The Role of the Mainstream Media in Kenya’s Electoral System towards Social Integration

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ABSTRACT

Over the last few years the media in Kenya has been accused of abdicating its social responsibility role by being partisan, subjective, biased, and willingly withholding factual information on matters of concern such as general elections that leave the country very polarized along ethical and political lines after every five-year electoral circle. The People's Choice Study that was conducted in America in 1940, found out that many voters make up their minds on whom they would vote for despite being exposed to certain media messages that advocate for certain politicians while those that haven’t decided whom they will vote for will seek guidance from opinion leaders. So the role of the mainstream media comes into focus.

The purpose of this paper is to establish the social responsibility function of the mainstream media especially around ethical and professional guidelines. The research question is, can the mainstream media be trusted to provide balanced, factual and objective information without any bias and subjectivity, or partisan interests on salient issues such as elections to help the Kenyan consumers make informed choices?

The study will sample three mainstream electronic and print media using purposive or judgmental sampling which will give the researchers an opportunity to identify the three major media houses in Nairobi to gather information in line with the study objective. Focus will be on the just concluded general election and explore whether they (media) stuck to their ethical and professional obligation guidelines. Conclusions will be drawn based on the data analysis of the collected information in line with the study objective.

Key Words mainstream Media, performance, integration, society, and politics