also led to the identification of gaps in the studies which form the basis of this study.

### 3.1.1 CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### *3.1.2.1 3.1 The study setting*

This study was carried out in Nairobi County, which hosts majority of social media users in the country. The population in Nairobi represents Kenyans of different social classes, diverse ethnicity and political affiliation minimizing any chance of bias that would be associated with a mono-cultural setting.

Nairobi is Kenya's largest county which acts as the central business district hosting parliament and other administrative and commercial capital. Nairobi's estimated population is 3 million persons. Almost every Nairobi resident has access to internet through their mobile phone or PC.

### *3.1.2.2 3.2 Data Sources*

The study made use of both qualitative and quantitative data. Using both primary and secondary data as seen below;

### *3.1.2.3 3.3 Primary Data*

In this study the primary data was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires was self administered to ensure 100% response and to save time, this style of administering gave the respondents and researcher a chance to freely interact, hence making it possible to get more accurate information. The study seeks to obtain information that describes existing phenomena by asking individuals about their perceptions, attitude, behavior or values. (Mugenda, 2003).The questionnaires comprised questions in line with the objectives of this study. The question was both closed to enhance uniformity and open ended to ensure maximum data is obtained. The questionnaires were distributed to the most relevant respondents who are the youth and technology-savvy members of the

society.

The researcher also employed the use of FGD through discussions directed by the researcher providing the researcher with more detailed response. The questions were formulated in alignment with the objectives of the study. The responses were analyzed and used in the findings. The quantitative data focused on data that is numbers, percentages and averages while qualitative data focused on attitude, opinion, criticism and choice.

Pilot tests of six questionnaires were conducted to measure the efficiency of the questionnaire.

#### *3.1.2.4 3.4 Testing Validity and Reliability of the data collecting instruments*

##### *3.1.2.5 Pilot study*

A pilot study was done to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire as a research tool. A sample of 3 ladies and 3 gentlemen of different age bracket was used to check validity of questionnaire and FGD interview guide. This was done to ensure that any unclear question was removed or rephrased. This also helped to estimate appropriate time to be used in main study.

##### *3.1.2.6 3.5 Secondary Data*

Secondary data was obtained from books, internet and journals as indicated in the literature review. Secondary data was data collected for some purpose other than the problem at hand (Malhotra, 2007) Secondary data for this study was collected from the directories of published online articles in refereed journals. Secondary data was also obtained from bloggers on the new media and various candidate pages to provide theoretical content and ideologies along which this study.

##### *3.1.2.7 3.6 Sampling Procedures*

The study made use of probability sampling techniques; first all respondents were purposively sampled from Nairobi owing to strategic justifications outlined in section

3.1.

The respondents were derived (in equal numbers) from three constituencies in Nairobi; Embakasi, Westland's and Langata which represent the various social classes.

Random sampling was used to divide the constituencies into divisions from which locations were randomly selected. Purposive techniques were used to get the key respondents in every location so that all age groups; socio-economic and political groups were represented. Purposive techniques were used to ensure that all the age groups were represented from below 25 to above 45 years.

### *3.1.2.8 3.7 Data Collection*

A total of 5 locations were selected (5 from every constituency) and from each data was collected from 5-8 respondents. The total sample used for analysis was 120 respondents 24 from every constituency of Nairobi. The sample size may have been limited but representative to the population to a certain degree being that the study was conducted against a background of financial constraints and scarcity of time.

### *3.1.2.9 3.8 Methods of Data Analysis*

The data collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. For qualitative data the computer statistical package for social sciences SPSS and Microsoft Office™ Excel Spreadsheets. The SPSS was used for both inferential and description statistics.

## **3.8.1 Descriptive Statistics**

These statistical tools enable one to give an account on numerical characteristics of the population as presented by the sample. Enables compilation and presentation of data in various forms which include; tables, charts and diagrams. It facilitates summary of raw data into easily readable forms enabling display of information from which conclusions and recommendations can be made. For the analysis of this project the below descriptive statistics are used;

### **a) Frequency Tabulation**

This descriptive statistic enables one to easily show the number of times a particular response occurs. It is used to represent the number of responses in a particular area of the study and the number is in turn used to calculate percentage.

### **b) Percentage**

Facilitates easy measurability of the proportion of responses over a whole sample times 100. Calculation of percentages was done using variables of the base facilitation comparison of one base to another. The study uses percentages as they are easy to calculate and interpret. **3.8.2 Inferential Statistics**

his is a statistical tool that enables one to compare the direct relationship between two or more variables. It analyses how one variable influences another or other variables.

For this study simple correlation was used to analyze the relationship between various social and political factors and effects on society.

### *3.1.2.10 3.9 Presentation techniques*

The findings of the FGD and questionnaire were presented in tables, graphs and pie charts. The use of narration for purpose of authenticating was also used.

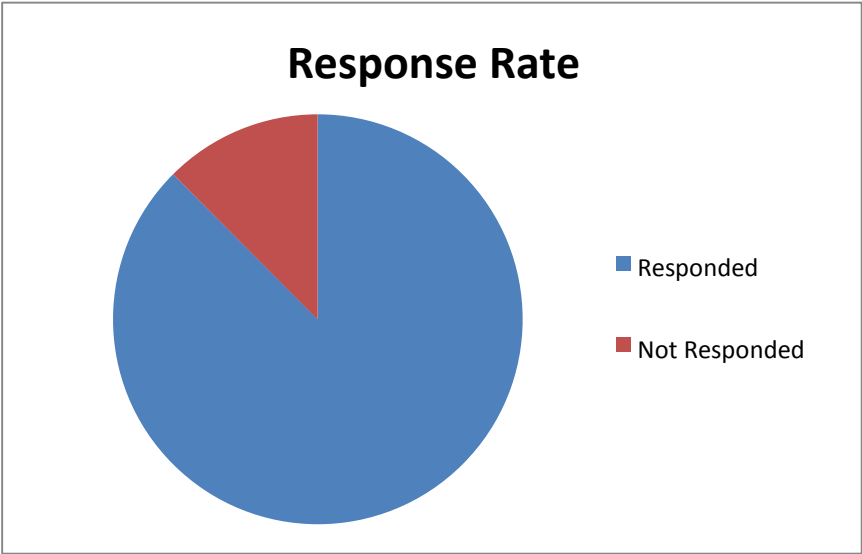
## 3.1.3 CHAPTER FOUR

### 3.1.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretations of the data from the field. It presents the results of data collected and further discusses the findings. The research sought to find out the role of social media as a political campaign tool: A case study of presidential candidates and their coalitions in 2013 General Elections. The analysis and interpretation factored in the

research questions and the objectives and findings mainly drawn from the focus group discussions and questionnaires using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The results are presented below. Tables and figures have been used to analyze and present the findings in the study. The respondents had different characteristics that are fundamental in determining how representative or biased the sample was.



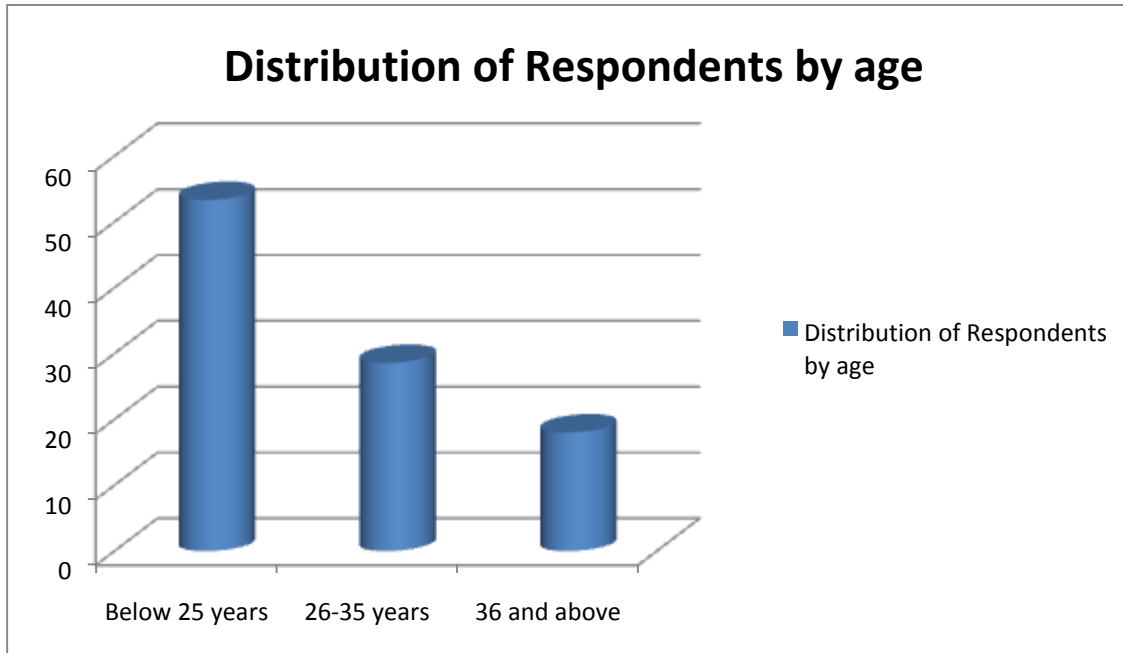
**Figure 7: Response Rate**

Figure 7 shows that 105 out of 120 sampled respondents filled in and returned the questionnaire contributing to 87.5% response rate. Thus the research sample was adequate hence the findings represented the population adequately.

**4.2 Distribution of Respondents by Selected Attributes**

The following tables illustrate the distribution of respondents based on various attributes:





**Figure 8: Distribution of respondents' by age**

Figure 8 demonstrates the age categories of respondents. All age groups were fairly represented. The various age groups could later be used to test the correlation between age and preferences. Hence the different population age groups were well represented.

4 Table 1: Distribution of respondents by occupation

<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Employed	23	36.19
Self Employment	13	12.38
University	31	29.52

Not in School and unemployed	23	21.90
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

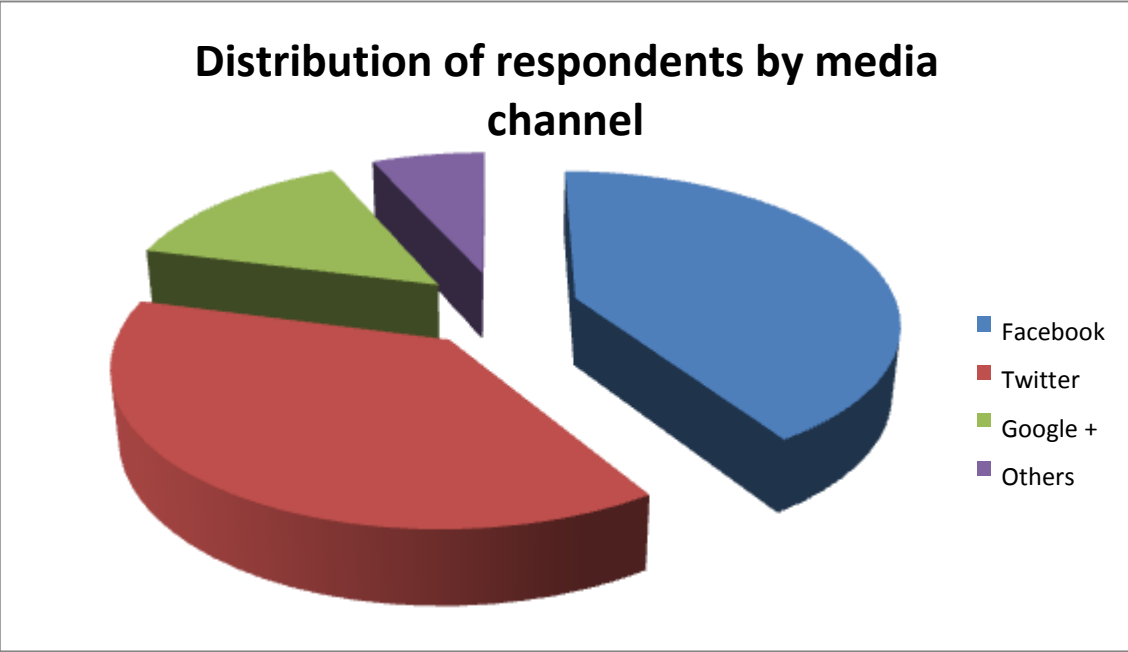
The above table represents the background distribution of the respondent's. Analysis of this enabled us to relate economic status impact on social media preference and show that majority of those using social media are the employed though data shows that through increased accessibility to mobile phone the unemployed also participate in social media politics

5 Table 2 : Distribution of respondents by political affiliation

<b>POLITICAL AFFILIATION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Jubilee Alliance	34	32.38
CORD	29	27.62
Amani	13	12.38
PK	11	10.48
Narc Kenya	10	9.52
Others	8	7.62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

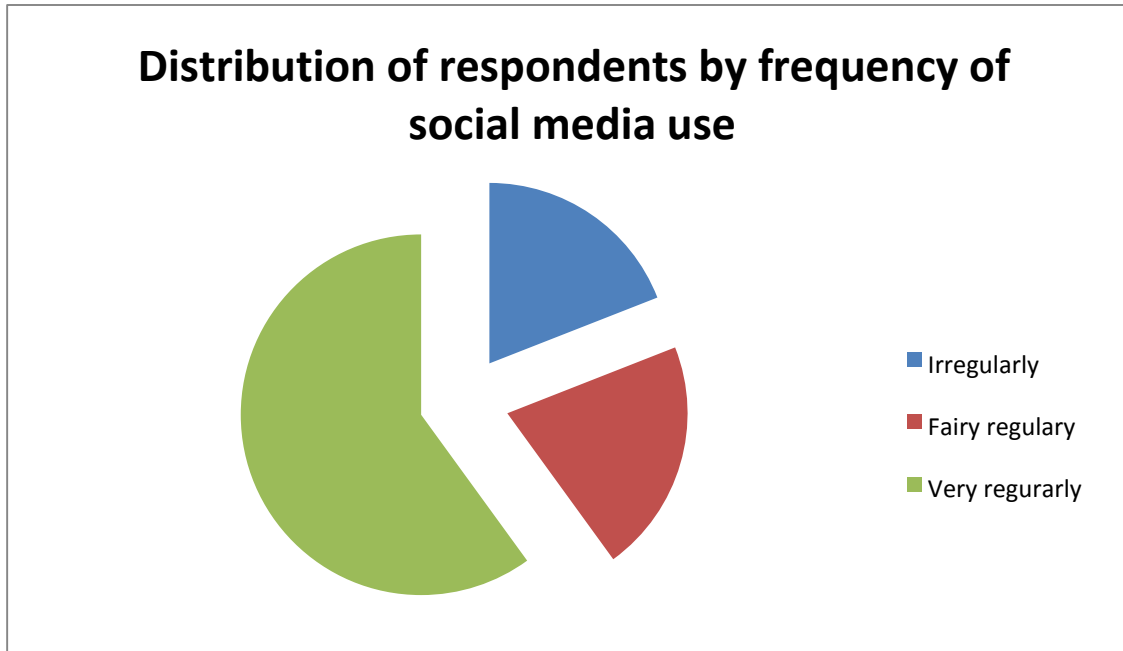
The above table shows that distribution was segmented amongst the most popular political parties. The sample was fairly representative of the various political opinions. The results could

be used to highlight the correlation between political opinion and social media preference. Results also confirm that social media may have greatly contributed to Uhuru Kenyatta of Jubilee Alliance’s triumphant win of the elections.



**Figure 9: Distribution of Respondents by social media channels**

The findings in the above figure show that Facebook is the most preferred social media channel. This could be attributed to the fact that it was established a number of years before the emergence of the rest of the social media channels. This affords familiarity to Facebook for its users, something that the other mass media channels are still grappling with. Google + and other mass media channels have the lowest preference rates largely attributed to the fact that they are the latest entrants into the market. The fact that one can also share as much content and images on facebook could also be a reason for its preference



**Figure 10: Distribution of Respondents by frequency of social media use**

The above figure shows that social media use is popular and widely accessed in the Nairobi area. This goes a long way to demonstrate the tremendous growth of social media in the last couple of years. Showing that most Kenyans relied on social media for real time political updates and that they could access information at any preferred time

6 Table 3: Distribution of respondents by most effective political party social media use

<b>POLITICAL AFFILIATION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Jubilee Alliance	27	25.71%
CORD	20	19.04%

Amani	10	9.52%
PK	30	28.57%
Narc Kenya	2	1.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

The table shows that PK demonstrated the best use of social media during the 2013 general elections. This shows that effective use of social media without practicing integrated marketing communications may not necessarily lead to a win as Jubilee alliance's Hon Uhuru Kenyatta emerged winner of the elections. Majority of the respondents interviewed that is 28.57% felt that PK used social media most effectively.

#### 7 Table 4 : Distribution of respondents by how political parties used social media effectively

<b>USE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Creating awareness	25	23.81%
Real time posts	47	44.76%
Answering queries	33	31.42%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

Above results show that respondents felt that political parties used social media effectively. By giving real time information making it easier for Kenyans to keep up with their political

campaign. Some also felt that social media was used effectively by political parties if they answered their supporters queries online and shared their manifestos online creating awareness

8 Table 5: Distribution of respondents by various ways in which Kenyans used social media platform

<b>USE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Monitoring Results	15	14.29%
Voice their opinion	70	66.67%
Interaction	20	19.05%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that during the 2013 general elections period Kenyans mostly used social media to voice their opinions on various political issues, however a few Kenyans used the platform to simply monitor polls. The results show that majority of Kenyans used social media to voice their opinions that is 66.67%/. While the other 19.05% and 14.29% used the platform to monitor results and interact.

9 Table 6: Distribution of respondents by their recommendations for GOK in adoption of social media

<b>USE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Regulation framework	63	60%

Interaction	31	29.52%
Awareness	20	19.05%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the respondents that is 60% felt that there is need for the government to develop a regulation framework which will at the same time not infringe on citizens rights.29.52% also felt that the government needs to use social media to interact with its people so us to understand issues affecting them.19.05% also felt that the government ought to use social media to enhance awareness.

10 Table 7: Distribution of respondents by social media effects on Kenya 2013 elections

<b>USE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Hate speech	40	38.1%
Polarization	42	40%
Freedom of expression	23	21.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in the above table social media use in the 2013 elections mostly led to polarization of Kenyans along tribal and political affiliation lines.40% of the respondents felt that use of the social media in the 2013 elections resulted in polarization while 38.1% felt that use of social

media resulted in hate speech being spread by bloggers. However a few felt that the overall effects of social media was that it enhanced freedom of expression.

11 Table 8: Distribution of respondents by media use of social media in 2013 elections

<b>USE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Inform	45	42.86%
Peace building	35	33.33%
Interact	25	23.80%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that 42.86% of the respondents felt that the media used social media as a platform to share real time updates on polls keeping Kenyans informed. This was done by the media houses to remain relevant to the audience who are online. Another 33.33% felt that the media used social media to preach peace. Majority of Kenyans have social media accounts hence one of the best ways to preach peace building is by posting messages online. The remaining 23.80% percent felt that the media also interacted with Kenyans online to keep up with their emerging needs.

## **FGD Findings**

### **4.3 Social Media use by Kenyans in the 2013 general elections**



The first objective of this research was to establish how social media was used by Kenyans during the 2013 General elections in order to gauge the effectiveness of Social Media as a political campaign tool. It was found that Kenyans use social media in the following ways;

According to the participants of focus group discussion, Kenyans used social media to keep informed by accessing real time news updates on their preferred political candidate and sharing opinions on various political party manifestos. This was confirmed by a 23 years old social media user who said: *Today if you want to keep up with current affairs go to social media.* This is a clear indication that social media has a lot of influence in Kenyans decision making.

Similarly, the various participants indicated that Kenyans used social media to campaign for their preferred presidential candidates by updating their updates to reflect their stand, sharing videos and photos. *“I used social media to campaign for my preferred presidential candidate through updating my status to reflect my political stand and sharing materials”*

(G.W, 1998) explained the Internet is not simply another medium; it is the "master medium." The Internet can disseminate text and photos like newspapers, audio like radio, and audio, text, and video like television.

It was found that social media use in the 2013 General elections lead to cyber bullying by use of hate speech which was incited by bloggers who were partisan in their updates giving biased information causing uproar amongst Kenyans. Most of them confessed to have participated in hate speech directly or indirectly through stereotypes either to retaliate.

Participants also indicated that Kenyans used social media to spread hate speech in their mother tongue especially Kikuyu and Luo representing the two main political parties leaders that is ODM and Jubilee Alliance leading to tribalism and polarization of Kenyans. Some supporters went ahead to even impersonate political parties and their presidential candidates by creating fake accounts to provoke others.

The (FGD) participants agreed that social media empowered them by giving them a chance to influence decisions. The participants indicated that they logged onto social media several times in a day to get updates on the 2013 General Elections and they then acted as opinion leaders by updating their families in the village who don't have access to real time information on the polls.

Kenyans used social media as a watchdog tool as political parties were under higher scrutiny than ever before forcing them to give Kenyans promises that they would fulfill in their manifesto. Social media has thus revolutionized how politicians share and generate news. Social media acts as a game change to how we are informed by the media.

#### **4.4 Social media use by politicians during the 2013 general elections**

The second objective of this study was to find out the different ways that politicians used social media as a political campaign tool. The participants of (FGD) were asked to discuss the above and it was found that politicians used social media as below;

Politicians used social media to call their supporters to actions by asking them to register for voting. They also used social media to inform their supporters where their campaign trail was headed.

According to the participants various politicians used social media differently as others focused on two step flow of communication, where information generally moved from top-down while others focused on a horizontal approach. Thus some politicians failed to understand this platform.

Politicians also used bloggers and various party admin accounts on social media to sell their agenda through use of propaganda, stereotypes and ethnicity indirectly.

Politicians also used their Facebook pages and twitter handles to create an interpersonal relationship with their supporters through answering their queries on various issues.

Politicians used social media to sell their manifesto through use of photos.

#### *11.1.1.1 4.5 Social Media use by Media during the 2013 general elections*

The media were seen to enter the media space with messages of peace while encouraging citizens to exercise their democratic right to vote during the elections.

Participants in the FGD said that mass media especially TV stations used their official social media pages to constantly update Kenyans on the polls this was especially visible on twitter. The media also gave social media comments made by Kenyans on live TV broadcast giving Kenyans a feel of what fellow Kenyans felt about various issues at that time

Mainstream media has been seen to play a significant role in political processes and dissemination of information of which previously excluded the local citizen from participation (Oser J, 2013) .Social media tools supplement, rather than replace, conventional media. Because they serve as channels of expression that could not be easily controlled by the ruling power, they widen and diversify public discussion. They offer critical assessments and unmediated perspectives (Makinen, 2008).

It is easy to reject the democratic potential of social media in the case of the Kenya elections especially since social media only seemed to spread hate speech thus negative campaigning and extremism resulting into the sensationalization of the public sphere.

According to the participants media did not report objectively on the social media as various media houses were seen to take sides with particular political parties.”Media were slanting news”

Media houses were also seen to use social media to promote the presidential debates which took place in Kenya for the first time during these elections.

#### *11.1.1.2 4.6 Effects of social media use in the 2013 general elections*

According to the participants social media was used as a platform for spreading hate speech, stereotypes and ethnicity leading to polarization of the nation. According to martin a 25 year old student; *Social media use during the 2013 elections was pathetic as Kenyans spread hate speech causing friends supporting opposing parties to clash. “What*

*was said on social media polluted minds, I can imagine my twelve year old niece going to the social media to see the sought of updates that were being shared” This would have caused a psychological condition” said Maria a participant*

Participants debated on whether social media use in this elections will necessarily stop physical violence in future just because hate speech was to a large extent only on social media and did not spread offline leading to an experience like that of 2007/2008 as use of new media in Kenya is currently mostly dominated by the youth in middle class and the upper class while those who engaged in physical face off in 2007/2008 elections were the older generation from rural areas. The participants felt that social media was for the affluent in society though with phone manufacturers developing cheap phones with access to internet this is bound to change.

Knowledge of social media use in 2013 elections will empower politicians, media and political parties to make informed decisions as to whether to incorporate social media strategies in their political campaigns and thus inform the other objectives of the study which include; Determine the way politicians use social media as a political campaign tool and examine possible effects of social media as a campaign tool.

Participants felt that social media has made the world a global village giving them a chance to speak out on various issues that affect our country to make a difference in their own different capacities. The findings also show that if used well social media can enhance democracy.

#### *11.1.1.3 4.7 Recommendations for the government in enhancing social media use in future elections.*

The government ought to use the findings of this research as learning’s of social media use in political campaigns and come up with regulation framework in partnership with CCK to curb the use of hate speech and incitement on social media. The initiative to curb hate speech by former P.S information Dr. Bitange Ndemo and NCIS can be strengthened by tightening regulations on new media use in the country and tracking of sources of hate speech online while ensuring that controls don’t infringe on Kenyans rights.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5.0 DISCUSSION CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the discussion of the findings from chapter four, conclusions and also recommendations based on the objectives of the study. The study had sought to establish the role of social media as a political campaigning tool in the March 4 General Election in Kenya.

This research study was done with the aim of answering three research questions. The first research question sought to find out how Social Media was used by citizens during the 2013 General Elections. It also looked at how politicians used social media and how the media used this platform. The questions looked at the effects of Social Media as a political campaign tool.

#### **5.2 Summary of findings**

The study established the following results as outlined below;

That the social media platforms that were used by most Kenyans were Facebook and Twitter.

The most talked about political parties on the social media were Jubilee Alliance and ODM.

That social media use by politicians as a campaign tool increased political participation as it enabled politicians to tap into the youth who hardly followed politics on the traditional mass media. The older generation that is 35 years and over who were hardly known to use social media joined the bandwagon so as to get access to real time political updates.

Social medium proved to empower Kenyans as they were able to share their opinions, interact, campaign for their candidate and access numerous sources of information without any form of censorship from the government or the media.

Social Media provided Kenyans with a public sphere reversing the roles of the media, state and Kenyans as the media no longer determined what the citizens should think about but instead the people determined what the media reported. Kenyans became the authority on this platform and the government and media were forced to conform.

Findings show that the freedom citizens got from this platform led to the emergence of citizen journalists and bloggers who reported on various issues as they happened and shared photos and video on the same. The fact that the citizen journalists provided coverage real time threatened the journalism profession.

The findings found that social media use in the 2013 elections was mostly by the middle class and upper class in society. Apart from mobilizing the masses social media was also used to spread prejudicial messages in form of propoganda, hate speech, stereotypes and ethnicity among Kenyans leading to polarization of the country in lines of political affiliation.

Bloggers were seen to incite Kenyans online by being subjective in their reporting on various issues and providing Kenyans with biased information.

The study found that the media used social media to share messages of peace and encourage Kenyans to register and exercise their democratic right to vote. The traditional media audience have declined as most audience prefer using social media to access news on political campaigns as social media provides them with all what they used to access on television, radio and print on

one platform. They can also access information on this space at any given time. Social media has also given the other mass media a challenge as it's cheap thus politicians can advertise at low cost.

The findings reveal that the agenda setting theory used is functional with the reversal of roles in society enabling Kenyans to set agenda. The public sphere theory is also supported as the social media provides Kenyans with a platform where they can share their views without any filter from the government or media. The last theory social identity theory shows that favourism of in-groups at the expense of out-group can lead to polarization.

While this study may not be representative of how social media is used universally in the democratic processes, it however provides an insight on perhaps what can be regarded as the shortcomings of new media as well as its capabilities in influencing the role of the populous in generating counter argument and in providing fairness and accuracy in reporting.

### **5.3 Recommendations on Social Media use in Political Campaigns in Kenya**

Several factors can be derived from the findings of this study for improvement of social media use as an interactive tool in the political sphere.

First, the findings show that social media is to a large extent being used by the middle and upper class in society. They are thus using this platform to set their agenda, therefore it is recommended that the various counties in the country to take up social media use and in turn encourage their citizens to use this platform. The study was limited to Nairobi based against this background of social media use.

Upholding of professionalism by the bloggers and citizens online is important. With the study revealing that hate speech was used by the above promoting ethnicity which led to polarization



of the nation. It is important that citizens express themselves responsibly so as to keep the country united thus enhancing democracy.

Current image of the social media to be where Kenyans can keep up with what is happening should be used by the media by monitoring the trends on this channel and covering news based on this so as to be able to keep their audiences. Politicians should also monitor this platform to understand Kenyans needs and get their feedback on various issues informing their objectives.

The study has shown best practices in the use of social media globally with Barack

Obama's campaign being the most exemplary as it did not lead to prejudice against its competitors or their supporters. Kenya needs to learn from this campaign by formulating stringent measures to ensure future elections do not result into polarization of the nation.

The government therefore needs to review the policies set up by NCIS on hate speech and tribalism on social media and set up a more stringent regulation framework that will then be passed by parliament. CCK should then ensure that the policies are followed and those who violate it are prosecuted. The policies should however not infringe on Kenyans right to express themselves.

Politicians ought to undergo social media use training to ensure that their communication to the masses is not top-down but horizontal thus enhancing their relationship with supporters and leveraging on this media.

However, the issue of whether discussions flowing from the grassroots affect power and the state of democracy remains unexplored. Ideally, social media tools could increase transparency in politics and enhance citizens' participation through enabling people to follow decision-making

processes and hold discussions about issues of common concern. There is a need for making new media tools more accessible to those who are less fortunate (Makinen, 2008).

#### **5.4 Areas for further studies**

1. The scope of this study was limited to the Nairobi County using a very small sample size. Similar studies could be conducted in other counties to determine the extent of social media reach even in the least technologically cognizant areas of the country. These studies will help inform the county government's expansion strategy on IT infrastructure.
2. Similarly, the survey was limited to the Social networking sites and the internet. Studies could be conducted relating to other forms of media like the television, radio and print media. This can also be used to analyze and compare preferences for such media and any correlation if any.
3. County governments and various government departments could embrace the use of new media through developing their own webpage's and interactive web platforms where they can disseminate relevant and timely information to the public and receive feedback on the same. This could go a long way in sensitizing the public to embracing appropriate technology for development, while improving their own performance. This study will inform the government's digital strategies.

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### APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is meant to collect information on the impact of political journalism in shaping political affiliations among Kenyan youths. Kindly answer the questions by writing a brief statement or ticking in the boxes provided as will be applicable. The information provided will be treated as strictly confidential and at no point will your name be mentioned in the research. This research is intended for an academic purpose only

1. Name: (Optional)

.....

2. Gender:

Male	
Female	

3. Designation:

Senior Management	
Middle Management	
Lower Management	

Any Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Age Bracket:

Below 25 years	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
26 – 44 years	
Above 45 years	

5. Are You?

In formal Employment	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
In Informal Employment	
In Self employment	
In University	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Not in school and unemployed	

6. How often do you use social media (Tick one)

Irregularly

Fairly Regularly



Very Regularly


7. Which Social Media sites do you know?

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8. Which Social Media site do you prefer most?

Please list your reasons:

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9. Your political affiliation in the 2013 General Elections

- Jubilee Alliance
- CORD (Coalition for Reform & Democracy)
- Amani

PK

Narc Kenya

Others

10. Which Social media did you use to keep you posted on the 2013 General Elections

Facebook

Twitter

Google +

Others

11. In your opinion how was social media used by the media in the 2013 general elections

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12. In your opinion how did most Kenyans use the social media platform during the 2013 General Elections

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13. Give suggestions on what you think Politicians should do to improve the quality of their social media campaigns

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14. As a social media user in Kenya what recommendations should the Government of Kenya take in adopting the use of Social Media

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15. In your opinion how is social media affecting us as a nation?

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**End. Thank You.**

**APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH BUDGET**

<b>No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost (Shs)</b>	<b>Cts</b>
1.	Stationary and other materials	1350	00
2.	Data Collection	1250	00
3.	Data analysis	380	00
4.	Typing Binding, Printing and circulation	770	00
5.	Miscellaneous expenses	725	00
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4475</b>	<b>00</b>

