Electronic media in electoral conflict in Kenya

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Abstract:

Ethnic diversity in Kenya has been the most outstanding factor in the elections since independence. Over 42 tribes and communities that have lived together in happiness and reverence always clash when it comes to the electioneering period. In the wake of this respectful unity between the different communities, threats on issues of resource distribution and political differences cost ethnic differences and this becomes worse during general elections that come every five years. These differences have been recurrent over the years but it sadly reached its climax during the 2007 general elections when the country broke into ethnic fighting after presidential elections results were fiercely disputed. This enhanced the ethnic differences among Kenyans and promoted the destruction of the cultural diversity. Electronic media news source has implications for three entities: the journalists, the organizations that the media houses represent or the involved parties, and the news consumers. Central to the model was the relationship between the involved parties as news source and the reporter. The concept of marketing-driven journalism and the role of public relations in news production lead to the concept of agenda building. In the process of agenda building, public relations practitioners channel information subsidies through the media and subsidize the news reporters’ newsgathering. The role of information subsidies in the mass media is termed as ‘agenda building,’ and the term represents the relationship between a newsroom and its sources. This study was fundamentally a descriptive survey. It entailed the description of the state of electronic media in Kenya. The description was appropriate for collecting information about electronic media fraternity and people’s attitudes, opinions and a variety of issues regarding electronic media and conflict in Kenya for the period April 2007 to April 2008. The target populations were residents of the areas affected by the post election violence, such as the Rift valley, Kibera and Naivasha. From the interviews conducted, it was evident that the general Public received most of the information and developments of the election campaigns and the election process through the leading media houses in Kenya. A majority of the respondents said they knew of the current developments through the radio. The actions by the electronic media were so intense at the peak of the electioneering process and the result was upraising and revolts from all the parts of the country were witnessed. However, the researcher found out that both the electronic media and the general public had a part to play in the violence although it was not quite clear whether these actions were deliberate or not.