Media Representation of Race and Ethnicity: A Case Study of Select Episodes of the Kenyan XYZ Show, Season 12

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Abstract

This article examined media representations of ethnicity and race in the Kenyan political satire show, XYZ. The show depicts political characters in satirical form. Seven episodes of season 12 of the show were randomly selected and analysed to examine how ethnicity and race were depicted. Season 12 was chosen because its screening coincided with the electioneering period in Kenya, when negative ethnicity escalated as political campaigns gained momentum. The study employed a qualitative research design. Four focus group discussions were held with university communication students to get their views on media representation of ethnicity by the XYZ show. The study sought to find out which Kenyan ethnic groups were represented in the selected episodes, how the groups were represented, the dominant ethnic frames that were used, and the views of selected research participants on the media representation of ethnicity in the show. One of the findings was that Kenya's most populous ethnic groups – the Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo, Luhya and Kamba were overrepresented in the seven episodes, while other ethnic groups were underrepresented. Another was that, the ethnic groups represented in the show through the political characters were portrayed in a stereotypical and negative manner. In addition, ethnicity of the various groups was depicted through vernacular accents, dressing, and stereotypes. Findings further indicated that the media representation of the various ethnic groups in the selected XYZ shows did not reflect the reality. However, race was not a major representation in the selected XYZ shows. The conclusion was that Kenyan media need to rethink their emphasis of ethnic stereotypes as a major source of comedy, given the likelihood that such frames have slowly gained acceptance as reality and are used as a political weapon by politicians seeking power (wa Wamwere, 2003). A major problem with frames as seen in the findings is that they are "persistent and perpetual" (Carter, 2013, p.11) but have very little reality. Entrenchment of these ethnic frames through media is therefore, a danger to the national cohesiveness of countries such as Kenya.

Key Words: Portrayal, media representation, media framing, ethnicity, stereotype

Introduction

The role of media in shaping reality has been debated for a long time. However, while, it is agreed that media do indeed have some impact on their audiences, the level of the influence they exert continues to be a matter of research. One of the ways that media shape reality is through their representations of various groups in society. Over the years scholars have analysed how these representations affect not only the image of these groups, but also the self-esteem of individuals who belong to these groups (Boylorn, 2008; Kimotho & Nyaga, 2015; McKoy, 2012; Wood, 1994). The concern is that the ideologies behind these representations could be projected "onto entire groups of people through the use of demeaning stereotypes that reinforce and legitimate" misrepresentations (McKoy, 2012, p.135).

One prominent American who has spoken about the effects of racial stereotypes is Former US First Lady, Michelle Obama (Hilbring, 2017). When asked about how racial issues affected her as a First lady, she said: "The shards that cut me the deepest were the ones that intended to cut. Knowing that after eight years of working really hard for this country, there are still people who won't see me for what I am because of my skin colour" (Hilbring, 2017). Obama said she was opening up about the hurt so as let those who used racist words know it was hurting.

This paper begins with an analysis of various scholarly articles on media representations of race and ethnicity globally. The discussion will then examine representations of ethnicity on Kenyan media. The article will also propose how race and ethnicity should be tackled from a media stewardship standpoint. The theoretical framework adopted for this paper is media framing theory.

Problem Statement

Ethnicity and race are highly emotive global issues (waWamwere, 2003). This is evident even in developed countries such as the United States of America (McKoy, 2012). In Africa, ethnicity or tribalism has remained a big issue, first used negatively by colonialists to drive a wedge among ethnic groups to prevent them from fighting for liberation, and now perpetuated by ruling elites in their search for political power (Oucho, 2002; Wanyonyi, 2010). Given, the importance of race and ethnicity issues, media have frequently provided platforms for debate on the same. Besides debate, ethnicity and race have remained a theme in other media content such as films, music, books, and comedy among others.

The concern of this paper was how media content on race and ethnicity is framed. How does the content represent the two issues, and with what kind of effect on media audiences? This is important given that critical theorists have contended that media are hegemonic in nature, and that they propagate ideologies favoured by elites but ignore those of the masses (Baran & Davis, 2009; McQuail, 2005).

Research Questions

1. Which Kenyan ethnic groups are represented in the selected episodes of XYZ season 12?
2. How are the Kenyan ethnic groups represented in the selected episodes of XYZ season 12?
3. What dominant ethnic frames are used to portray the ethnic groups represented in the selected episodes of XYZ season 12?
4. What are the views of selected audiences on the media representation of ethnicity in XYZ?

Definition of key terms

1. Race – "a group of people who share the same language, history, characteristics, etc." (Cambridge Dictionary Online).
2. Ethnicity – can be defined as "a large group of people who have the same national, racial, or cultural origins or the state of belonging to such a group" (Cambridge Dictionary Online).
3. Portrayal – the representations used to depict an individual or individuals (s) in media content (Cambridge Dictionary Online).
4. Representation is "the process through which words and images stand in for ideas, individuals, social groups and other categories" (Franklin, Homer, Hanna, Kinsey and Richardson, 2005, p.233).
5. Stereotypes – a process that divides, simplifies, and sometimes exaggerates characteristics of an individual so as to make them more memorable (McKoy, 2012). The exaggeration or simplification is used to describe everything about the person or group.

Theoretical framework

McQuail (2005) defines framing in two ways: The first describes how journalists package news "within some familiar frame of reference and according to some latent structure of meaning" while the second looks at the likelihood that audiences may "adopt the frames of reference offered by journalists" and end up with a reality that mirrors that offered by media (Media 2005, p.555).

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007, p. 11) posit that the way an issue is framed by media can determine how "it is understood by audiences". Carter (2013, p.10) argues that while the power that frames have on audiences is "debatable" they (frames) "do make certain elements of stories more salient" and eventually have a level of influence on media audiences. Carter's contention is similar to that of Franklin, Homer, Hanna, Kinsey and Richardson (2005, p.85) who state that "when people have little direct knowledge of events, they become increasingly reliant on news media for information, but also an understanding or interpretation, of those events". Van de Pas (2014) further elaborates this power of framing on audiences by exemplifying how politicians use media coverage of certain issues to determine which matters are important enough for tabling in parliament for debate. The scholar contends that through framing, "the meaning of an issue or problem is construed and as a consequence certain solutions become more salient, while others are pushed to the background" (Van de Pas, 2004, p.45). Carter (2013) further illustrates the existence of frames in and outside media territory:

> Frames are embedded in culture, inside people's minds, and within the agendas of the media. Frames are found in all types of media, from print to broadcast news, and they convey meaning through the interaction between the reader and the text (these meanings are not in the text *per se*, but rather already existent in the mind of the reader of the text). (Carter, 2013, p.11).

To demonstrate the power of framing, de Vresse (2005, p.53) argues that "frames are parts of political arguments, journalistic norms, and social movements discourse". De Vresse seems to suggest the need to bring in some form of movements in efforts to change the prevalent media frames. This is needed because frames "are (usually) persistent and perpetual" and "provide only a segment of objective reality" (Carter, 2013, p.11). Hallahan (1999) says that framing works by excluding certain aspects of an issue while emphasising others.

Race and Ethnicity in American media

Scholars have looked at how the different races in America are portrayed by media and what effect these representations have on media audiences (Mastro & Yarchi, 2015; McKoy, 2012; Wood, 1994). Some of the scholars (Mastro&Yarchi, 2015; Wood, 1994) have discussed what they have termed underrepresentation of American minorities in media content and the portrayal of these groups in a stereotypical manner. This section will start with a discussion on an article by McKoy (2012),which examines how films produced by African American entertainer, Tyler Perry portray black women.

McKoy critiques Perry's popular films positing that they entrench stereotypes that black women have struggled with over the years. The scholar views this portrayal of African American women in Perry's films as a misrepresentation. She argues that Perry as a "culture brander" should be more careful of his film content. A culture brander is one who has "a strong presence and impact on popular culture" (McKoy, 2012, p. 127). The scholar underscores the power of film as a cultural tool. "Films possess the ability to re-image and re-focus what American culture knows to be 'real' particularly pertaining to black culture" (McKoy, 2012, p.135).

McKoy highlights three stereotypical roles about the African American woman portrayed in Perry's films. The stereotypes emerge from how black women were perceived in the slavery days. One of the roles depicted in the Perry films is *Mammy*, a stereotype which originated from the role of a black woman as a domestic servant who worked for the white slave owner. *Mammy* was "faithful and obedient" but also stern. She was also likely to be overweight and unattractive. Then there is *Jezebel*, a light-skinned female slave who was sexually exploited by the slave masters because of her beauty.

Lastly, we have *Sapphire,* a black female slave who is not as attractive as *Jezebel. Sapphire* is "sharp tongued, violent and offensive", she epitomises the angry black woman syndrome. According to McKoy, Perry's films reinforce these three stereotypes through different characters. For example, the character Madea played by Perry himself depicts the modern *Mammy* prototype. Madea is an overweight, unattractive, stern, not very well-educated, angry black woman who goes to great lengths, sometimes breaking the law in a bid to protect her place as the person who runs the Madea household. McKoy says Madea's character (shown in Figure 1) is projected as "violent, domineering and threatening" (McKoy, 2012, p.138).



Figure 1: *Screenshot of Tyler Perry's film: Madea Goes to Jail*(Source: http://www.methodhousestudios.com)

McKoy argued that the most prevalent stereotype is the *Mammy* stereotype projected through the Madea character seen as "violent, domineering and threatening" (McKoy, 2012, p.138). McKoy's concern is that although the Madea character is popular among consumers of Perry's films, her representation of the black woman forms part of the "cultural discourse to discuss constructions of race, class, power and sex" (p.135). McKoy calls for "greater sensitivity to role portrayals of African Americans in the media.

Tukachinsky, Mastro and Yarchi (2015) conducted a study on the portrayal of race/ethnicity on primetime television in America for a period of 20 years. The scholars analysed 345 most viewed US television programmes. Their findings indicated that Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans were underrepresented in the programmes analysed. When the scholars compared the content of the TV programmes to public opinions on race at the time, they found a relationship between "the quality and quantity of representations of ethnic minorities in primetime television and White Americans perceptions of Blacks and Latinos" (Tukachinsky, Mastro & Yarchi, 2015, p.32). The scholars contended:

> Conversely, as more Blacks and Latinos on television occupied high social and professional status, White Americans tended to hold more favourable views of these social groups. These results illuminate the importance of improving the quality of representations of ethnic minorities, rather than merely increasing the sheer number of these characters in the media (Tukachinsky, Mastro &Yarchi, 2015, p.32).

Race and ethnicity have always also been a big issue in American politics. Lashley (2009) examined how the race issue was portrayed in the American media prior to the 2008 presidential elections. The scholar argues that the race card was used by both media and the Republican Party. However, Lashley notes that it is the Democratic Party's, Hillary Clinton that had first used race euphemisms to try and win the party's nomination. However, the article points out that even when Hillary lost the nomination to Barack Obama, the race issue remained a pertinent issue in the presidential campaigns.

Lashley (2009, p.367) contends that prior to the presidential elections, African American voters were concerned about the pervasive "racial euphemisms in the media primarily targeted at white voters" depicting "Obama's strengths as flaws". She argues that media portrayed Obama's education and his legal background as evidence of his "elitism" and used stereotypes to question his patriotism to America.

Lashley argues that it was difficult for pollsters to gauge White Americans views about race in the 2008 elections because white voters were unwilling "to admit racially tinged sentiments" when questioned about their perceptions about "black candidates" (p.367). However, despite the racial framing in the election, Obama went on to win the elections in 2008 and in 2012. His presidency was seen as having positive effect on the self-esteem of individuals from the American Black Community, who like the boy pictured in Figure 2, were inspired to aspire for greater things (Calmes, 2012).



Figure 2: *Screenshot of photo a five-year-old boy touching the then US president, Barack Obama to feel whether the president's hair felt like his* (Source: www.nytimes.com)

Ethnicity in Kenyan media

The two key laws that guide Kenyan media on how to tackle matters of race and ethnicity are the Media Council Act of 2013 and the National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008. Article 26 of the Code of Ethics for the Practice of Journalism in Kenya which is the second schedule in the Media Council Act asks journalists to avoid quoting sources who make derogatory comments on race, ethnicity and sex. The article urges journalists to be cognisant of how negative ethnic or racial comments can affect both the group portrayed in bad light and the country at large.

According to Article 13 of The National Cohesion and Integration Act, hate speech comprises use of words that stir up ethnic hatred against people of a certain "colour, race, nationality, or ethnic or national origins". The Act tackles spoken hate speech, hate that is written, hate propagated through theatre and hate propagated electronically. The penalty on conviction is a fine of not more than one million shillings or an imprisonment of not more than three years.

Apart from the period of the 2007/2008 post-election violence, when Kenyan media (specifically, vernacular media) were accused of propagation of ethnic hate, Kenyan journalists, have conducted themselves professionally when dealing with matters of ethnicity. However, there are still concerns about dissemination of ethnic hate through social media (Kimotho & Nyaga, 2015; Lando, & Mwangi, 2014). Kimotho and Nyaga (2015) conducted a research to investigate the effects of ethnic hatred spread through social media. A survey of students from four universities in Kenya found that 50 % of the respondents felt bad about themselves when they read content that contained hate speech targeted towards their ethnic group (Kimotho & Nyaga, 2015).

According to the Kimotho and Nyaga study, nearly all the respondents (90.7%) believed that hate messages targeting ethnic groups on social media influenced people's perceptions about the different ethnic groups in Kenya. Lando and Mwangi (2014) studied how Kenyans used social media in the 2013 general election. They found that although there was no politically-related violence in Kenya, Kenyans battled each other on social media.



Figure 3: *Screenshot of Papa Shirandula of the Shirandula show* (Source: Citizen Digital on https://www.youtube.com

Over the years, ethnicity continues to be a major theme in local television dramas. Characters in various shows such as the Papa Shirandula show (shown in Figure 3), use story lines written around the theme of ethnicity. A number of characters in the show portray stereotypes of various Kenyan ethnic communities. The stereotypes are shown through their mannerisms and accents. Like in the American Madea films, the stereotypes are exaggerated for comic effect. For example, is it realistic that most of the characters speak with heavy ethnic accents despite the setting of the show being an urban one? In real life, most of the people living in urban areas do not have such heavy ethnic accents. The work roles of the characters also depict common stereotypes about Kenyan ethnic groups.

The question here is whether it is right to reinforce such stereotypes through TV dramas? The concern here is that films are a form of cultural products with the power to transfer perceptions of reality to audiences (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; McKoy, 2012).

A study by Ndonye, Yieke and Onyango (2015) examined ethnic stereotypes portrayed in Kenyan stand-up comedy shown on television. The *Churchill Live Show* produced by Daniel Ndambuki and which airs on NTV and *Kenya Kona*, a show that previously aired on KTN but which had by the time of conducting the research stopped airing. The study found that most of the content used by comedians on the show was on tribal jokes about the different Kenyan communities. The scholars found that because these stereotypes are so entrenched in Kenyan life, a comedian could tell a tribal joke halfway, because the audience would understand the rest of the story. The contention by the scholars is that although the tribal jokes, are funny, they could be harmful because "ethnic stereotypes are exploited by politicians to down play their competitors or to place members of other ethnic groups in bad light" (Ndonye, Yieke & Onyango, 2015, p.48). In essence, the tribal jokes help Kenyans to poke fun at themselves and each other, but during the election period, they become a source of fear and suspicion among Kenyan communities.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative design methodology. Qualitative content analysis was used to pick up race and ethnicity themes from the selected episodes of season 12 of the XYZ show.

The population of the study was episodes of XYZ show, season 12, which was screened this year, 2017 (an election year in Kenya). Bryman (2012, p.293) supports this method positing that the dates chosen for content analysis are to some extent "dictated by the occurrence of a phenomenon". The season was selected purposively because as demonstrated in the literature review, ethnicity matters in Kenya seem to heighten during political seasons.

Episode	Date of publishing on YouTube
Episode 3	May 18, 2017
Episode 5	May 29, 2017
Episode 7	June 12, 2017
Episode 9	July 10, 2017
Episode 11	July 21, 2017
Episode 13	August 4, 2017
Episode 15	August 28, 2017
Episode 17	September 11, 2017

Figure 4: Dates when the various episodes were aired

The unit of analysis was seven episodes of the show (dates when the shows were aired is shown in Figure 4 above).The authors felt that the seven episodes were adequate as they were aired on various dates in a period of five different months, making it possible to gauge the recurring ethnic stereotypes. Random sampling was used to select seven shows in the season, with the n^{th} starting point being episode 3. Part of the data was collected through qualitative content analysis to examine how ethnicity and race was framed. The second set of data was collected through the focus group discussion (FGD) method in a bid to get views on media representation.

Four focus group discussions were held to find out young people's views on how the XYZ show represents ethnicity. The focus group discussions were held on September 11, 2017. The four groups comprised of St. Paul's University communication students from Limuru campus. Each of the groups had a moderator who was trained on how to conduct the discussion and given a guide with a list of open-ended questions. Each of the groups watched episode 3 of season 12 of the XYZ show, at the start of the discussions.

Brief description of the XYZ show



Figure 5: A screenshot of a You Tube clip from the XYZ show

The XYZ show is a political satire that has characters in puppet form. According to the show's Facebook page, XYZ is directed by Brian Kyallo Msafiri and written by Loi Awat and Edward Khaemba. The show airs on a Kenyan television station, NTV every Monday at 8.30pm, East African time. The first episode aired in 2009, and the show is now in its 12th season. According to Buni media, the show is watched by 10 million viewers in Kenya and around Africa (http://www.bunimedia.com). The show was inspired by French show, *Guignols de I'Info* and the British show, *Spitting Image* (http://www.bunimedia.com). The characters poke fun at Kenyan politicians.

Findings

Findings from content analysis

Ethnic communities portrayed in the selected shows included the Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo, Kamba, Maasai, Somali, Kisii, Indian, American, Chinese, Turkana, British, Swahili, Tanzanian, Ugandan, Zimbabwean, North Korean. Given that XYZ is a politically-based show, ethnic groups in political leadership were most dominant in the representation. The politicians who were extensively represented in the show included those in government, the President (Uhuru Kenyatta), his deputy (William Ruto) and those in the opposition, Opposition leader (Raila Odinga) and his running mate (Kalonzo Musyoka).

The politicians were represented in terms of their ethnicities. For example, the Kikuyu ethnic group were mainly portrayed through the character of Uhuru Kenyatta and other minor characters represented as businessmen in the various episodes. The Kikuyu politicians and business people were portrayed as crafty and greedy – not willing to give other people a chance. They were also represented as untrustworthy.

Kalenjin politicians represented mainly through the character of Ruto were like their Kikuyu counterparts represented as greedy and selfish. Kalenjins like the Kikuyu were shown as liars. In one episode, the character of William Ruto, a Kalenjin was shown with a group of party officials at a centre that had been set up to lie to Kenyans that the government had fulfilled their campaign promises.

Kisii leaders were depicted as marginalised. The Kisii were portrayed through the character of Chief Justice, David Maraga who was in one scene kicked out of a vehicle because the political leaders in the van did not want him to join them. Magara's character was portrayed as one who spoke with a heavy ethnic accent, although that is not how he speaks in real life.

Luo politicians were portrayed as untrustworthy and crafty. For example, the character of Raila Odinga was shown in a class purporting to teach a religious lesson while in essence he was engaging in a political campaign. A police officer listened into the lesson and kicked him out of the class.

Kamba politicians who were mainly represented through the character of Kalonzo Musyoka, Raila Odinga's running mate in the general election, were portrayed as undecided. The character representing Kalonzo had to be pushed and cajoled by Raila so as to agree to participate in various things. The Kamba were also depicted as arrogant and illiterate through the character of Sonko, a Nairobi politician who used vulgar and dismissive language when asked by a journalist what his vision for the city is.

Nearly all the characters were depicted in an ethnic manner through their accents. Depiction of ethnicity through vernacular accent was done even for those characters representing people who do not naturally speak like that in real life. For example, Chief Justice David Magara's character had a heavy Kisii accent that was an exaggeration from the manner in which the judge speaks.

Despite the ethnic representations of the various politicians, one running theme in the selected episodes was the fact that each of them was trying to persuade the voters to vote for them in the election. For example, in one of the episodes, the various characters depicting both government and opposition leaders sang together as they tried to woo voters. Both sides of the political divide also had manifestos and promised to fulfil their promises.

Ethnicity in the shows was shown through ethnic accents; dressing (for example, Somali and Maasai regalia); skin colour for the different races; mannerisms associated with different ethnic groups; occupations (Kisii and Kikuyu depicted as business people, Kalenjins shown as police officers, Turkana shown as pastoralists); ethnic symbols (spears of the Maasai group); and names of places (Kirinyaga showing the community origin of politicians: Ann Waiguru and Martha Karua).

Findings from focus group discussions

Ethnicity is a major part of Kenyan society

Participants in the focus group discussions said that the power of ethnicity was demonstrated in a scene in the show where a character portraying a woman politician got a job recommendation because she belongs to the same ethnic group as that of the president. The participants also felt that the show emphasised ethnicity as opposed to nationalism. They argued that each of the characters was represented in an ethnic manner, through the accents, clothing, mannerisms and even their occupations. The contention of the participants was that although the show is a political satire, its weakness was in highlighting ethnicity above other things that comprise the Kenyan society.

Some Kenyan communities are overrepresented while others are underrepresented

Participants in the FGDs said that some communities such as the Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Kamba, Luhya and Luo are overrepresented in the show while other communities are either underrepresented in the show or not portrayed at all. This scenario, the participants felt makes some ethnic groups appear superior while others are marginalised.

The show is not a true representation of the Kenyan society

The FGDs participants felt that the show exaggerated many aspects of ethnicity and was not a true reflection of the Kenyan society. A participant said: "There is overrepresentation of certain ethnic groups in Kenya, such as the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin. I did not see my ethnic group represented" (Participant A, FGD 1). Another participant said: "The show has a lot of stereotypes. It may portray how some Kenyans behave, for example, politicians, but not all of us behave that way" (Participant 4, FGD 2).

The show showcases Kenyan culture through entertainment

Some of the participants in the FGDs contended that the show was important because it highlights Kenyan culture in an entertaining way. A participant argued: "The show promotes nationality by making politics not seem too serious. It gives a picture of what is happening in politics in a humourous way" (Participant C, FGD 1). Another participant said: "It depicts Kenya in a way only Kenyans can understand. People from other countries would not understand what the show is about" (Participant 8, FGD 2).

Discussion

Critical and cultural studies have posited that ideology that supports hegemonic structures and systems is embedded in media content (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005). Scholars argue that "sets of symbols" chosen by media producers entrench the dominant ideology in the society (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005, p. 325). As a result, opposing views of the less powerful in society are ignored.

This is in agreement with the contention of Tukachinsky, Mastro & Yarchi (2015) that the manner in which groups of people are represented by media may eventually become how other people in society view them – the dominant frames depicted in content slowly turning into the accepted reality. The findings also tie in with the argument by Kimotho and Nyaga (2015) and Ndonye, Yieke and Onyango (2015) that although tribal jokes disseminated through media may appear harmless humour, they may end up destroying the desired national cohesiveness.

In preserving the status quo in representation of ethnic groups, media negates its role as society's watchdog and fails the social responsibility test. Social responsibility depicts stewardship, where media recognise that they do not exist for themselves but are there to serve public interest.

> Schultze (2000, p. 118) further explains the ways in which media may fail its audiences:
>
> All media institutions contribute negatively to culture in some way. The normal ways that newspaper editors select and present the news can hide the bigger truth about a story. Newspapers sometimes censor the voices of members of groups that do not buy many papers.

Using Schultze's proposition, it is important for producers of media content who value stewardship to be prudent in choosing the kind of ethnic content portrayed in their television shows. Heads of programming in Kenyan stations must question the lasting effects of media content on negative ethnicity on their audiences. The producers ought to urge those under them to come up with new frames for the Kenyan society, because Kenya is more than just tribal accents and stereotypes.

Innovative Kenyan producers can also use Boylorn's (2008, p.430) proposition and adopt an "oppositional gaze" to challenge the current ethnic representations in media and "construct realities" that move "beyond stereotypes".

They can also learn from Michelle Obama and her White House staff who used You Tube videos to subtly counter negative representation by conservative media (Meyers & Goman, 2017). While the conservative media had depicted her as "angry, militant, unpatriotic, and disgruntled", the You Tube videos showed how she had used "education, hard work, perseverance" to achieve the American dream and her love for family and motherhood (Meyers & Goman, 2017, p.27).

Conclusion

The issue of negative ethnicity in Kenya is yet to be resolved. It especially comes to the fore in the electioneering period when politicians use ethnic propaganda to whip the emotions of members of their ethnic communities. Given the dangerous repercussions of negative ethnicity as witnessed in the 2007 elections, it is prudent that Kenyan scholars critically analyse the effect that media messages play in fanning animosity among communities.

It would be naive to believe that just because Kenyan mainstream media steer away from hate speech, then negative ethnicity from media has been tackled. As the studies cited earlier show, negative ethnicity has moved from mainstream and is now prevalent on social media platforms. At the same time, mainstream media cannot be given a clean bill yet, because while hate speech is absent, tribal stereotypes are a common feature in comedies and TV shows. It appears that if producers of these comedies and drama were instructed to remove tribal stereotypes from their shows, then most of the programmes would fold up because this (negative stereotypes) form the main source of 90 per cent of the content. The concern about stereotypes portrayed in film is that the representations of various groups may be reinforced in people's minds and over time be perceived as reality even when faulty.

Kenyan TV and film producers must become more innovative in selecting content for their shows. They should avoid the laziness of resorting to tribal stereotypes to make money quickly.

The producers ought to conduct research to find out what kind of content besides stereotypes can still be well received by audiences.

Areas of further research

Kenyan scholars should conduct more research on the effects of negative media content on the perceptions that different Kenyan communities have about each other.

There is also need for more research on how selected popular Kenyan television shows frame ethnicity so as to critically analyse how the different ethnic communities are depicted. The study should also look at which groups are overrepresented, underrepresented, and the ones that are missing completely.

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