DECODING THE 2017 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN POSTERS IN KENYA

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DECLARATION

Declaration by the Candidate

This is to declare that this research project is my original work and has never been submitted for any degree in any university or college for academic award. No part of this research project may be reproduced without prior permission of the author or the University of Nairobi.

Signature…………………………………   …………………………………

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Declaration by the Supervisor

This research project has been submitted for the award of a Masters of Arts degree in Communication Studies to the University of Nairobi with my approval as assigned University Supervisor.

Signature…………………………………   …………………..…………………

Dr Joseph Nyanoti   **Date**

University of Nairobi

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research project to two very special people in my life my dear husband and my loving mother. To my husband, thank you for believing in me and always giving me support. To my dear mother I dedicate this to you for pushing me out of my comfort zone and urging me to go back to school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to analyse the 2017 presidential election posters in Kenya from a critical media studies approach. The study employed semiotic analysis approach to identify and analyse the various signifiers and their signifieds. The study's main objective was to establish the meanings encoded in the 2017 Jubilee and National Super Alliance presidential election posters. The specific objectives were to investigate how the posters were crafted to appeal to the voters, to investigate the hidden meanings embedded in the posters and to establish the presidential candidates' ideological differences and similarities in the posters. The study employed exploratory research design which used qualitative method that is semiotic analysis. The main theory used in the study was Stuart Hall's Encoding Decoding model, which theorises how audience read messages as preferred reading, oppositional reading and negotiated reading. The data was thematically analysed and presented in a narrative form. The study found that the parties crafted their posters professionally to appeal to their voters for ease of identification by their followers; the strategy was effective in attracting the targeted voters however the emphasis on visual attraction overshadowed the attention to the content of the posters. The embedded hidden meaning was illusion of many in the case of Jubilee to show that they had a huge following while the National Super Alliance presented a picture of the people representatives while portraying the leading opponent as a failure that needed to be replaced. The ideological difference was that the National Super Alliance projected a social transformation and liberation of the masses while the Jubilee presented an ideology of continuity portraying itself as being a safe pair of hands and can be trusted once more. The study recommends use of neutral colors so as to shift the attention back to the content of the posters. Voter literacy is key towards enabling the electorate to decode the hidden meaning in the posters. Finally, the study recommends that the parties should craft posters which communicate specific ideology so as to prevent ambiguities in the understanding of the messages conveyed in the posters.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This study focused on political advertising specifically the use of posters in election campaign and what meanings are embedded in the texts. Despite many changes in communication use of posters in election campaigns in democratic countries is still a common dominant culture (Plasser, 2009). The use of posters dates back as early as the 1920's and was used as recently as 2017 during Kenya's General Election campaign period. Political parties and candidates use this medium to reach their audience who are potential voters.

1.1 Background to the Study

Political adverting around the world entails how candidates vying for different political seats and their parties use mass media to pass their messages to potential voters. Politicians package their messages and use mass media to convey it to the people, mostly in democratic countries. The politicians usually get free coverage while in the office during news time, however during campaigns period they pay for media coverage. There are countries that do not allow airing of political advertising on radio and television such as Switzerland. Political advertising in the United States of America has been around for over 100 years.

Political advertising in America dates back to the early 1900s before Mass Media, Television, internet and Radio became popular. The politicians seeking elective posts then used posters, handbills and printed publications (Jamieson, 1984).Radio advertising was also used by political candidates to spread their messages and that can be traced from the 1920's (Kaid and Robertson, 2003).In 1940's Franklin Roosevelt used a strategy of a celebrity who was a Hollywood star to sell his ideas on Radio to the potential voters. The use of celebrities was strategic bearing in mind that they already had admirers and followers who may translate into voters. The earlier mode of political advertising in also included getting out and meeting voters, participating in debates in town-hall and shaking hands of the people. Harry S Truman a presidential candidate in 1948 elections made history by covering over 31,000 miles in America and shaking more than half a million hands. In this age and time that would be unheard of but back then that was a major achievement for Harry in marketing himself.

The first Television commercial for political candidates in America to air was in the year 1950 on behalf of Connecticut Senator and former advertising executive William Benton. The advert was broadcasted on screens set up in public areas such as shopping centers and strategic locations on the streets. The outdoor airing was necessary since most Americans at that time did not own televisions sets. Benton actually won the re-election. Presidential candidate Dwight D Eisenhower was the first politician to explore television advertising. In the year 1952 he created 40 twenty-second Television spots which were filmed in one day. Eisen had an opportunity to respond to voter's questions in a recorded session which was later to be produced as a political advert dubbed "Eisenhower Answers America". This advertising strategy has been credited to his winning the elections. (Kaid and Johnston 2001)

John F Kennedy 1960 went a step further than Eisenhower by creating over 200 Television advertisements during his campaign. Lyndon B Johnson is remembered in America for one of the most famous political advertising in History going by the title "The Daisy Girl" (Schwartz, 1964). The one-minute advertisement aired only one time on television, but it's been watched again so many times. This advertisement was a game changer as to how a political candidate can market themselves. Johnson was re-elected against Republican Arizona Barry Goldwater in 1964. The television advertisement begins with a little girl playing with petals on a daisy counting them as she plucks and drops them down. The camera gradually zooms in toward her pupil and after plucking the last petal a voice is heard counting then followed by a loud explosion. This is followed by a message popping up on the Television urging the people to elect Johnson because *the stakes are too high for you to stay home.*" The advertisement instills fear about his opponent Goldwater with accusation of his support of nuclear war.

The invention of technology came with changes in political advertising. The messages started shifting to World Wide Web as from the mid-1990s (Kaid, 2004). Barack Obama embraced new media for his political advertising and had a huge online presence in his campaigns. He also used positive campaign message in his first campaign dubbed 'Hope'. The campaign team besides using internet advertising and also erected posters in the streets of America and also shared them online. He appealed to the youth and most voters hence winning against his competitor John McCain.

Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign was majorly on digital platform. Political advertising has moved online with an increase of videos being distributed (Dowling and Wichowsky, 2014). The Trump-Clinton saw online posters; you tube videos and use of social media platforms such as Facebook and twitter used in sharing videos. The two presidential candidates were also involved in a presidential debate to try and persuade voters to vote for them. The used that platform to articulate their ideologies. There were also posters both online and on the American streets for both candidates. The cost of political advertising has also gone up. Miller explains that Hillary Clinton's campaign team spent approximately 120 million US dollars on advertisement only (Miller, 2016).

The Unites States of America has now provided a level playground for political advertising with the passing of a regulation that requires the Television stations to charge them lower than normal rates. The Federal Communications Commission regulations requires that Television stations must sell political commercial slots at the *"lowest unit charge"* 45 days before the primary and 60 days before a general election . This is to ensure that Media station do not overcharge for political advertising and make huge profits from the candidates during the campaign period.

Political advertising in the United Kingdom is majorly in the print media and Broadcast. Major political parties are allocated free airtime on television for Party Political Broadcasts (PPB) which are referred to as Party Election Broadcast (PEB). Political advertising in the United Kingdom is partly regulated. Therefore, the environment sits between free market, liberal model of the United States and the more regulated democratic corporatist orders of Northern Europe (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Political advertising is also a dominant culture in West African countries. The period after colonisation and with the rise of multiparty politics and technological innovation have become central vectors of public space hence pushing state media to the edge (Frere 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2005). Multiparty politics brought about competition and options for elective positions, hence advertising was inevitable. During political campaign period the presidential candidates would employ spin doctors to sway the agenda for the day to favor them. The candidates seeking to be elected and to market themselves to their potential voters also use radio, television and print media for political advertising. Political candidates in West Africa receive a lot of media reporting

similarly a large deficit in West African journalism occurs because of its partisan role (Perret, 2005). The use of radio for political advertising in West African is very common during campaign period. This could be due to the fact that most West Africans listen to radio in rural areas. The listeners' then have a chance to call in and have a live engagement with the political candidates present at the radio station. They get to ask them questions and engage them in the issues they would like addressed if the candidate is successfully elected into office. Campaigns in urban areas in West Africa have is a bit different in that the audience are literate and have ease in accessing newspapers hence there is increase in use of print media in urban areas (Brunet,2004).

Mali in West Africa has a liberal approach to political advertising. The candidates mostly use meetings, press declarations, billboards and also radio during campaign to pass across their message. The politicians' travel across the country addressing political rallies and gatherings with a sole purpose of interacting with potential voters and meeting them face to face. The political aspirants also use radio advertising whereby friends of political parties and the parties finance the radio advertisements. Generally, in West Africa Public Relations campaigns play a key role during political campaigns and the media sets the agenda for the campaign.

South Africa held its first unique election after the release of Nelson Mandela from jail in 1994. The campaigns were the very first after apartheid and repelling of repressive media laws which were replaced with media freedom, freedom of expression and access to official information by the public (Wasserman and Beer, 2006). During the campaigns gearing to 1994 elections African National Congress (ANC) candidate Nelson Mandela's poster had his smiling photo and children from all races surrounding him. It was a soft image to give hope to the future generation if he is elected after the suffering, they had been through as a Nation. Political advertising was done randomly before 1994.There were street posters and placards bearing the candidates name and position, an occasional newspaper adverts, door to door handbills and pamphlets. (Norris et al, 1999) argues that there was little need for widespread campaigns because meetings, rallies and editorials in the press of the time were deemed sufficient (Norris, Curtice, Sanders and Semetko, 1999). Television advertising was prohibited for politicians because it was assumed to be a very persuasive form of advertising (Tomaselli, 2006). However, South Africa now have opened up Television advertising,

posters and use of online platforms during campaigns to reach out to their potential voters.

Kenya enjoyed being one party state since independence in 1963 up to the year 1991 when multi-party politics was introduced. This saw political advertising coming to play from this election. Posters, billboards, radio, television, public address, rallies as well as print media were used to popularise candidates. The Television stations were however state controlled hence the ruling party then had an upper hand in advertising. In Kenya, political candidates use more than one language to communicate to their voters. In the Urban areas, English and Kiswahili may be used but in rural areas campaigns are done mostly in the dominant native language. Cosmopolitan towns view a balance of languages as important for inclusive campaigns. Political advertising in Kenya as from the year 2013, besides using campaign posters, has been leaning towards alternative media such as Facebook and twitter to engage the youthful population who are a majority in their messages. The most recent elections campaign of 2017 saw an aspiring presidential candidate having a live chat on Facebook with voters. The main aim of using such platforms is to reach many voters at a go and speaking the language or using the mode of communication of that particular age group.

Political advertisements in Kenya are regulated by several statutes such as the constitution, Defamation Act, National Integration and Cohesion Act and Kenya Communication Act. Posters are widely used during campaigns in Kenya and they are placed on walls in the estates, streets, and roads as well as online. This has also necessitated a law regulating posters during campaigns in election Act 2011.The act states that it is an offence to print, publish, distribute or post up any placard or poster which refers to any election without the names and addresses of the printer and publisher. National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) passed a requirement for candidates to deposit with them some amount to be returned after they have removed posters following end of an electioneering period. Kenya's political campaign involves spending a lot of money by the candidates in advertising as well as in branded merchandise. The candidate's financial prowess keeps them ahead of the other candidates since it is a fairly expensive affair. There are brightly colored posters all over the streets, voters darning wrap around Leso and t-shirts with their candidate's photo and a message on it, campaign vehicles fully decorates with posters of the specific

political party and with a Public address system mostly playing music and Print and TV adverts, for those who can afford the high cost of such adverts. The campaign posters have an added advantage if the brand, in this case political party is well known and saleable. The major political party brands in Kenya vary each election period. In 2017 elections the major party brands were NASA, Jubilee and KANU. There are instances where candidates are not aligned to a major political party (independent candidates) a brand name may come in handy in advertising. The independent candidates tend to maximise their winning chances by highlighting their strengths in line with integrity, impressive work and leadership track record, honesty and reliability among other positive traits that voters may resonate with (Kinder et al 1980).The last two elections in Kenya 2013 and 2017 saw the introduction of Western culture of presidential debates where all the aspiring presidential candidates share a podium and articulate their issues. This trickled down to aspiring running mates as well as Governors and their deputies.

Candidates vying for political elective positions have been investing in paid political advertising with intent to persuade voters to vote for them. The messages are independently encoded by the candidates and shared as is by the mass media at a cost the party or candidate. According to Delvin, George Bush and John Kerry in 2004 presidential elections campaign spent more than $600 million dollars for television advertising (Devlin 2005; TNS Media Intelligence, 2004). The 2007 Kenya general elections campaigns including advertising according to (CAPF) Coalition for Accountable Political Financing almost Ksh6 billion was spent (The East African 2012). Young (2004) explains that during campaigns period in Australia Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on advertising and PR across the country (Young, 2004). Dahir in an article in Quartz Africa indicates that Kenya had a very expensive elections in 2017 with an estimated 1 Billion dollars being spent. A presidential campaign costs an estimated about 50 million Kenya shillings (Dahir July 18, 2017).

Therefore, while political advertising is known to be one of the dominant cultures it is not clear how such campaign advertisements such as posters are decoded by voters in an ethnically divided county and what ideological meanings are embedded in them.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While political advertising is a dominant culture in elective campaigns, there is little literature conducted in Kenya to examine the ideological meanings carried in the

posters. In other words, the study focuses on determining the ways in which posters are used to advance ideology during campaigns. In the 2016 political campaign in the United States of America the dominant ideologies of Republican was populism or democracy which supports rights, aspirations and peoples power (Taylor,2016) whereas the Democrats dominant ideology was liberal which is social liberalism, an ideology that seeks a balance between individual liberty, social justice and the common good. Australia Labor Party's main ideology was socialism, liberalism and pragmatism (Young, 2004).While for Yugoslavia main ideology was coercive persuasion (Predan et al.2000) and in South Africa the dominant ideology for African National Congress(ANC) is communism and Africanism (Jager,2015).Little has been done in Kenya to establish ideological meanings carried in the 2017 presidential campaign posters. This is the gap this study seeks to undertake.

1.3   Main Objective of the Study
To establish the meanings encoded in the August 2017 Jubilee and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) presidential election campaign posters.

1.3.1 Research Objectives
1. To investigate how the posters were crafted to appeal to the voters.
2. To investigate the hidden meanings embedded in the posters
3. To establish the presidential candidates' ideological differences and similarities in the posters.

1.4   Research Questions
1.   How were the posters crafted to appeal to the voters?
2.   What are the hidden meanings embedded in the posters?
3.   What are the presidential candidates' ideological differences and similarities?

1.5   Justification
Elections in Kenya have always been accompanied with elections posters for decades now. Despite there being other methods of political advertising, posters are always used from presidential position, Governor, Senator, Women Representative, Member of Parliament to the then Councilors and now Members of County Assembly. However, it is not clear why every election period poster is mounted on the walls, bill boards and posts with colorful photos and catchy slogans. The reading and interpretation of

ideological meanings of these posters by the reader, in this case potential voters, is also not clear. Posters are designed and the messages in them are well thought out by the political candidates, parties and their campaign strategists. They carry a message from the person seeking to be elected to an office to the people who will elect them to the office. The messages carry a meaning that the candidate seeks to deliver to voter as he or she has encoded it. The readers of these posters come from different cultural backgrounds; have diverse political leanings and ideologies. Therefore, it is not clear how these posters are read and interpreted by voters and if the meaning decoded is what was intended by the candidates and parties. This is the gap this study sought to undertake.

1.6   Significance

This study is justified on the basis that political advertising is a culture during political campaigns. Voters are bombarded with posters on the roads, in shops, billboards, cars and on the walls. To understand how voters decode the poster messages is important in advancing knowledge on how politicians communicate during campaigns. Also, the campaign posters are an expensive investment which means that the candidates see value in them. The study is necessary to show what the value is and how it relates to communication practice during political campaigns. Furthermore, unlike in advanced democracies like the US and the UK developing countries such as Kenya need more studies in electioneering process and this study therefore is a contribution to local knowledge.

1.7   Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study narrowed down to political advertising by the two major presidential candidates in the 2017 General elections for Jubilee and NASA (National Super Alliance) who fronted a candidate from one of their affiliate party named Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). The study analysed posters that were put out by these two candidates in the electioneering period before August 8TH 2017elections. The other limitation was in meanings. It is important to note that meanings are very subjective and largely depend on the culture, time, and level of education, gender and political leanings of the target audience. Therefore, it may be challenging to draw meanings that are universally acceptable across all the viewers of poster images. To manage the study, the research was limited to one constituency in Nairobi which is Langata. Time and

financial resources were limiting factors for conducting the study in all the constituencies in Nairobi. The chosen constituency has five wards which comprise of people from different cultures and economic classes which were important in conducting the study. The researcher conducted in depth interviews with key informants in the constituency and applied semiotic analysis on the posters. While a broader and longitudinal study would have been ideal, it was nevertheless important to understand, albeit in a limited way, if the heavy paid-for posters indeed are useful for the voters and if they carry any ideologies.

1.8   Operational Definitions

Voters - People, who are above 18 years, have a national ID and are registered to vote

Readers - The potential voters who consume the posters

Candidates - Those people seeking to be elected to a political office

Signifier - any material thing that exists in real life for example image of chair

Signified - the concept that the signifier refers to example that bank is open for business.

Sign - A sign refers to anything that can be used to communicate or a thing that stands for something else

Denotation - the literal meaning of a sign, for example the word orange signifies a particular kind of a fruit.

Connotation - The hidden cultural meaning of a sign e.g. Orange in Kenyan political culture signifies opposition party

Persuasive – Messages that connect with voters and arouse their emotions with the intention by the encoder of the message to win over their votes through emotional appeal

Respondents - People who are called upon to give answers to a set of questions.

Posters - Print outs texts bearing campaign messages

Presidential candidates - This refers to the two main presidential candidates in 2017 elections

Code - A combination of semiotic systems, a super system, that function as general maps of meaning, belief systems about oneself and others, which imply views and attitudes about how the world is and/or ought to be. Codes are where semiotics and social structure and values connect.

Ideology - These are codes that reinforce structures of power. Ideology works largely by creating forms of "common sense," of the taken-for-granted in everyday life

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter reviewed the available literature related to the study and theoretical framework used in the study. It reviewed literature on semiotics focusing on its evolution and how it is applied in making meanings out of political posters. Political advertising literature was also reviewed covering developed and developing democracies. The literature reviewed started with global literature and then regional then a look at Africa and Kenya. The study was anchored in the period preceding August 2017general elections. The focus was on presidential campaign posters for Jubilee and NASA

Figure 2.1:. Posters from both parties

2.1 Semiotics

Semiotics is a new discipline in Kenya which is yet to be institutionalised as an academic disciple. However, studies are being carried out in this field and there is literature available on semiotics. Semiotics, as explained by Bignell (2003), is a study that focuses on how signs communicate meanings. Political campaigns posters are loaded with meanings which can be decoded using semiotics. This may help the consumer of the posters interpret the meanings embedded in the texts. Semiotics also

involves the study of not only what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else as explained by (Chandler, 2007). In his study, Chandler explains that signs take the form of words, images, sound, gestures and objects. These are the features prominent in campaign posters. A sign refers to a thing that stands for something else. He also points out that signs take on important meanings that are defined by cultural and social conventions and interactions. Scholarly work of French Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders explains that every sign has two levels, the signifier and the signified. The signs can be interpreted to give the obvious literal meaning (denotation) or the hidden meaning (connotation) (Berger 2000, Cobley and Jansz 1998, Bignell 2002). Political campaign posters for instance, looking at the signs used during 2005 Constitution Referendum were banana and orange. These two signs literal meanings are fruits, but on close reading and with the campaigns going on at that time they had hidden meanings. The team that was supporting the passing of constitution was being represented by the banana whereas the group that was voting against it was being represented by orange. Roland Barthes a French Critic identified these two levels of signification which are: Denotation and connotation. Denotation is the literal meaning which anyone can read in a text. Connotation on the other hand is the hidden meaning which needs interpretation in a text.

The signifier and signified according to Saussure are two inseparable parts of a sign. The signifier represents an image or literal word whereas signified is the mental concept evoked in the mind of the person studying the signifier (Berger 2004).

The signifier in semiotics signifies the literal meaning. For example, an image of a lamp has obvious meaning of a device that provides light. It can be used in place of electricity or independently as a source of light and it is mostly found in rural areas of Kenya.

A chair is another example of a signifier, when you see an image of chair the first impression that you get is that it is a piece of furniture which is supported by legs and used for siting by one person or several people if it is a long chair.

The colour *green* is a beautiful and you get it by mixing colour red and blue. There are green clothes, toys, plates and even green fields

The word *closed* on a door simply signifies that you are not able to access the room or building using that door since it has been shut. One may look for an alternative door that is open to access the room or building or come back when it is open.

These examples of signifier explain to us the obvious or denotation meaning of a text that is one level of making meanings which is the most obvious.

The signified is the other side of a signifier which gives us a second level signification which requires close reading of a text to interpret the hidden meaning or connotation out of the texts. The examples above can be interpreted at the next level for example the word *green* in a high school set up is used to refer to the new entrants in form one or in the university the freshmen who have just joined campus. Their lack of experience in the school is signified by the word green which is derived from a plant which is in its initial stages it looks so fresh and young.

Sign is made up of signifier and signified which Saussure argues that they are two inseparable parts. Whereas a signifier refers to a real-life thing the signified is the idea evoked by the signifier in the mind of the person observing the signifier. The relationship between signifier and signified is also explained as being arbitrary thus providing room for the signs to be interpreted differently by different readers (Berger, 2004) .The signs in the presidential political posters will have multiple meanings hence interpreted in many different ways by the voters depending on their political leanings, cultural background, economic status and ideologies. Therefore, a signifier in Jubilee or NASA candidate from Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) poster can point to many signifieds. The arbitrary relationships between signifier and signified is illustrated in the diagram below
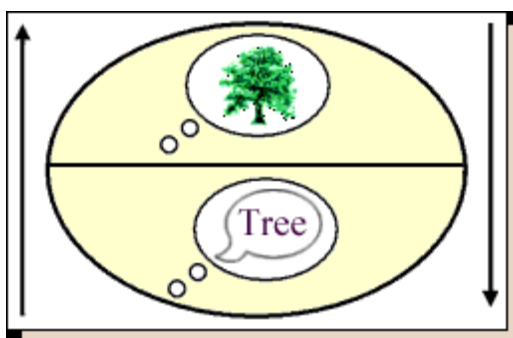
Figure 2.2: Source: Daniel Chandler, 2007

There are two models of signs triadic model credited to Charles Pierce and dyadic model credited to Ferdinand de Saussure (Danesi, 2004).In the dyadic model, a sign consists of the signifier and the signified – the signifier being the physical part or form that carries the meaning while the signified is the thought or concept or content associated with the sign as shown in the diagram above.

An example is the written word Chair. Its signifier is furniture which is two to four legs which one or several people can sit on depending on its size. Its signified is not a specific chair but the concept of a seat. In Saussure's dyadic model, a sign must have both a signifier and a signified, but the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary. The same signifier may signify more than one concept. For example, the Queens chair which has a status attached to it, the Presidency chair (a concept of leadership) which one ascend to upon being elected, a wheel chair a physically challenged person who cannot walk and needs support to move around.

Connotation and denotation are two important terms in revealing the meaning beneath texts. Denotation refers to the literal meaning that is obvious for example a car is a means of transport. Connotation goes to the second level of meaning for example what is the colour of the car and what does the colour mean. Red cars are associated with feminism and could mean it belongs to a woman whereas dark coloured cars are associated with masculinity. What is the make of the car? Is it a Toyota, Subaru or a Range rover? Depending on the make of the car the hidden meaning there is social class or financial prowess of the car owner. Connotation refers to the cultural meanings attached to words, texts and other forms of communication. These can involve symbolic, historical and emotional matters that are connected to texts (Berger, 2004). A great deal of semiotic analysis revolves around unearthing the deeper meanings of objects, symbolic phenomena, actions and dialogue of the characteristics in texts and images and linking the meaning to social, cultural and ideological concerns

Nyanoti (2018) conducted a semiotic analysis of the 2017 political campaign posters for women aspirants in Nairobi County to find out what the texts signified. The posters were found to be carrying a patriarchal ideology and also objectifying women. The image for instance used by aspiring Women representative for Nairobi County Millicent Omanga was taken at a close shot, the curvy shape of her body was emphasised and she was more of a media spectacle, just good to look at.

Figure 2.3: Millicent Omanga Nominated Senator

Source: Nyanoti, 2018

The other poster analysed was for Esther Passaris whose poster had the words *mama taa mtaani* which translated loosely means 'a mother who provides lights in the estates'. The aspirant is signified to be a woman by her motherliness nature by not what as a leader she is standing for or planning to bring to the people she is seeking to lead once elected into office. The emphasis is on her femininity not her ideology.

Figure 2.4: Wanjiku wa Kibe and Esther Passaris

Source: Annie Wanjiku *wa* Kibe Facebook page and Source: Nyanoti, 2018

This media text has an image of a lady aspiring to be a Member of Parliament for Gatundu. The words in the poster '*Round hii MP ni Mama na Maendeleo'* brings out the feminine side of the candidate and her motherliness an ideology that cuts across most women candidates' posters. The words can be translated to mean 'this time it is a mother with development'. A close reading of her name *Annie Wanjiku wa Kibe* loosely translated to mean Annie Wanjiku wife to Kibe. The name Kibe in this context is a man and this has signified that Annie is a married woman and she heads a home and is capable of heading a constituency .Annie is being identified with a man is also a way of making it easy for her to be accepted by both male and female voters since as the analysis by Nyanoti (2018) indicated that Kenya is still largely a patriarchal society and the gender rule of 30% representation is yet to be attained. The hegemonic ideology is still patriarchal and women are still mostly identified in those posters by their feminine side of being a mother, a wife to a man and beautiful to look. This study focused on the ideology on women posters but it did not look at the ideology(s) in the presidential candidates' posters and that's the gap this study seeks to investigate.

2.2 Political Advertising

Political advertising falls in the category of political communication which scholars have described it in broad terms as the conversation between the aspiring or elected leaders and the voters. This can be traced back to classical scholars like Plato who mainly focused on Rhetorical devices and uses of language and oratory that affected Public life in early days of Greek and Roman societies (Newdell, 2005). Political communication has evolved and changed over time to include, political speaking, political campaign debates, political advertising, political news and political uses of new technologies as outlined by (Lynda 2000). Political communication scholar (McNair 2003) argues that it is a purposeful communication about politics. The present study focus is on political advertising for presidential elections in Kenya during the 2017 presidential election campaign. The period before the material voting day is a busy season for selling the potential candidates to the voters through various advertising channels. This is a time when voters get are repeatedly fed with information about the candidate's vying for different positions and probably what the candidates are planning to do if at all they are elected to the position. The messages in the adverts in most cases are encoded by the candidates or their communication team as explained by Mareek (2011). The role of Mass Media in political advertising depends if they are airing or

publishing paid advert or free advert. The paid for posters by politicians are not subjected to editing but aired as is whereas for free airtime for adverts media houses are at liberty to air or print them with little or no editing.

Political advertising being one of the branches of political communication plays a key role especially during electioneering period. There is huge need to be visible and well known by the voters at this period of a Politician's life. Political advertising is used by candidates and parties seeking to persuade voters but it is also the most expensive method and one that those vying for political office have control over (Mills 1986). Kaid and Johnston further explains that researchers have investigated the content of political television advertising, identifying the "video style" of candidates by analysing the verbal, nonverbal and television production content of political advertising (Kaid and Johnston,2001). Political adverts are disseminated through mass media television, radio, social media as well as through posters. The main goal like in most marketing strategies is to package a candidate and make them easily saleable to the voters. To achieve this, communication strategists' use well thought out pictures, colors, words and slogans. There are three types of political advertising used by political candidates as summarised by Cartee (1997). These are: praising the candidate, secondly condemning the opponent and lastly responding to attacks directed towards the candidate (Johnson Cartee and Copeland 1997).To implement Cartee and Copeland three types of political ads, it requires a communication strategist who is well informed and up to date with what is happening in around the political environment, innovative and creative in designing the posters messages throughout the campaign period. Positive and negative adverts play important roles in advertising .Young (2004) argues that political advertising are some of the best evidence one can get to learn about what is going on in the inner sanctums of politics and how it plays out at the highest levels because that is where the political advertising are financed, crafted and developed. Young goes ahead to affirm that parties are now relying more on advertising than ever before and the Public Strategists they engage do their work in secrecy. This points us to the key role advertising plays in elections both in developing and developed countries and if indeed they carry the candidates' ideologies.

2.3 Election Campaigns

An election campaign is a time when candidates vying for various elective positions get to share their vision and ideas with the electorates. The politicians package messages to try and persuade voters to choose them over the other contestants. Elections campaigns offers information designed to influence the electorates choice and also offers a good opportunity for voters to get relevant information that may help in making an informed decision on voting day (Popkin 1994).The information being passed across during this period has an ultimate purpose of generating shifts in public opinion and trying to influence elections results (Holbrook, 1996). There is a stipulated campaign period in different democratic countries running to several months just before the voting day. Kenya for instance, the Elections Act 2011 indicates that the official campaign period is three months to the elections date and ends two days to voting day. Campaign activities includes the use of posters, television radio and newspaper advertising, public rallies, social media, branded clothing's, public address systems and also personalised short messages (SMS). The present study will look at the campaign posters used by NASA and Jubilee presidential candidates for this electioneering period.

2.3.1 The Importance of Elections Campaigns

Elections campaigns are important especially in a democratic country as it presents an opportunity for the electorates to get to know policies and manifestos of the political parties.

Several studies done that indicate importance of campaigns advertisements in passing across their messages and trying to win over potential voters include (Swanson and Mancini 1996, Holbrook 1996; Farrell and Schmitt-Beck 2002; Vavreck, 2009). Election campaign method mostly used despite being very traditional has been posters as extensively discussed by (Norris 2002, Farrell and Webb, 2000).The elections campaign period offers a level play field for the contestants to try and win overs supporters since all candidates have equal chance to campaign and utilise the available spaces to display their posters. However, the differentiating factor is the financial resources availability which is either limiting or liberating is a limiting in running the campaigns. The more the finances the larger the area a candidate is able to cover and the more the adverts the candidate and parties are able to churn out. This is also one of the rare times that the candidates are on the ground meeting and talking to their

prospective voters at a close range. The voters also have an added advantage at this time because there are candid discussions going on between political parties and candidates revealing to them many truths and untruths. The negative advertising from one campaign group tends to communicate some truth on the shortcoming of the candidates. Mueller and Stratmann (1994) explain that there is minimal difference between informative and persuasive campaigning of political candidates. The posters being limited to very few words tend to be very economical in what it communicates. It is argued that since posters may not be able to provide detailed information on policies and candidates manifesto, they are generally used as persuasive tools in campaigning (Cheles, 2001).

According to reviews by scholars the feature that stands out in the posters are information about the position the candidate is vying for. Most candidates take on certain general issues and persuading voters to vote for them without necessarily committing to a position on the issues affecting the electorates (ibid, p. 65). Campaign period is important for Mass Media because they have so much content for their print Media, they host political debates and shows whose content is majorly political and centered on elections.

The campaign posters have an added advantage if the brand, in this case political party is well known and saleable. The major political party brands in Kenya vary each election period. In 2017 elections the major party brands were Jubilee, NASA and KANU. However, Jubilee and NASA turned out to be the major contesting parties. There are instances where candidates are not aligned to any major political party and brand name might be important in advertising. These particular candidates referred to as *'Independent candidates'* tend to maximise their chances of being the preferred candidate by highlighting their strengths in line with integrity, impressive community related development work they have done and leadership track record, honesty and reliability among other positive traits that voters may identify with (Kinder et al 1980)

Candidates take this period as a good opportunity to package their own messages for the voter or enlist professionals in public relations in designing campaign slogans and their desired messages. The present study focus is on the posters used by Jubilee and NASA presidential candidates. The presidential candidate for Jubilee was Uhuru

Kenyatta and his running mate William Samoei Ruto whereas NASA was Raila Amollo Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka as his running mate.

2.3.2 The Role of Posters in Elections Campaign

Despite being one of the oldest campaign method posters are still a dominant medium of political advertising in many countries around the world (Plasser, 2009). Kenya election campaign period is equally characterised with posters mounted on the walls every electioneering season. Maarek further explains that posters are an important visual medium of political communication that is directly controlled by the politicians directly (Maarek, 2011). The candidates fund their posters therefore they are free to encode the contents that seem fit for them. Unlike commercial advertising that has to go through the process of editing and further editing to fit into the specific media house reporting style, this does not apply to political posters. Their message is printed as they intended on the posters and circulated without any amendments. The aspiring candidates also get to decide the colors, photos and designs of their posters independently or with the help of their preferred communication strategist.

Posters are very affordable campaign tools and they are easily accessible. The posters have some semblance of permanence since when they are pasted on a wall many people can pass by and have a look at it as opposed to visual or audio which is easy to miss out since it airs at specific times depending on the advertising slot allocated by the specific media house. Whereas audio or a few seconds advert on television and radio may be difficult for the audience to remember, seeing a poster every time one passes where they have been placed, they are constantly reminded of the candidate and their quest for a political position. Lincoln describes this as mass art since posters have both verbal and non-verbal but visual elements (Lincoln, 1976). The photos on the posters bring out the non-verbal part which shows the voters the candidate's personal qualities, their emotions, their relationship with the others on the photo and with their surroundings. The verbal aspects of the posters are portrayed through candidate's slogan which may act as the candidate's identity for example *"Yes We Can"* slogan used by former president of the USA Barrack Obama is his identity even today. They may also contain promises of the candidate or their take on certain issues such as Jimmy Carter promise on his poster that says he *can save America*, it identified him as a savior a character he made complete by having Jesus-like look on a poster as shown on Christian movies in

his long hair. Therefore, posters are non-mediated but are fully controlled by the candidates to independently package their dominant hegemonic ideologies (Gramci, 2…) without interference since advertising rules that applies to commercial advertising do not apply to them. The role of mass media if applied in this case is transport the content to the voters without any alteration to the content.

2.4   Encoding and Decoding

Stuart Hall (1996) was one of the early advocates of the audience reception theory. He developed encoding/decoding model as an approach to textual analysis, with focus on the scope for negotiation and opposition on the part of the audience. Hall (1996) believes that the audience does not simply passively accept a text as the model took a look at ways in which audiences also referred to as readers make meaning from texts.

The encoding and decoding model was developed by Hall in an attempt to challenge assumptions on how media messages are produced, circulated and consumed. Hall argued that researchers should direct their attention toward: analysis of the social and political context in which content is produced (encoding), and the consumption of media content (decoding). Researchers should not make unwarranted assumptions about either encoding or decoding, but instead should conduct research permitting them to carefully assess the social and political context in which media content is produced and the everyday life context in which it is consumed (McQuail, 2010). Therefore, Encoding/decoding is the translation of a message that is easily understood. When you decode a message, you are extracting the meaning of that message into terms that you are able to easily understand. Decoding has both verbal and non-verbal forms through communication. Decoding behaviour without using words would be observing body language, dressing colours used and the background of the photo (Hall*, Durham and Kellner, 2001).*

Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding model of communication basically explains that meaning is encoded by the sender and decoded by the receiver and that these encoded meanings may be decoded to mean something else. That is to say, the senders encode meaning in their messages according to their ideals and views and the messages are decoded by the receivers according to their own ideals and views, which may lead to miscommunication or to the receiver understanding something very different from what the sender intended (Hall, 1993).

To further explain how misunderstandings come about in all kinds of literal works, Hall came up with three "hypothetical positions from which decoding of a televisual discourse may be constructed".

They are; preferred reading, negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

Preferred reading the audience decodes the message the same way the encoder intended it to be understood.

Negotiated reading the audience understands the intended meaning but also have their own position. The reader partly agrees with the hegemonic position but also interprets the message his own separate way. Therefore, a negotiated reading is one that involves a mixture accepted and rejected positions. According to Hall, adaptive and oppositional elements can be uncovered when decoding negotiated versions. That is, although readers recognise the central message in a coded communication, they often differ with the encoder on various aspects of the message. Instead, the readers ultimate understanding will be influenced by their individual biases and experiences.

Oppositional reading happens when the reader perfectly understands both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but chooses to decode the message in a globally contrary way. In turn, this leads to a complete distortion of the intended message. The readers experiences and respective backgrounds influence their elucidation of the message, hence the wrong insinuation. Hall explains that this kind of position happen mainly in political moments like during crisis period when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading.

Other scholars have explored Hall's model for encoding and decoding, providing insight through their criticism. The model was primarily criticised for assuming that encoders create a dominant position for the main concealed meaning. Another significant shortcoming identified was Hall's explanation of how the 'preferred reading' is achieved and communicated by the encoder. Among the critics include Shaun Moores, who questioned where the encoded information is and how the reader knows she/he has identified the intended meaning (Moores, 1993). According to the author, there is a realistic possibility for the reader to manipulate the text with the

intention of arriving at a predetermined meaning. Moreover, he questioned whether all sorts of text contain universal encoded messages.

When the concept was applied by one of Hall's colleague and student, David Morley a new question arose. From his experience with the concept, he wondered whether those analysing the texts based their findings on what they predict will be the understanding of the majority of the members of the public (Morley, 2006). Morley goes on to suggest that the decoding stage is necessary for distinguishing how the text will be evaluated and consequently, comprehended.

The present study based on encoding decoding model seeks to find out how the potential voters read the campaign posters of Jubilee and NASA and what position they took in interpreting the meanings and ideologies, if any, embedded therein.

2.5 Flow Chart

Political advertising is intended for a particular audience in this case the potential voters. The advertiser who is the candidate seeking to be elected to a political office designs a message that the audience will consume. The meanings are interpreted by the audience depending on their ideology, political leanings, cultural beliefs and interests. To understand how the political advertising messages are decoded it is important to appreciate the voter's background since it may influence their ability in meaning-making.

Figure 2.5 **Flow Chart**

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┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Political Advertisings │              │      Audience       │
└─────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────┘
           │                                    │
           ▼                                    ▼
     ┌───────────┐                        ┌───────────┐
     │  Encoder  │                        │  Decoder  │
     └───────────┘                        └───────────┘
           │                                    │
           └──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┘
                          ▼      ▼
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │     Message     │
                    └─────────────────┘
                            │
                            ▼
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │     Meaning     │
                    └─────────────────┘
            ┌───────────────┼───────────────┐
            ▼               ▼               ▼
      ┌───────────┐   ┌───────────┐   ┌───────────┐
      │  Culture  │   │ Interests │   │ Ideology  │
      └───────────┘   └───────────┘   └───────────┘
```
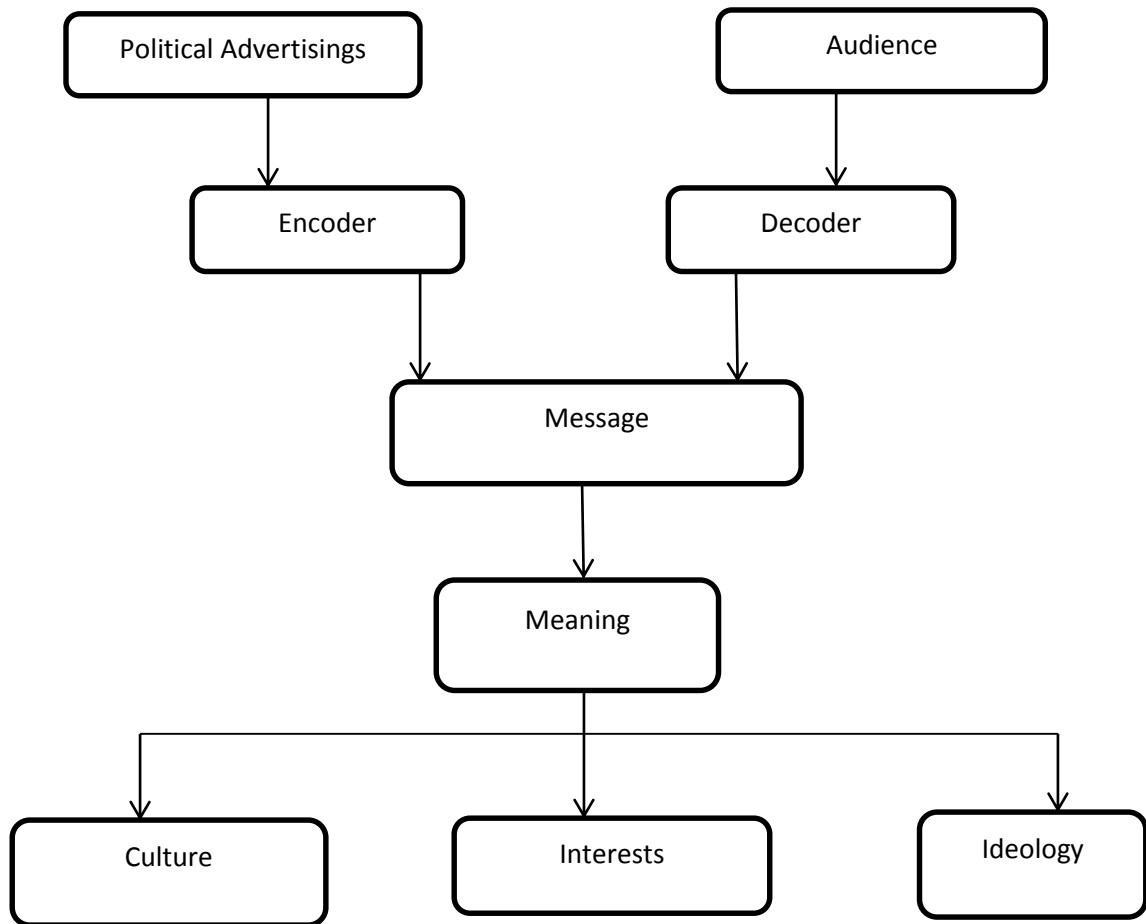
2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Stuart Hall Reception Theory as its main theory. The other theories the study used were media representation theory and constructivism theory.

2.6.1 Encoding Decoding

Stuart Hall a cultural studies scholar in 1996 developed Reception theory whose focus was on giving meaning to a message. This theory acknowledges audience as active players in reading texts. Hall (1996) theorised that media texts are encoded by the producer and are loaded with meanings. The texts are then decoded by readers. However, different audience will decode the text in different ways, probably not how the encoder intended. Hall identifies three positions from where the audience or readers may decode the texts. These are preferred, negotiated and oppositional reading. The first position is when the reader interprets the text in the literal sense as intended by the decoder. This may be due to the fact that they share similar interests, ideologies and

cultural background. Negotiated reading the reader on the other hand thinks through the text and does not agree with everything the encoder has put across. This reader may accept part of the encoders view but will also have their interpretation of the meaning.

Lastly, oppositional reader might clearly understand what the encoder intended to communicate but because of different interests, ideological and cultural background the reader forms their own interpretation which is opposite of the intended meaning. This reader totally rejects the intended meaning and creates different meaning of the text.

This theory helped the researcher in trying to get answers from the audiences with different backgrounds on how the read and interpreted the Jubilee and NASA posters. This will be done bearing in mind that audiences are active participants in reading the posters. The NASA campaign slogan in 2017 presidential campaign poster '*Madadiliko ni sasa'* translated in English to mean *change is now* can be interpreted by a preferred read to mean that they would like change from the current regime. An oppositional reader will totally reject this message since they could be comfortable with the current regime and they do not want any change. The negotiated reader on the other hand will agree with part of the slogan but will make an independent decision about the next government. Encoding decoding model guided this study in finding meaning(s) as interpreted by different audience depending on the position they take.

Voters may not necessarily live in one town for long because of work, school, marriage and going up or down the social class. They carry with them experiences throughout their lives. Constructivism theory assumes that people make sense of the world and generate knowledge while forming meanings based upon their own personal experiences. Based on one's past from childhood the informants may become critical thinkers hence giving multifaceted meanings to the political campaign posters. Kenya has had events associated with elections, for examples, 1997 Clashes, political parties merge, 2007 post-election violence and the most recent 2017 inconclusive elections. Therefore, basing on constructivism theory, a voter may base their interpretation of campaign messages on these experiences if at one point it affected them. The researcher will use this theory in deconstructing the texts. Through experience the reader's in this case potential voters are able to think and make meaning out of the posters basing on the experiences in their lives. The study was anchored on the main theory of encoding decoding model together with constructivism.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses research design and methodology used to carry out the research. It also discusses the target population, sampling and the sampling techniques, data collection instruments and data analysis and data presentation. The researcher used semiotic analysis and key informants' interviews adopting purposive sampling of respondents and posters of NASA and Jubilee for 2017 presidential elections.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher employed an exploratory study design to investigate the meanings embedded in the 2017 presidential political posters for Jubilee and NASA's candidate from ODM party. The design is used when the area being investigated is fairly new or little is known about the area of interest. This design was used to investigate the full nature of the new area of study and other factors related to it (Polit et al, 2001). The researcher collected posters for the two main contesting candidates and studied them to explore the meanings embedded in them. This process is defined by Creswell (2009) as the plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis aimed at solving a research problem (Creswell, 2009).In exploratory research design the researcher may encounter new ideas or insights and thus she should be flexible to change the direction of the study as guided by the new information obtained (Saunders et.al., 2007). Analysing political campaign posters using semiotic analysis is also a fairly new angle of looking at the posters hence the choice of exploratory design for this study.

3.3 Research Site and Time

Interviews were carried out in Langata constituency of Nairobi, Kenya which is among one of the cosmopolitan constituencies in this county and has diversity in terms of its multi-ethnic residents, and its diverse socio-economic characteristics. The study covered three wards within the constituency namely: Karen, Nairobi West, Mugumo-ini. The study was conducted during the period between 2nd and 8th September, 2018.

3.4   Research Approach

This study used qualitative research method. The study employed semiotic analysis and interviews. The researcher obtained the posters used by Jubilee and NASA presidential candidates through taking photos of posters pasted on the walls, streets, on billboards, on campaign vehicles, shirts and also downloading the ones uploaded online.13 posters were used in the study, the posters were obtained using a convenience sampling technique. The posters of interest were the ones bearing the portraits of the two leading presidential candidates namely Raila Odinga vying on NASA ticket and Uhuru Kenyatta vying on Jubilee ticket photographed alone. The other criteria used were posters with the presidential candidates photographed with their running mates William Ruto (Jubilee) and Kalonzo Musyoka (NASA). NASA presidential candidate came from ODM (Raila Amollo Odinga) and his running mate was from Wiper Democratic Movement (Kalonzo Musyoka). The scope was narrowed to the two main presidential candidates in order to get quality response on just the two candidates as opposed to all the sixteen candidates' posters.

3.5   Research Method

The researcher was guided by objectives and set out to find people who can and are willing to provide information in relation to what the researcher was investigating. This was based on the informants' knowledge and experience. The informants for this study were life members of Jubilee (or formerly TNA and URP) and NASA affiliate parties who have voted in Langata for more than two elections. The researchers then used snowball technique to get the subsequent informants. This means that the informants being interviewed referred the researcher to the next informant. Keyton (2015) further explains that snowball is employed in qualitative studies because this technique helps the researcher find potential participants who share some characteristics that is often required for the person to participate in the research.

3.6   Population and Sampling Procedure

3.6.1 Sampling Procedure and technique

The selection of posters was purposive as the researcher only used the posters for the two main presidential candidates in the 2017 general elections developed between July and August 4th 2017.

Snowball therefore is accomplished by getting referrals from individuals who are already being interviewed. This is further confirmed by (Lindolf and Tylor, 2011) that

the referrals in snowball technique share same characteristics with the respondents who in this study are registered members of Jubilee and NASA affiliate parties who have voter more than twice in Langata.

3.6.2   Sample Size

The researcher interviewed a total of 12 respondents out of which 8 were from Jubilee and NASA and the other 4 were independent respondents who had interacted with the 2017 election campaign posters to supplement what the researcher had already gathered and there were referrals from the key informants. The 4 independent respondents were interviewed on phone after sharing the 13 posters with them on email

3.7   Data Collection Procedure

The researcher used qualitative data to execute the study. Non Standardised key informant interview guides was used to gather data from the informants, the guide sought to find out information of their understanding and interpretation of the campaign posters According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), Interviews are ideal to collect data from the key informants because they allow a researcher to get detailed background about the subject as well as get elaborate data concerning informants opinions, values, motivations and experiences. The researcher carried out interviews with key informants. The respondents were selected purposively using a convenience sampling technique. Upon receiving Certificate of field work from The University of Nairobi the research formally introduced herself as a student to the candidates (who had now been elected into office) and the researcher was referred to the key informants who were assisting on the ground and specifically those who were directly involved in disseminating posters within Langata constituency. During the in depth interviews the researcher started by officially introducing herself as a student and explaining that all ethical considerations with be adhered to as she sought permission to conduct an interview. Upon being granted permission to start the interview the researcher gave out print outs of 13 posters to respondent and then conducted the interview being guided by an interview guide. The first respondent referred the researcher to two other informants who in turn gave further referrals until the researcher reached a point of saturation. The researcher in this case applied snowball sampling technique. The data was collected and responses written down on the researcher's notebook. The prevalent feeling among the respondents was that politics is an emotive topic and they preferred not to be recorded. There were only 3 respondents who agreed to have part of their

interview recorded. The data collected was later transcribed and analysed manually in a narrative form. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the informants who were able to assist the researcher in achieving the objectives of the study and snowball technique was used to get the subsequent informants. Political posters do not interest everyone and therefore it was important to be judgmental in selecting sample size so that the study achieves its main objective. This also saved time of explaining what campaign posters are and which ones the researcher would like to be interpreted since the informants were already aware of what they are. Purposive sampling as explained by Bernard (2002) is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses.

3.8. Instruments of Data Collection

3.8.1 Interview Guide

The instruments of data collections were interview guide, a recorder, a note book, a pen. Interview guides are informal and flexible since they contain topics and prompting words which can be asked in different ways. The researcher was at liberty to shuffle the questions or even omit or add some questions depending on the informant capabilities (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011).

The study adopted an interview guide with open ended questions so as not to limit the participants in expressing themselves. The data from the interviews were captured in the researcher's notebook and the assistant researcher's notebook as well. The 3 respondents who agreed to be partially recorded were captured on the recorder. The researcher was able to record their interviews using a voice recorder after seeking consent from them. Most respondents opted not to be recorded owing to the sensitive and emotive nature of the topic, politics. The researcher took notes in the researchers note book for the remaining 9 informants who were not comfortable being recorded.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

The researcher used semiotic analysis to study the posters. This involved having a close study and analysis of language used, signs and symbols. McQuail (2012) categories posters as part of the print media. Therefore, the posters that were used in 2017 by the two main presidential candidates during the campaign period were the primary text for semiotics analysis for this study.

The data was analysed manually taking into account subjectivity as is the tradition of qualitative research and presented in a narrative form (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). The researcher analysed 13 posters for Jubilee and NASA that were used during the campaign period. The research adopted Young (2004) and Nyanoti (2015) framework in analysing the posters. The two scholars analysed their data using their objectives. They applied a close reading of the texts (posters) and categorised them into words and images and applied semiotic analysis in decoding the messages in the texts.

Having a close reading of the images, the researcher looked at the size of the photo if it is small, medium or big. The other aspects that were analysed in the photos are the angles in which the photograph was taken and the colours used in the image. The person or people in the image were also analysed to find out what is more visible in the photo, are photos shot from the same angle or one person is more visible than the other|(s).

The analysis took a close reading of the setting and the location of the photos. The researcher was also analysing if the photo has a formal or informal background and what it communicates. The presence of supporters in the background or the candidates holding a microphone on a podium was also analysed to establish what that means.

The language used by encoders of the message was also analysed through semiotic analysis. The researcher analysed the use of English language, Kiswahili, mother tongue as well as sheng languages in the posters. The language used carries both literal and hidden meanings. Decoding encoding model Hall (1996) theory was also used in investigating meanings embedded in the posters.

The posters had signs that represent political parties and also signs by the candidates themselves. These signs were analysed and their meanings decoded.

Lastly the slogans and highlighted words were closely read and analysed to decode the meanings they carry and why some words are emphasised by highlighting them and others are not. The words which were not emphasised were also analysed since the text was being read in totality.

The data analysis was guided with the objectives of the study. The data collected through audiotapes and the notes on researcher's notebook during interviews was manually transcribed guided by the study's objectives.

The data was presented in a narrative form discussing the photos and words used in detailed manner.

3.9.1 Data validity and reliability

Data collection tool the interview guide was pre tested for a period of one day after which revision and correction was made based on the pre-test results during the second day. The pre- test helped to assess and evaluate the question wordings, sequencing and identify areas to be amended. The research was in two levels, interviews and semiotic analysis by the researcher. This is referred to as triangulation where more than one method is used for purposes validity of the research. Treadwell (2011) explains that triangulation is whereby a researcher uses multiple methods providing multiple perspectives to the research problem.

3.9.2 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important in research as they offer guidelines for the researcher to adhere to while conducting the study. Furthermore, they ensure that trust and accountability are assured for the participants of the research. This study was carried out within specific ethical guidelines. The researcher obtained a dully signed and stamped Certificate of Fieldwork (*Appendix III*) from The School of Journalism before proceeding to the field for collection of data. A Declaration of Originality Certificate (*Appendix IV*) was also issued to the researcher after checking, verifying and confirming the originality of the study. A Certificate of Corrections (*Appendix V*) was issued to the researcher from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication upon successfully effecting the recommendations as proposed by the University's Board of Examiners after the final study defense

Before data was collected from the respondents the researcher officially introduced herself using a dully signed copy of certificate of fieldwork from the University of Nairobi that stated the purpose of the data collection was purely for academic purposes and not for commercial purposes or any other intention. The researcher sought consent from the respondents before interviewing and recording them. This study avoided any bias by reporting facts as received from the respondents. The researcher also avoided fabrication of data and plagiarism as all sources of information in the study have been acknowledged

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This chapter is organised in order of the three objectives of the study. The objectives are to decode hidden meanings embedded in the posters, examining how the posters were crafted to appeal to the voters and assessing if there were any ideological similarities and differences between the incumbent, Uhuru Kenyatta, and his main challenger, Raila Odinga. The chapter ends with an analysis of the findings using Stuart Hall's frame of textual analysis in terms of preferred readings, negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

4.2 Hidden meanings embedded in the posters

Development of posters is a deliberate process that involves a careful choice of everything that makes up the poster. The quality of paper used the colours, the size, the angles and all details in a poster are done by professional art designer who build the post into something the audience will decode and make sense of it. For the presidential candidates and their running mates, the posters were conceptualised by using three main approaches according to the analysis in this study.

The approaches are discussed below in four steps. The first is the encoding stage in which the researcher reads the signifiers such as colour, location and the non-verbal body language. The second is to decode the signifiers by answering to what the signifiers signify (Chandler 2007). The third stage is to seek meaning in the signified which Hall (1994) says is a process of connecting the encoded message to reality. The last stage is for the researcher to draw a finding from the encoding, decoding and meaning making stages.

4.2.1 Easy identification with the candidates (identifying the brand)

4.2.1.1 Encoding

For Jubilee party, the presidential candidates are presented in the posters with a sense of familiarity. "Tano Tena" is a familiar Kiswahili phrase which means "five (years) again". The two gentlemen, Uhuru and Ruto, standing side by side in a medium short, suggest a familiarity with the audience by using the phrase "… and will continue …".

Having been in power for five years, the voters are familiar with the faces which explain where there are no introductory statements of character and personality as would be in presidential candidates who have to push a bit of who they are into posters.
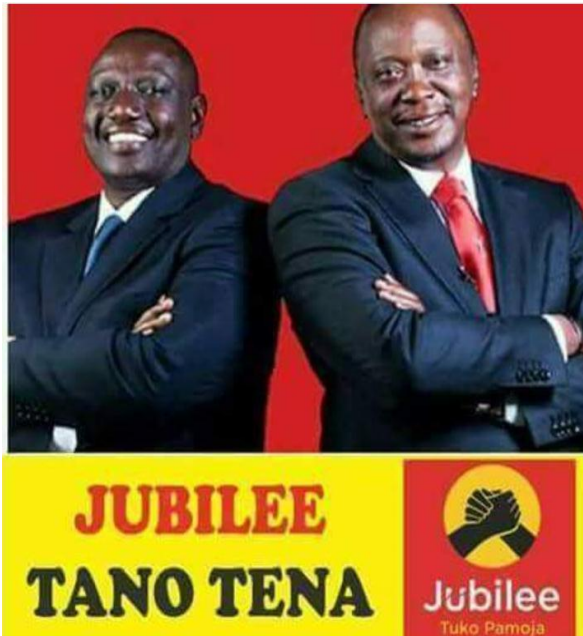
Figure 4.1: Uhuru and Ruto

For Nasa, there is no much struggle either to introduce the candidates as both Raila and Kalonzo are public faces who have been in government (both opposition and in government of the day) for many years. But the fact that the NASA presidential candidate uses the presidential candidates party symbol, the orange, and not the umbrella body symbol for NASA creates a familiarity with the longest serving political party since 2002 when the KANU regime fell to Narc. For the supporters of Raila Odinga, the orange symbol is a suggestion that they are "at home" as would have been using the umbrella symbol for NASA.

Figure 4.2: Raila and Kalonzo

4.2.1.2 Decoding

For Jubilee and NASA supporters, it would not be difficult to identify their candidates on the posters. It would not be a challenge either to appreciate the posters as they are less crowded with images, symbols or signs such as wordings. The fact that the lead candidate for each party stands out in the poster to show who of the two is presidential candidate and who is deputy removes the ambiguity on an ordinary voter who might confuse the power relation in the post.

4.2.1.3 Meaning

The easy to identify posters can be interpreted in many ways. But it is the choice of simplicity for Jubilee that is interesting in decoding. The president and his deputy could have used State House, pictures from State House functions, military parades or the "soft event pictures" such as visit to rural areas, hospitals or launching of projects that are normally done with pomp and colour to demonstrate their capacity to "continue with the development agenda" as implied in the " … to continue …" textual message in one of the posters. Perhaps the encoders opted to keep the development signifiers for the audio-visuals which were rampantly used to portray the president and his deputy as having been very successful in the first term. As Hall (1996) says the encoding is meant to represent reality, why did the encoders of these posters leave out the success story

even in the background of the posters? This leaves the voter with a plain message of identifying the candidates but not necessarily "identifying with".

Contrastingly, the Raila presidency, as portrayed seems to suggest prosperity and growth of Nairobi. The choice of Nairobi as background in the NASA poster is a signifier of fronting the national interest given that Nairobi is a capital city of the country. The encoded meaning is that by Raila taking charge of Nairobi, symbolised in the background picture by the skyscrapers, development is coming. The executive posture and direct eye contact with the voter suggest that prosperity is on the horizon if the candidate is given power through the ballot.

4.2.1.4 Finding

The easy to identify with presidential candidate posters used by Jubilee and NASA to attract their voters show that in a poster use it is important to keep the "decoder voter" clearly informed of who it is they are asked to vote. The background, foreground and middle spaces of the poster ought to remain simple and straight to what essential for the voter to see and decode. This also means that posters alone are not enough in campaigns as we note the absence of the success stories of Uhuru for example in his first term. This is in line with Sally Young (2004) who says that in political advertising the aim is to persuade voters by political marketing and highlighting the success stories of key achievements.

4.2.2 Promise, promise and promise

4.2.2.1 Encoding

From a quick glance of the NASA posters, there is a sense of political promise. The postures in the two-party candidate's posters are all executive, futuristic and promising. This is confirmed by the choice of words used. "Mabadaliko Sasa" (time for change now) is an implied promise. The voter is invited to change things and now. This is also reinforced by the use of State House in the background almost suggesting that change is investable.

Figure 4.3: ODM candidates outside Statehouse and poster of Raila with Nairobi City as background

For Jubilee the promises are spelt out in the posters. "… progress we have made over the last five years … and turns into benefits you will be able to feel". The crafters of the posters ride on what they consider successful past five years hence "…progress …" and now want to turn that into "… benefits you are able to feel". The voter for either party is confronted with promises.
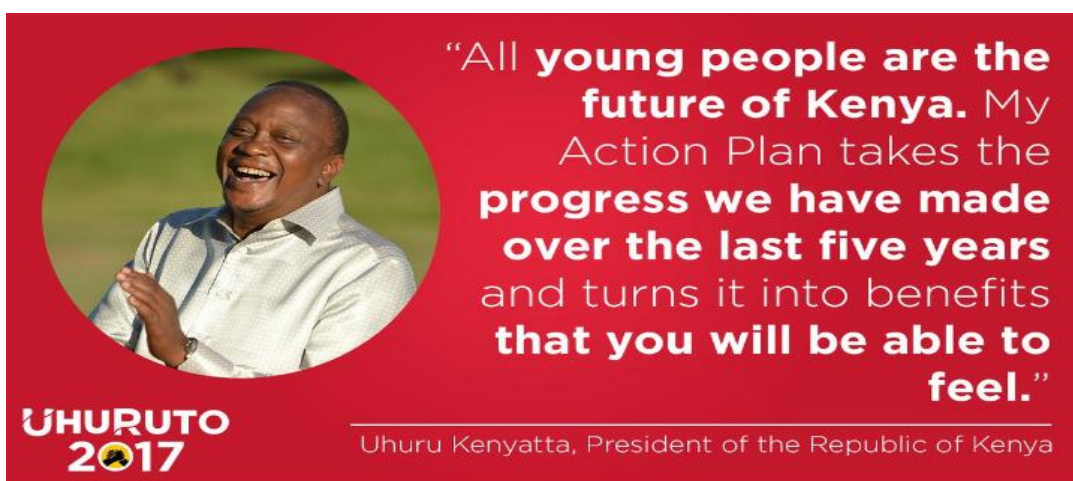

Figure 4.4: Poster showing Uhuru laughing

4.2.2.2 Decoding

The voter decoding the messages in the posters is likely to go straight to the candidate of choice except for the swing voters who may not get much from the posters as they are quite limited in introducing the candidates or giving more details even if in a few more words inscribed in the posters.

The pro-government voter is likely to be assured of continuity of the "progress" while the opposition voter is likely to be attracted to the "mabadiliko sasa" call out. The two voters are pulled into commitment of what they believe in.

4.2.2.3 Meaning

The voters confronted with the posters of the two competing candidates can be radicalised into what they already belief in. A voter seeking to understand what the Uhuru regime has been will get very little from the posters except for the propaganda line "… progress … benefits you will be able to feel". What does this mean in concrete terms? Would another statement have made a difference if it emphasised say "improving our health care system" than … "benefits you will be able to feel"? It is hard to read much into the opposition poster as it calls for "change now". Nevertheless, the change now statement is militant as compared to a statement such as "realise your dream".

4.2.2.4 Finding

The posters have a degree of emptiness in their promises. There is little especially for the government that has been in power for five years that creates a sense of renewed interest. The encoders would have been more creative. Compared to Trump for instance whose slogan "Make America Great Again" says so much of the history, the position of the US in global politics and, implicitly, what is has lost in the outgoing regime of Barak Obama, the posters from the government lack creativity. They are emotionless. The same example of the Trump campaign renders the Raila's "mabadiliko sasa" stale. "Change now" does not revitalise a voter who has waited for the Raila presidency since 1997 when he first attempted to get to State House.

4.2.3 Indirect attack on the opponent

Figure 4.5: ODM candidates in a playful pose

4.2.3.1 Encoding

The choice of the word "mabadiliko sasa" is an indirect attack on the opponent. It suggests failure and misrule of the Jubilee regime and therefore the call for "change now". The words are carefully selected to diplomatically attack the opponent as it also popularises the NASA candidate.

4.2.3.2 Decoding

The poster other than indirectly attacking the opponent has the umbrella campaigning name NASA which is a combination of parties such as ODM, ANC, Wiper Party, Ford –Kenya among others which serves as a reminder of history made in the year 2002.Confirming constructivism theory, these experiences helped in creating meaning. The country was in dire need of change from a twenty-four-year regime and saw it best to come together under NARC Kenya so as to realise change together. This strategy succeeded to bring change of leadership. The strategy of many people parties coming together being a symbolism of many voters from different ethnic group coming together so as to realise the change for common good of all of them.

For NASA supporters it would be easy to relate to this statement and make believe that Jubilee government may not have lived up to their promises and it may be time for a change. The sway voters may be left thinking that if indeed they are to vote back in Jubilee as opposed to NASA candidate will they be losing out on an opportunity for change. Negative advertising on the opponent in politics is common. Young (2004) argues that even though saying something negative about opponents may turn off some people, it has a potential benefit that many voters will remember the words in the posters and contribute in decision making during voting.

4.2.3.3 Finding

The wordings in the poster "mabadiliko ni sasa" are ambiguous and can be interpreted by voters to mean that Jubilee government has failed and there is need to change. It taps into the voters' cynicism and make them believe that there is dire need for change now. This is likely to influence voters to vote against the current government.

4.3 How the posters were crafted to appeal to the voters

Figure 4.6: Voter holding ODM poster

4.3.1   Location and background

Most respondents successfully identified the content of the poster, its background and the background of the entire photo. According to her, she could see the NASA presidential candidate and his running mate standing side by side. Apart from the clear blue sky, the other visible item in the poster was the KICC building, which they explained is the universal symbol of the country's capital. They also pointed out that to describe the lower half of the photo which is dominated by the colour orange. The colour orange is associated with the political party of the presidential aspirant, ODM, which is denoted by the symbol of an orange foot located at the bottom left corner of the poster. The other significant symbols that she could make out from the poster are Raila's photo and a white box checked with an orange tick, symbolising a ballot paper. The fact that the poster is carried by an individual in a crowd pointing to the candidates implies that they are the choice of the people, according to the respondent. In their opinion the poster in the context of the photo is communicating the message that these leaders have already been selected.

Figure 4.7: Jubilee Candidates

Their message of unity is evident from the poster. The way the two candidates are depicted close together with warm facial expressions indicates a friendly relationship. The theme of unity is driven home by the party's logo on the bottom right corner of the image. By using a background colour that is similar to the logo, the designer successfully links the logo to the candidates. The background also suggests that the photo was taken in a studio. The popular phrase "Tano Tena" appears at the bottom of the poster. The party uses the phrase to urge voters to give their candidates five more years in the office. Being a supporter of the opposition party, the respondent stated that he was not going to vote for the candidates. The voter claimed that he had seen the highest number of campaign posters used in this election than all the other he had

witnessed. Additionally, the quality is much higher. However, the poses are somewhat repetitive in candidates from both sides.

Figure 4.8: Uhuru and Ruto

4.3.2 The candidates and Style

The voter admitted that the photo is the most professional that she had seen over the course of the campaign. President Uhuru and his deputy Ruto are portrayed as professional and trust worthy individuals. Their request for votes is justified by the subsequent statement claiming that their leadership will transform the country. At first glance, one can easily associate the image with elections. The voter explains that it is the inclusion of the ballot-paper-like design feature that draws the viewers' attention to the voting exercise. When asked whether she would vote for the candidates depicted, the responded replied affirmatively. Her reason was that a second term would give them the necessary time to complete the projects that were in progress. Moreover, she believed that the colour of the setting was strategically selected to match the party's

theme colours. Therefore, they serve the purpose of inspiring allegiance to the party. According to her, the thing she had noticed about campaign posters was the focus on communicating a particular message. For instance, she gave the example of the poster in question which she believes was intended to win the trust of the voter. She concluded that the main thing she discusses with her friends about the posters were their overall appearance. For example, she explained that her friends would agree that the poster was professionally done with both aesthetic and functional purposes in the mind of the designer(s).

Figure 4.9: ODM candidates playfully pointing towards the camera

4.3.3 Tone and highlighted words

Figure 4.10: ODM poster displayed on a shop

In this poster, the voter stated that the poster contained the images of the opposition leaders, Raila and Kalonzo. The two aspirants appear playful in the image as they are smiling and pointing their hands towards the viewer. In doing this, the poster sends a message of friendliness, showing us that they are one of us. He continued. The respondent believes that the photo was taken in a studio because of the white background used. There are very few words used in the photo, the hash-tag above for social media use and the phrase "Raila Miaka Kumi" encouraging the voter to put the candidate in office for the maximum two terms. According to the voter, he had already made the decision to vote for the candidate. Nonetheless, the message of togetherness encoded in the poster reinforced his decision because it shows that the candidate and party by extension understand the struggles of a common man like myself. Retaining a neutral background in the poster was important as it demonstrated the inclusive nature of the NASA coalition. That is, the party has the intentions of the people at heart, as opposed to advancing their political agenda. Party colours have been over-emphasised in campaign posters according to the respondent. Therefore, the neutral approach taken in this one is not only a unique and fresh approach, but also indicates that the nation's

politics are steadily maturing. The responded stated that they do not focus their discussion on the content of posters when talking politics with his peers. Instead, they evaluate the strategies and policies of individual candidates.

Figure 4.11: Jubilee posters showing Uhuru Laughing

The respondent noticed that words were given priority over the candidate's photo in this poster. He describes the image used as being interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, he points out that the laughter is genuine. Additionally, the president appears causal and sociable, when compared to the other campaign posters where he is official and professional. From the words, it is clear that the poster targeted youth voters. Although the poster does not directly ask for votes, the subliminal message is clear. Since the youths stand to gain the most from upcoming projects and those that were recently implemented, they should re-elect the leaders so that they can finish the work. The respondent claimed that the message was enough to convince even non-youths like him to vote for Uhuru so that their children can enjoy the fruits of their work. As expected, the poster's background uses the party's theme colours.

4.4   Presidential candidates' ideological differences and similarities in the posters

The political differences between the two competing political parties are subtle rather than explicit. Unlike the US for Example, where the Democrats and Republicans have a clear ideological difference, the latter preferring individual freedom and individual prosperity as the yard for measuring development on the one hand and on the other

hand Republicans preferring tradition, nationalism and conservative policies, the Kenya 2017 political advertising lacks explicitly distinguishing characteristics in ideology.

Overall, the main ideological similarity that implicitly emerges from the posters and the key interviews is that both Jubilee and NASA are social transformation vehicles. Jubilee encodes its messages to show that transformation has begun and will continue if it is given "tano tena" (five more years). The interviewees aligned to Jubilee see the posters as indicating a pair of candidates who are focused, at ease with each other (should to shoulder poster) and a team leader, Uhuru Kenyatta, who is happy and laughing (poster showing Uhuru laughing) a sign that Kenya is doing well. On the same transformation agenda, the NASA pair pushes the narrative of change indicating how the economy has been messed and could be worse if change is not brought about. Social transformation is key to the future of Kenya.

The main political ideology, which is implicit in the posters and in the responses, is that development is brought about by youthful leadership (Jubilee) while development is brought about by radicalism (NASA). The posters portray youthful Jubilee candidates as the present and future of Kenya with some posters reinforcing that message that "the youth are the future of Kenya". In contrast, NASA counters the claim with the pair candidates dancing a jig showing that they are still youthful but what is needed is radical change. The poster with the pair 'shooting' brings home the idea that a combative approach is necessary and that this is the only way change will happen.

Nevertheless, the following are sub-ideological differences though they do not clearly distinguish one candidate from another.

4.4.1 Trust in us (Uhuru, Ruto) vs Raila focus on change

Figure 4.12: Posters eliciting trust

The Uhuru, Ruto side of the campaign urged the voters to trust them with another term in office while Raila advocated for a change in leadership. These ideologies formed the premise of the campaign message for the two opposing sides.

The prevalent feeling among the respondents was that

> "*Jubilee government deserves a second chance to finish what they had started. The reason being the first part of their first term was spent at ICC at The Hague concerning the 2007/2008 elections chaos therefore they did not have enough time to focus on their manifesto. Now that the case is over, a second chance will see them achieve more.*

> The respondents further noted that *NASA needs to be given a chance to bring change because the cost of living had gone up and Jubilee did not create the one million jobs for the youth. Raila the presidential candidate according to the respondent can bring change in the economy.*

Consequently, the posters were designed with the same in mind as both parties wanted to relay the core messages behind their ideologies. In one photo, the Jubilee aspirants have directly requested voters to trust in them so that together they can continue to transform the country. Here, they were alluding to the projects that they had implemented but were yet to be concluded. For instance, key infrastructural projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), laptop projects, and providing free milk to school going children which plans were still underway. On the same note, the party was unable to deliver on the international quality stadia they had promised during their campaign. Therefore, they argued that with more time in the office, they will be able to expand the project to other major towns, ultimately achieving their goal of decentralising development. Additionally, the party claimed that it would use the second term to make good the promises it did not get the chance to address in during its first term in office, hence the slogan "*Tano Tena*". Mob psychology was also used to lure voters to Jubilee's side. An excellent example of how they executed the strategy is their use of the popular statement "*tuko pamoja*", which means we are together. Using this analogy, it can be concluded that the big crowds used in the posters served as evidence for the public support the party was enjoying. That is, the party presented itself as the proverbial "known devil" in an attempt to form a connection with the public based on the perceived relationship they have developed over the course of its first year in power. As a result, the strategy successfully employed the illusion of many to gain the trust of swing voters.

On the other hand, the NASA camp pushed for the need for change as their focal campaign message. This is evident from their slogan "*Mabadiliko ni sasa"* which emphasises the exigence of the proposed change. Through the campaigns, the party sought to justify the identified need for change. Therefore, the posters became one of the main avenues for communicating this vital campaign message. Given the nature of the message, discrediting the ruling party was vital to the strategy adopted by the opposition. To achieve this, NASA made it a point to bring to the attention of the public the shortcomings of their rivals, the Jubilee party. For instance, jubilee's failure to deliver the five international quality or digitise primary school learning by equipping students with laptops could be used by the opposition to antagonise the ruling party in the eyes of the public. However, their main point of contention was the rising cost of living which directly affected the common citizen whom the party claimed to represent. This provided a pragmatic platform for the party to run on, as it was tied to sensitive issues such as the high levels of unemployment. In doing this, NASA hoped that it could position itself as the vehicle that was going to deliver the people from the failure misrule of the Jubilee regime.

4.4.2 Uhuru focus on youth vs Raila aiming at youth with "smile and shooting hands" position to attract youth

The posters also bring out the president as easy-going and people friendly people. The context of the laughing president can be traced back to the Moi and Kibaki era where the president was seen as "serious" hardly laughing. The art designers of the posters want to bring out the down to earth president hence demystifying the presidency especially aiming at the youth.

Figure 4.13: Uhuru and Ruto with folded hands

Both parties recognised the significance of the votes held by the youths in deciding the outcome of the elections. As a result, the posters were purposely deigned to target the youth population. Despite the shared objectives, each party employed a unique strategy aimed at winning the coveted votes of the youths.

> The prevalent feeling among Jubilee respondents feel that *President Uhuru in his first term and during campaign period would have young people over at statehouse. They would take photos and videos then post them online. The respondents went ahead to say that Nasa party also tried to reach out to the youths by using hashtags in their posters as well as posing for posters photos in a playful way like pointing hands like a rapper musician, what the youth identify with.*

Uhuru and Ruto leveraged the fact that they were the younger pair to convince youths that they were one of them. The previous two presidents were elderly and could relate more to the older generation but the "Uhuruto" as they coined their name sounded youthful. During their first term according to the respondent, they focused on Digital programs such as Huduma Centre. The young people are digital and they could identify with such a project. E-citizen has become a game changer in accessing some government services and the youth prefer operating online as opposed to visiting government offices 'quick fix' is what the youth prefers.

During campaign rallies, the Jubilee party strategically had a youthful (MC) master of ceremony 'DJ Chris Darling'. According to the respondent, the 'DJ Chris' is a big youth

mobiliser and he has huge youthful following in his entertainment industry which Jubilee party was hoping they could equally believe he is leading them to the party of choice, Jubilee. The entertainment in most rallies was by young musician Bahati and Ben Githae with his hit song 'Uhuru na Ruto Tano Tena.

> *UHURUTO 2017according to respondent 3 denotes the name of Jubilee candidate and his running mate coined together, Uhuru and Ruto. The respondent explains that that is a rare sign of unity where they can be referred to by one name. This being a symbol of unity of names also may mean that they could be having unity of purpose. The respondent noted that this could be what the country needs. Uhuruto is an attractive name to the youths, whom this massage could have been targeted at. They are able to identify with them as their candidate of choice. However, the respondent noted that this may not appeal to the older generations who have been socialised to refer to a person formally. The use full names that is Kalonzo Musyoka, title for example Engineer John Odhiambo or Mrs. Esther Muigai.*

This strategy on focusing on the youth, who according to registered voters are the majority hence, having them on your side means inching closer to winning elections.

On the other hand, Raila and Kalonzo packaged themselves as the experienced leaders with the interest of the youths at heart. To communicate this, NASA candidates used hand and other symbolic gestures, either alluding to their connection to the young people. The youthful musicians point fingers as a cool thing, so by doing that their focus was on attracting young voters to vote for them. They also employed a strategy of using a comedian who goes by stage name Mdomo Baggy in some of their campaigns whom the youths can identify with. This was a good ideology though according to the respondent the Jubilee government had a better strategy in wooing the youthful voters as opposed to Raila and Kalonzo. The youth perceived the NASA candidate elderly and they were not sure they would understand and articulate their issues well. The youth formed a huge percentage of registered voters in the 2017 general elections and focusing and aiming at them was very critical for winning the elections.

Figure 4.14: Raila and Kalonzo on a white background

4.4.3 Continuity and not disruption (Jubilee) vs change and not despair (NASA)

Jubilee was campaigning for their continued rule whereas NASA was warning the public of the dangers of becoming complacent with an ineffective government. Therefore, Jubilee sees itself as a safe vehicle for continuity and not the antagonistic and disruptive NASA. On the contrary, NASA sees itself as the change that ought to occur for development to be achieved and not leading people to despair as, from its perspective, is the case now.

Figure 4.15: Posters showing continuity and disruption

In relation to continuity by Jubilee respondent 1 feels that *Jubilee in the Presidential Delivery Unit highlighted the projects they had begun opined that giving them a second term means there are high chances of them completing the projects. The respondent furthers says that having NASA candidate as the next president yet they have their own set of projects will mean that they are likely to abandon the projects Jubilee had begun and focus on what they have in their manifesto'*

Continuity featured so much during Jubilee campaigns and was also used as their slogan *'Tano Tena'* to mean they don't want to end their term yet but to continue and finish the ten-year term allowed by the Kenyan constitution. During the campaigns the leaders would explain to the voters that Uhuru should be given a second chance to leave a legacy. During their first term in office in 2013 which was immediately after a previous hotly contested and disputed 2007 elections that saw divisions along ethnic lines. They had promised to unite Kenyans and Jubilee party which was comprised as URP and TNA and fifteen other parties had come together as Kenya was marking 50 years since independence to unite and form one party 'Jubilee'. The same unity was supposed to be replicated in the whole country if allowed a chance to continue leading the country. Uhuru also introduced the idea of leaving behind a legacy during his second and last term which he envisioned will be through the Big 4 Agenda .This entails focusing on Manufacturing, Affordable Housing, Universal Health and Food Security which will form part of Jubilee president Uhuru legacy if he is given a chance to lead for a second term.

> Respondent from NASA affiliate parties felt that *NASA has always been in opposition and having them in government will mean a lot of changes that they have been pushing while outside government. Despite the fact that a propaganda of relating Raila with vitendawili (riddles), he was in a better position to bring about change he has always fought for'*

During the election period of 2017 the economy was reported to be doing badly and most Kenyans were struggling economically. Companies were laying-off people and some Small businesses were shutting down. The feeling of desperation was in the air and Raila positioned himself as the change the Kenyans need to turn around the economy. The party comprised of a seasoned Economist Dr David Ndii gave a detailed approach NASA was going to use to turn around the economy. This sounded like hope in the midst of despair if given a chance to bring the much-needed change

4.4.4 Promise (Jubilee) vs risk (if electing NASA)

Figure 4.16: Posters showing promise vs risk

Promises are a common feature during campaigns period. The electorates have their expectations and their needs and the leaders have their list of what they intend to offer their followers.

> Jubilee aligned respondents explained that '*People generally fear NASA candidate the respondent called it 'Raila Phobia'. He is perceived as a radical and he is just feared. Electing him will be a risk. The respondent goes ahead and says that Jubilee have not fulfilled most of the promises they made in 2013.Therefore the voter here is confronted with a choice to either risk and vote in NASA leader or still hold on to hope that Jubilee will keep their promises in the second term'*

Jubilee government sold their party to the voters as a visionary party that had most of their promises on track. Whether this was true or not using words such as 'progress' doesn't quantify how much they have delivered in their promises. The first term saw the Jubilee duo travel to Hague to attend to their case at ICC and they were only able to fully focus on delivering their promises after the case. The promise to unite Kenyans and make it possible for them to live anywhere in the country, following displacement during 2007/2008 skirmishes was still of the list among the Jubilee promises.

On the other hand, Raila was described as a feared man by the respondent and it could be linked to his training in Russia and being aligned to Fidel Castro. The 2017 campaigns saw NASA attracting support from a former leader of perceived Militia Maina Njenga who was seen as a risky person bearing his history. Violence during elections periods have been associated with NASA presidential candidate die hard followers and having him as the president presents a risk that he could probably form a government that might be associated with violence. The respondent went ahead to explain why Raila is risky and he is feared by citing examples of his alliances. He explained that during 2002 campaign with his party LDP joined KANU and later walked out even before the campaign period was over. During that period, he was fondly referred to as *Tingatinga,* this depicts him as a person who cannot be trusted. He continues that Raila went ahead to form Orange party with Kalonzo during 2007 campaign period but they soon fell out and they split into ODM and ODM Kenya. On the flip side Nasa umbrella party that ODM party candidate was the presidential candidate had promised its followers that they have sought for presidency for so long and now it was time for them to support him and he will take them to 'Canaan' the land of plenty, referring to presidency. The risk vs promises ideology played out throughout campaign period and in context of bitter rivalry Jubilee sees itself as the one liberating people and therefore needs to stay in power. The campaign period was characterised by violence incidents and political jabs from both camps. Jubilee positioned itself as security and attempted to portray NASA as a risk enterprise.

4.4.5 Social transformation (NASA) vs status quo (if electing Jubilee)
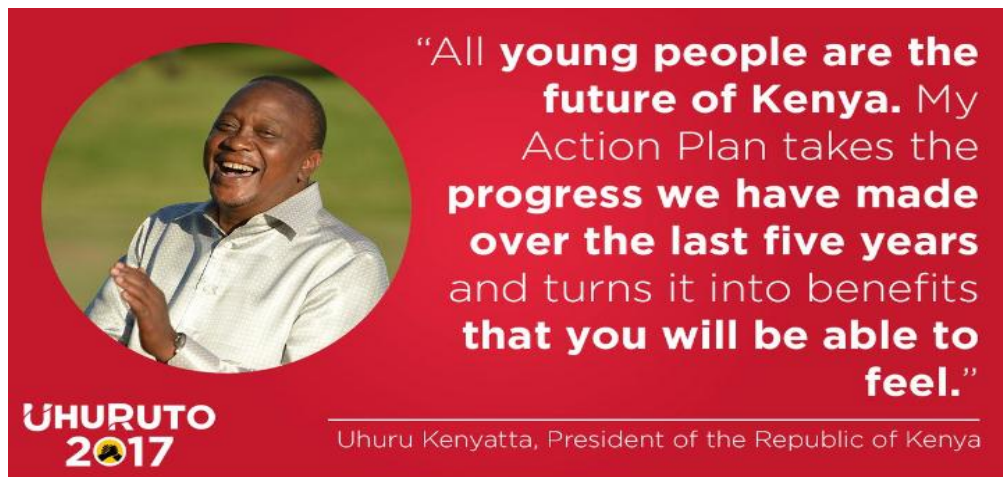

Figure 4.17: Jubilee poster showing social transformation

Figure 18: ODM candidate at Gusii stadium

On its part, NASA aimed to portray itself as the true representative of the people. The status quo must be removed by an angry voter. The campaigns were full evidences including propaganda evidence to affirm this position.

General feeling from some independent informants in relation to this explained that *Jubilee had done a lot of advertising showing how much they had transformed the country through projects such as rural electrification connectivity and opening up the market for investors. She went ahead to say that NASA was painting a picture that life had become unbearable and hard for the common people hence need for social transformation*

NASA poster had a Logo of rising sun orange in colour to depict new beginning in the horizon. The opposition capitalised on the failures of Jubilee party including being marred with corruption cases. The first term of Jubilee government saw public offices stepping aside because they had been linked to corruption cases. This period also saw the high borrowing which according to the respondent the money was not spent to benefit the common people or have an effect on the economy that was felt by the people. The opposition capitalised on NYS 1 scandal, Eurobond, SGR inflated costs, Hustler Jet and El-nino bar soap that costed Ksh 37,500. NASA presidential candidate believed that his coalition party is capable of fighting corruption and uprooting it from the system.

The Jubilee party had promised to support sportsmen and women and build five stadia with international standards in Kisumu, Mombasa, Nakuru, Eldoret and Garissa which was never done. This was used against them by NASA and they offered an alternative that was going to look into the welfare of the sports industry. Jubilee party was really campaigning to remain in power so that they can deliver these stadiums in their second term as they were unable to do so between 2013 and 2017.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) had not been fully resettled and there were claims according to the respondent that the ones who received compensation were not genuine IDPs. The Jubilee government was on the opinion that they were on track with resettlement and if status quo remains they will finish resettlement.

Nasa had leaders from more than two ethnic communities that Jubilee had and it positioned itself as the face of Kenya. They were seeking to change the narrative that only two ethnic communities can lead the country since independence as has been the case in Kenyan politics. Jubilee had rebranded to also indicate that after 50 years of self-rule there was need for change though I real sense it is maintaining status quo under Jubilee party which changed from TNA and URP as the major coalition partners.

The education sector had been promised some changes which includes limiting students to 40 per class in public schools. The other plan was also to increase the number of schools in marginalised areas in order to increase literacy levels. Jubilee first term so teachers striking over poor pay. The NASA umbrella party was campaigning with teachers and they had promised to transform the education sector once they get into power.

4.4.6   Raila posters with the "poor" on the streets – a political link with the poor

Figure 4.19: ODM poster in the hands of the "poor"

> The independent respondents strongly felt that in relation to the poster bearing Raila's photo being carried on the streets by poor people thinks that *Raila has always tried to show he understands the needs of the poor and he would alleviate them once elected. The respondent recalls that the Jubilee party during their campaigns accused Raila of portraying himself as 'King of poverty' and using the masses for his own gain rather than helping them better their lives…*

NASA flag bearer Raila Odinga has been a Member of Parliament of a constituency that has the largest slum in Africa. He has been a representative of the marginalised people and his ethnic group has been in opposition hence perceived to be left out of the government over a long period of time. The poor people seem to relate to Raila and see him as their source of hope. However, the Jubilee party thinks otherwise. To them they

see him as riding on the poverty of the people to gain sympathy votes. According to them he their long serving member of parliament and he did not alleviate their poverty. The argument was that if he never did that then what will be different when he becomes president. The poor are usually the majority of voters and politicians always try to get their votes since history shows that they faithfully vote could be in the hope that whoever they elect will keep their promises and come up with policies that will improve their lives.

4.5   Interpretation

The fathers of Semiotics Ferdinand De Saussure (1983) and Charles Pierce (1992) introduced semiotics as a study of signs and symbols. This is a study where meanings are not arbitrary (Saussure, 1983) but assigned meanings through a process of signification. Posters are good examples of how messages (photos and words on a poster) are signifiers, that is, they stand for something else. These tallies well with Hall's (1997) theory of representation that posters represent something more than what one would see on a poster.

Hall (1996) postulates that there are three ways in which audiences decode messages. These are the preferred reading, the negotiated reading and oppositional reading.

The preferred reading is about the audience decoding the messages the way the author intended them. In the case of the presidential candidates, loyalties were evident in decoding the posters. The Jubilee supporters tended to read the posters in positive light even two years after the elections were conducted. In confirmation with the theory of encoding and decoding (Hall 1996) the loyal supporters do not give any negative indications suggesting perhaps the party was not as genuine as it portrayed itself during the election campaigns. If anything, the findings indicate that Jubilee supporters have a preferred reading that they want to justify in order to keep the opponent painted negatively. The strongest indicator for this is the respondent who said the challenger is a "Lord of Poverty" since he has won the Kibera seat as an MP but also as a party since independence yet the constituency remains poor. The Jubilee defendant encodes anything on the poster of the challenger as lies.

On the other hand, the NASA supporters have their preferred reading of the posters. Two years of after the campaigns they still read the posters with a strong unwavering

support. They see the pair of Raila and Kalonzo as having won the election but which was stolen and so think the posters were well crafted and captured the audience as intended. This finding confirms the proposition of Hall (1996) that readers have preferred reading.

The negotiated reading is about the audience decoding the message partially agree with the author but also introducing own reading. McQuail (2010) warns that researchers should not make unwarranted assumptions without studying the context in which media content is produced. This is important in understanding audience who reading the posters differently. In the decoding of the posters it was evident that some respondents agreed with the ways the messages were crated but also differed on others. For instance, some agreed that the challenger was right in seeking social change but also felt he is too radical and might antagonise the peace in the country. This way of reading the text confirms Barthes theory that signs and symbols have two levels of interpretation which are denotative and connotative (Barthes, 1967). On the hand, the interviewed respondents said that it was necessary that the incumbent completes his projects for the country by being given another five years. However, they also criticised the incumbent indicating that the posters give a false hope because the first term showed that his performance was below par. But they justified themselves that in the second term the incumbent, aware that he is no longer a candidate in 2022, he will do everything possible to leave a strong legacy and therefore should be given votes. Looking back, this category of decoders feels their person reading was right and they probably should not have voted in the incumbent for the second term considering his poor performance in fighting corruption. This way of decoding messages is also confirmed by Mareek (2011) who says that even though politicians have total control in designing posters they have no total control in the decoding process. Barthes (1972) further explains that once an author writes a text that marks the end of his work (death of the author) and the interpretation of the texts is left to the consumers of the texts. The politicians in this case did not have control over how the texts they had encoded would be interpreted. The posters on their own do not carry meaning but meaning is given by the people reading it depending on their interests, culture and ideology.

Oppositional reading happens when the audience decodes the message as crafted but puts in its own different meaning. Cheles (2009) argued that posters lack policies and details that the voter could use to make informed decision when voting. True the

oppositional reader to a poster chooses to hold a different opinion and probably discredits the poster since as it is simply remaining a signifier as Saussure (1983) says signifiers are subject to interpretation. The researcher did not find much evidence that there were oppositional readings. However, this could be for the reason that many voters were strongly divided between the two leading political parties, Jubilee and NASA candidate from ODM party. Oppositional reading would most likely be found on candidates and supporters who did not align themselves with either of the two parties. The researcher did not sample this category.

Political advertising as well articulated by Young (2004) is a field full of meanings. From outright lying, to subtle deceptions all the way to propaganda against opponents, the findings of this study show that political advertising involves well-crafted posters that aim to sustain loyalty for the already loyal supporters, antagonise the opposition through condemning messages through a process of denotation and appeal to new supporters like those who take long to decide on whom to vote for.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Overview

This chapter presents the summary findings, conclusions and recommendations.

5.2   Summary

The study found that the parties crafted their posters professionally to appeal to the voters. This is evidenced by use of catch phrases *"Tano Tena"* and "*Mabadiliko ni sasa*" for ease of identification by their followers. The posters were also dominated with the party colours which was red and yellow for Jubilee and White and Orange for NASA candidate from ODM party.

Despite the strategy effectiveness in attracting the target voters, however the emphasis on visual attractions tends to takes away the attention from the contents of the posters. The voters that do not support Jubilee may not even take interest in reading what is in the poster just by seeing a poster in red and yellow. This may also bring about distortion of the message and breed division among the voters by creating room for propaganda since one will only be discussing the poster, they have read for their party comparing to what they have heard about the opponent's poster. The voters interviewed, some of them were able to decode the hidden meanings as well as the literal meaning in the posters

The study also found out that the posters were embedded with hidden meaning. Jubilee posters had the illusion of the many, to show that they have huge following and they are just waiting for voting day to go and cast their vote for their candidate. NASA poster paints a picture of the representative of the poor and the common voter and voting for them is putting the people's choice and someone who will articulate their issues in power. The party slogans "Tano Tena" by Jubilee was used to urge voters to give them a second chance to do the projects they had promised them in their first term and complete the ones they were not able to deliver. "Mabadiliko ni sasa" had hidden meaning of indirectly attacking the opponent as a failed regime which needs to be changed and they opposition offered their NASA candidate as the better option to replace the current president.

The study also found that there were ideological differences and similarities in the campaign posters. They were both targeting the youths since the data of registered voters indicate that the highest number of voters fall in this category. NASA ideology on social transformation was dominant as they presented themselves as liberators of voters from a failed regime. Jubilee presents itself as safe hands and by urging voters to vote for them "again" since they have given them a chance before they can be trusted. Voting for the opposition who want "change now" is taking a risk as they do not know what kind of change to expect from them once they ascend to power.

The study also found that it is difficult to tell what the ideological differences are between the pairs of candidates. Jubilee and NASA presented themselves as agents of social transformation without strong messages that bring out ideological differences necessary for voters to decide from. Instead, the parties battled their campaigns around age and continuity for the incumbent and radical change for challenger.

5.3 Conclusions

The main conclusions based on the findings show no specific ideology in the posters for the two candidates. The researcher found out also that the posters carry many meanings; they are polysemic even when they seem to be less wordy and direct. The findings from this study also show that Kenyan voters dominantly decode messages from posters using the history carried by the candidates on the posters.

5.4 Recommendation

The researcher recommends use of neutral colours in the posters so as to attract all voters to read the contents in the posters. This will make the voters read all posters without pre judging them based on the party colours in the posters. The undecided voters and also voters from opposing sides might be persuaded by the advertisement in the posters.

Voter literacy is also recommended so that voters are able to decode the hidden meanings in the posters. The research shows that the crafting of posters involves hidden meanings and the words used are not innocent but carry meanings. Media literacy on semiotics is highly recommended so as to avoid voters falling victim to propaganda and they will be able to detect it.

Finally, the researcher recommends specific ideology and not ambiguous promise like "*mabadiliko ni sasa*" or "*tano tena*". This leaves rooms for many interpretations, and raises question as to what kind of change? To continue doing what? ...A specific ideology such as change in Education system or to continue and finish railway infrastructure project… are tangible ideologies that the candidates can be held accountable to during and after their term.

5.5   Suggestion for Further Studies

This study semiotically analysed how presidential campaign posters in 2017 August 8[th] election was crafted to appeal to voters, the hidden meanings embedded in the posters and ideological differences and similarities in the posters. The study recommends that further research should be done on the potential impact of information technology on political campaign advertising.

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Appendix I: Interview Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview. My name is **Betty Too,** an MA student at the University of Nairobi. I am conducting this interview for my thesis entitled: **Decoding the 2017 Presidential Election Campaign Posters in Kenya.** This study is being undertaken for academic purposes only as part of the fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Maters in Communication Studies, School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Your responses will strictly remain confidential and anonymous and only used for academic purposes. Your contributions and participation will be highly appreciated.

1. Tell me something about the photographs in this campaign poster.
2. Tell me what you think about all the things or people captured in this poster.
3. What is your comment about the way these photos were taken?
4. Do you think these photos mean more than what meets the eye?
5. What do the write ups or words in the posters mean to you?
6. Do you think these posters will make you vote or not vote for that candidate (s)?
7. Does the setting and background of the photo bring any new meaning to the photo?
8. What is your general comment on the 2017 presidential campaign posters?
9. What aspect of the posters do you discuss with fellow voters e.g. the candidate photo, party slogan, party symbol and the wordings in the posters?
10. Any other comment on Kenya's campaign posters in general?

Respondent Outputs

Respondent No.1

11. What do the pictures in these posters communicate to you?

> In the photos I can see Raila standing dressed in a blue suit. Behind him there is blue sky and buildings of Nairobi city. I can see KICC from farther are also bushes which look like green plants. NASA appears to be written on the sky and voting date *Nane Nane* appears on top of KICC which is a very tall building in Nairobi. I think NASA are really wants to lead the country *"ndiotarehenanenaneimewekwajuuyaKicckilamtuaonenaaeleweanafaa kupigiakura Raila akuwe president"* loosely translated in English to mean "The date eighth August is strategically placed above KICC in the poster so that everyone can see and understand that they are supposed to vote for Raila to become president"

> This photo has two people Uhuru and Ruto standing side by side and insert of a picture of Uhuru in a voting slip. The photo background is red like the ties they are wearing. There are colours of Kenyan flag on one side of the poster. They are two in the poster unlike the other one where it was just one person. Uhuru appears taller than Ruto in the photo." pengine *kwa sababu ni mkubwa wake. Uhuru ni mrefukuliko Ruto kweli?"* loosely translated in English to mean "Could be he is taller because he is his boss. Is Uhuru taller than Ruto really?"

12. Besides what is generally seen in these photos, is there anything else can see?

> These posters are used to sell the candidates to the voters. What I think is, the photos of the person vying to be president should be the only one in the photo so that it does not confuse people. The voting date is very important in the poster so that people can be reminded when they are supposed to go and vote.

13. What do you make in the way these photos are taken and how many people can you see in the picture?

I think they just took the photos in a studio

14. Do you think these photos mean more than what meets the eye?

I don't think so. It is just the way the look like in real life

15. What do the write ups or words in the posters mean to you?

They help us know the name of the candidates, the party they are vying with and the day of voting.

16. Do you think these posters will make you vote for that candidate?

Kura yangu ni siri yangu. Mimi hua tu nime amua ni chama gani napigia kura loosely translated to mean 'my vote is my secret. My mind is always made up which party I am voting for.

17. Does the setting and background of the photo bring any new meaning to the photo?

No

18. How many times have you voted and was the ideology in the 2017 presidential election posters any different from the previous ones?

They were just ok

19. What aspect of the posters do you discuss with fellow voters e.g. the candidate photo, party slogan, party symbol and the wordings in the posters?

The party slogan

20. Any other comment on Kenyan Campaign posters in General?

They have improved in quality from 1992.The words are also many on the posters. If you want to know it is elections time look out for posters posted everywhere even on our gates. I have never seen any election period without campaign posters in all positions

Respondent No.2

1. What do the pictures in these posters communicate to you?

   There is a crowd like in a rally and Uhuru is on a stage with a microphone talking to them. He is wearing a red t-shirt and jeans. The photo is simple and straight forward. It has Jubilee Logo, voting date, who to vote for 'Uhuru and guiding words ''get out the vote'

2. Besides what is generally seen in these photos, is there anything else can see?

   The photo and message are so straight forward on what it wants to communicate. Straight to the point

3. What do you make in the way these photos are taken and how many people can you see in the picture?

   I think the focus when taking the photo was on the people present in the rally. The photo for Uhuru is not well visible but the crowd is big. Maybe to show he has many supporters

4. Do you think these photos mean more than what meets the eye?

   Yes, like the one with a huge crowd in rally shows that Uhuru has a huge following and he will win. The one that has words 'tano tena' means Uhuru and Ruto don't want to lose. They want to rule for another five years.

5. What do the write ups or words in the posters mean to you?

   It means what I have explain in the other question

6. Do you think these posters will make you vote for that candidate?

   Yes, it will. The one that is convincing me will make me decide who to vote for. The promises they put on the posters like 'mabadiliko ni sasa'. We need change. Change is good. It is important to give other people a chance to lead us, they might do for us what the other government did not do. You know, when someone is new in a position, they try to impress the people and do their job very well. For me what I really want and the leader have promised that is the person I will vote for.

7. Does the setting and background of the photo bring any new meaning to the photo?

I am not sure. It depends with how you look at it.

8. How many times have you voted and was the ideology in the 2017 presidential election posters any different from the previous ones?

> The 2017 campaign posters for presidents were very colourful and promising. It was like they were competing who will have the best and most convincing posters. They were well thought out and very exciting to see and catchy. Actually, they could make you sway your vote.

9. What aspect of the posters do you discuss with fellow voters e.g. the candidate photo, party slogan, party symbol and the wordings in the posters?

> Wordings in the poster and party slogan. The slogans are easy to remember and captivating. The aspect we discuss in the slogans is what they mean and if actually they are able to deliver it. We also try and discuss what that means to us the voters. The *"Tano Tena"* if it is to benefit us or the leaders seeking re-election. "*Mabadiliko ni sasa"* some of my friends' feel that they want change and can relate to the slogan. I believe the parties think so hard about the slogan to use and if it will give them mileage and people can identify with it. They must really do a lot of thinking about the specific words to use in a slogan. Maybe they even consult people in the grassroots. But honestly the slogan is very powerful and it is what most of us remember more often than even the other things in a poster.

10. Any other comment on Kenyan Campaign posters in General?

> Kenyan campaigns posters must be really big business. They are usually very nice especially for presidents. The artwork looks expensive and the quality of work too. The way they are produced in mass means someone in the design and printing makes a lot of money. The people who stick them on the walls I also think are paid a lot of money. They do it so systematically and mostly at night. Because you wake up in the morning and find your neighbourhood is full of posters. Sometimes rivals posters are placed very close to each other, many for one candidate. They seem to be very effective since they are always there in every election year. Since I started voting I have always seen posters. I hope there is an archive of posters so that one day we can see how they have been changing over time.

Respondent No.3

1. What do the pictures in these posters communicate to you?

   What I can see in these photos are the candidates who are vying to be elected for presidency. Let us check one at a time;

   a) This one has a serious looking Uhuru and a smiling Ruto (I can see his teeth). They are dressed in a very executive way just like the office they are aspiring (official or formal).

   b) This photo has Kalonzo and Raila they are also formal in smart suites, but not in uptight gesture. They look playful in the photo with both pointing hands in front of them. There is also a party Logo for NASA and photo of Raila in what looks like a voting slip ticked in Orange.

   c) Raila is alone in this photo with a background of capital city of Kenya. Half the page of the poster shows how voting slip is likely to look like.

   d) This is a very nice campaign poster; the presidential candidate is on a podium addressing the voters he is seeking to lead. Very nice.

   e) The two people in this poster Uhuru and Ruto have their arms folded and looking outward. The photo of Jubilee party Logo two clasped hand is at the right-hand side of the poster.

2. Besides what is generally seen in these photos, is there anything else can see?

   The parties Logos is very visible that is clasped hands for Jubilee and Orange for ODM. The people look serious and they seem they took time or consulted what to wear while taking the photos. They are dressed like leaders they want to become. Power suites communicate a lot of executive-ness and seriousness in the job they are looking for. The slogans for both NASA and Jubilee and well written in the posters, you cannot miss it.

3. What do you make in the way these photos are taken and how many people can you see in the picture?

   Very professionally

4. Do you think these photos mean more than what meets the eye?

Of course, yes. It is just like going for an interview; part of what the panel looks at is how one is dressed and their body language. Despite the fact that it is a still photo, one can read these things. Imagine a presidential candidate wearing some funny looking clothes in a campaign poster. By funny I mean a loose fit t-shirt with shorts or rugged jeans, I cannot look at that poster twice. For me image is everything. It sells and I can trust you with my vote and the power to lead the country. The photos are meant to convince people probably of all classes that leaders need to look nice and dress well since they represent our Country.

5. What do the write ups or words in the posters mean to you?

They mean so much and I read them over and over again to understand and internalise them. Well as I said they are selling their candidate and telling us why we should vote for them. The words are very meaningful I must say

6. Do you think these posters will make you vote for that candidate?

Yes, they will help me in deciding who to vote for. Most definitely

7. Does the setting and background of the photo bring any new meaning to the photo?

Yes, it does. Look at this poster with state house in the background. The end game for this candidate is to end up in Statehouse. You vote for him first since he is in front then he enters state house.

That poster with Uhuru addressing a crowd is a powerful background. It shows he has followers.

The use of party colours in the background as in white and orange for NASA whereas the Jubilee uses red and yellow makes them distinct. Easy to identify which poster from its background belongs to which party.

8. How many times have you voted and was the ideology in the 2017 presidential election posters any different from the previous ones?

They were well designed and very easy to read and understand

9. What aspect of the posters do you discuss with fellow voters e.g. the candidate photo, party slogan, party symbol and the wordings in the posters?

All aspects, you know a poster is complete with everything. We cannot discuss the colour and leave out the slogan or the photo of a candidate and leave out the wordings in the poster. We discuss everything in it.

10. Any other comment on Kenyan Campaign posters in General?

I wish they could capture their promises in the posters so that as they try to woo our votes, we know what they plan to deliver. You know a picture sticks more and since it is written I think I can demand as a voter the promises fulfilled. I can keep a copy of the poster for reference during the five years. You know I can actually keep it for five years and during the next campaign season I stick it next to that year's poster. If they would have delivered the previous promises it will add their popularity. Unfortunately, if they wouldn't have fulfilled them it will be negative advertising so that they also know we as voters deserve what we are promised. Isn't it?

Appendix III: Certificate of Field Work

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This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 17th/08/2018 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

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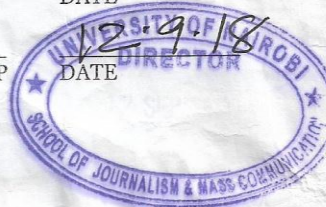
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Appendix IV: Originality Report

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