VERBAL VENOM: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF VERNACULAR RADIO STATIONS IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN KENYAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The study sought to examine the role of vernacular radio stations in conflict management and enhancing peaceful co-existence in Kenyan society. Vernacular radio stations have in the past been incriminated in the past for promoting discussions and providing a platform for hate speech. Such discussions have been found to be stereotypical, lacking in facts and often sensationalized. The study therefore sought to examine vernacular radio station content and talk to a sampled editors and radio station manager. The study found that some discussions did not differentiate comment, conjecture and factual contributions on the various sensitive issues during discussions that threatened peaceful co-existence and conflict situation in Kenya. Some of the discussions analyzed contained unsubstantiated claims. The unsubstantiated claimed bordered on negative ethnic contributions, insensitive contributions to topics without understanding the content and also criticizing concerned parties without proof of fault. Such unsubstantiated claims threaten peaceful co-existence and conflict situations in the country. Similarly, some talk-shows and interview discussions challenged common stereotypes while some did not. Even though only about quarter of those surveyed did not challenge the stereotypes, the power of radio stations to manipulate people’s attitudes and opinions means the stations have to think critically about their capacity to challenge people’s viewpoints. While vernacular radio status have in the past been accused of orchestrating violent conflict in Kenya, improvement has been evident in the manner of operations and conduct exhibited during their discussions. While challenges still exist, the vernacular radio stations should be considered as vital platforms of engagement with local communities on various developmental issues and should be supported in realizing this objective. Above all, they should be used as platforms to enhance national cohesion, peaceful co-existence and demystify ethno-cultural issues in the society.

Key words: Vernacular radio, peaceful co-existence, Ethics, Conflict management

Introduction

The media including vernacular radio stations has a significant initiative as a gatekeeper which sets the agenda for public discourse, filters the issues which promote peace, against those that don’t, and tries to maintain a balance of views. It sometimes offers a voice to the voiceless and allows rural communities to play an active role in their development. It allows for greater access to information and, perhaps more importantly, helps in the development of democratic societies by providing a forum to respond to and question those in power. The 2007/2008 post-election violence painted a grim picture of vernacular radio stations as stated in the Kriegler and Waki reports. The two reports point out that some of the vernacular FM stations contributed to a climate of hate, negative ethnicity and may have incited violence. This is attributed
to the content broadcast. Some of the FM stations included Kameme, Inooro, and Coro which broadcast in Kikuyu; Kass FM in Kalenjin, among others. They thus breached a number of clauses in the Code of Conduct for the practice of journalism.

The violations might have resulted from the freedom that the media now enjoys. Prior to the reintroduction of multiparty democracy in 1991, media practitioners were often harassed, tortured, imprisoned, persecuted and fined for expressing their views. During such times, censorship and self-censorship also ensued, stemming from fear of reprisals by the state which created a certain form of extreme caution that hindered overt coverage and reporting of issues considered sensitive and politically incorrect.

It should, however, be noted that some of the issues that are not ethically and professionally discussed in the vernacular radio stations have the potential to exacerbate latent conflict and destabilise the peaceful coexistence in the society and promote violence. Insecurity, land issues and politically instigated conflicts are topical discussions in vernacular FM radio stations. These have the potential to foment ethnic hatred and/or incite, organise, or plan for violence and thus should be monitored to avert violence.

Peace building means reinforcing the prospects for peace and minimizing the chances of further violence. The aim of peace building is to develop society’s ability to sort out its conflicts in a peaceful manner. The media is well placed to facilitate peace building. It can advocate for the protection of human rights which are likely to be abused during conflicts, including protection of women and children against abuse; health and control of epidemics; law and order, specifically exposing and preventing arbitrary arrests, torture and inhuman treatment, and so on. Furthermore, the media’s role, if well executed, includes the creation of an environment conducive for free and fair elections through voter education and a defusing of political tensions. Vernacular radio stations in Kenya face a host of challenges including financial instability and insecurity, lack of staff training opportunities, and lack of adequate equipment. Regardless, they are still expected to uphold accountability, ethical and professional standards, and respect the golden principles that guide broadcasting.

Objectives

The main objective of the study is:

i. To establish the role of vernacular radio station in enhancing conflict management and peaceful co-existence among Kenyan societies.

Other objectives of the study are:

ii. To establish the level of professionalism among vernacular talk-show hosts in moderation of sensitive discussions that have potential to cause conflict in Kenya

iii. To establish the perception of vernacular radio editors and station manager on the ethical, professional and operational challenges that they face in enhancing peaceful co-existence and conflict management in Kenyan society.

Research questions

i. What is the role of vernacular radio station in enhancing conflict management and peaceful co-existence among Kenyan societies?

ii. Has vernacular radio talk-show hosts’ exercised professionalism in moderation of sensitive discussions that have potential to cause conflict in Kenya?
iii. What are the perceptions of vernacular radio editors and station manager on the ethical, professional and operational challenges that they face in enhancing peaceful co-existence and conflict management in Kenyan society?

Methodology

The study will use content analysis which will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Content analysis is a method for summarizing any form of content by counting various aspects of the content. The use content analysis is to be able to make links between causes and possible effects of media. This study used a code sheet. The study focused on all talk shows/interviews from sampled radio stations. The focus was local language content in the sampled radio stations for the period of eight months starting January 2015 to August 2015. Previous reports and other publication on vernacular stations were reviewed and relevant information extracted. Generally, at this point, the report basically examined how the subject has previously been analysed to provide the context. Discussions with editors and radio station managers on role of the ethical, professional and operational challenges that they face when managing their vernacular radio stations.

Vernacular radio stations were sampled based on the audience research reach figures obtained from the Kenya audience Research foundation. The vernacular radio stations sampled were those that had the highest reach and share but were representative of the largest ethnic communities in Kenya. A total of 8 vernacular radio stations were sampled. Talk-shows and call-in sessions were considered for the study. These programmes often run between 6am and 10am. The study was done for a period of three months which consisted of one month of content analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning. Frame construction focuses on the way that journalists cast the elements of news stories, especially the formats that they use, newsmakers' intentions and values, and the devices that journalists use in their work. Framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called “the frame”) influences the choices people make about how to process that information.

Scheufele (1999 argues that frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey. The theory was first put forth by Goffman, under the title of Frame Analysis He put forth that people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework. This framework is regarded as primary as it is taken for granted by the user. Its usefulness as a framework does not depend on other frameworks.

Putnam & Shoemaker (2007) argue that research on frame construction might examine what stories get reported, which sources are cited or not cited, and where a story appears in the layout of the news. Framing effects research centers on the outcomes of news framing and the interaction between the media and audiences.

Paul, D (2002) argues that in conflict situations, framing is evident in two processes: discourse use and development of the issues. In discourse use, framing is performed through the naming or labeling of events, the use of words that imply blame, and explanations about the nature of a situation. Actors label a situation as a problem, infer causes for why it occurred, and provide accounts for the sequence of events.

Issues in a conflict are not objective topics or proposals. Rather, parties construct them through a continual
process of assessing and reassessing issues in light of attacking arguments, information exchange, and interpretations of events. In effect, stakeholders, and particularly the media, frame issues through naming what the conflict is about, exploring causes for it, and providing explanations for ongoing events. This process is continual as stakeholders negotiate, persuade, and co-develop understandings of a conflict (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007).

Conflict functions as both a type of and process for media framing. According to Tewksbury & Scheufele (2010), conflict calls attention to oppositional tensions, disagreements, and incompatibilities. In covering these events, the media define a conflict through the language used and the issues included in their stories.

McCombs, (2004) argues that conflict framing entails the naming or labeling of a controversial situation, exploring causes for it, and providing explanations for ongoing events. Thus, the media frame some elements of a conflict as figure and others as ground, search for labels to capture the nature of a struggle, and try to forecast the outcomes of a dispute.

Framing is in many ways tied very closely to Agenda Setting theory. Both focus on how media draws the public’s eye to specific topics – in this way they set the agenda. But Framing takes this a step further in the way in which the news is presented creates a frame for that information. This is usually a conscious choice by journalists in this case a frame refers to the way media as gatekeepers organize and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover.

## Literature review

### Media and conflict situations

The media in conflict-ridden countries often play a significant role in creating and furthering both facilitating factors and triggering factors, for example by utilising ‘oppositional metaphors’ (‘us’ vs. ‘them’) linked to internal and external issues or ‘threats’ facing the nation (see Jager & Link 1993; Van Dijk 1997). In the case of conflict between two countries, the ethnic minorities in one country are often identified as the official representatives of the external ‘enemy’ regardless of the weakness of the ties between them, while everyday discrimination against them, on the one hand, and their contribution to economic, political and cultural diversity, on the other, are rarely mentioned in the media.

While media can, and often do contribute to the escalation of tensions and conflicts, this does not mean that they cannot play a positive role as well. On the contrary, based on the experience of Common Ground (CG), we argue for a more ethical use of the media in order to counterbalance the negative effects and/or reverse the damage that has already been done.

There is a distinction between news journalism and other forms of media. While the former is important for the communication environment of a country, it only represents one component of all of what is referred to as ‘the media’. The latter term refers not only refers to journalism itself, but may also comprise a whole host of communication types, varying both in content and in format, and ranging from drama and documentary to discussions, using a host of technologies, such as radio, television, print media and the Internet. In this paper we use the expression ‘media’ in this wider sense (Puddephatt, 2006).

### Radio and Genocide in Rwanda

A large number of Rwandans could not read or write and, as a result, radio was an important way for the government to deliver messages to the population. According to Dallaire (2004) in addition to the usual news, the radio broadcast official notification of appointments to and dismissals from government posts, announcements of government meetings and lists of candidates admitted to secondary schools. It also broadcast daily reminders from the president, exhorting Rwandans to work hard and live clean, moral lives.
So long as Rwanda was a single-party state the radio also disseminated propaganda for the president's party, the MRND. Not just an official voice of the state and a propaganda channel for the single party, the national radio also helped link families whose relatives were distant, broadcasting news of deaths so that relatives could return home for funerals.

Radio Rwanda was first used in directly promoting the killing of Tutsi in a place called Bugesera, south of the national capital. On 3 March, the radio repeatedly broadcast a communiqué supposedly sent by a human rights group based in Nairobi warning that Hutu in Bugesera would be attacked by Tutsi. Local officials built on the radio announcement to convince Hutu that they needed to protect themselves by attacking first. Led by soldiers from a nearby military base, Hutu civilians, members of the Interahamwe, a militia attached to the MRND party, and local Hutu civilians attacked and killed hundreds of Tutsis.

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s propaganda minister, called radio “the most important instrument of mass influence that exists anywhere” DellaVigna & Gentzkow (2010). Elites in control of autocratic states have repeatedly used mass media – often under their direct control with the intention to induce citizen support of, and participation in, violence against certain groups. Cross-country evidence indicates that when persecution of certain groups in society is made the official ideology of the elite in power, the likelihood of a conflict transitioning into political mass killings is significantly higher (Harff, 2003). Yet, it is an open question whether and how propaganda that explicitly encourages violence against a certain group can, in fact, directly induce violence against that group.

Media and Professional conduct during conflict situations

The media cannot be neutral towards peace: While news journalists may react strongly against such a claim by holding their ‘professional objectivity’ above everything else, they must realise that the way in which they report on and about a certain conflict can drastically affect the audience’s perception of the situation and thus may influence further developments. While we would not want to endorse the idea that the news media may be controlled and used for specific purposes, even that of peace, the perception that journalists ought to be ‘neutral’ needs to be challenged continually.

According to Botes (1996), the media alter the communication environment and are thus inherently involved in the conflict and non-neutral. Furthermore, there is a very fine line between discarding one’s objectivity and viewing events with a certain attitude towards conciliation. In other words, though the media are usually run for profit, and, moreover, conflict sells better than cooperation, journalists should ensure balanced reporting with a view to preventing the escalation of tensions. It is possible to move in this direction by covering peace initiatives - at the very least as much detail as renewed escalations, by choosing to counter hate speech, and thus reducing the negative potentials of the media in conflict situations.

Challenges facing the management of conflict situations in Kenya

The solutions to conflict in Kenya face a lot of challenges. Some of them include limited positive dialogue and communication within and between communities any aspect that raises suspicion quickly provokes tension, particularly where poor communication carries negative overtones that affect perceptions and dialogue between communities. A community-centric perception of identity is another challenge that to the effective management of conflict (Guyo,H, Godana,D, 2013). It should be considered that even within one community, elements of clan or family lineage and “gates” arise, thereby creating challenges about how a community perceives itself. For the most part, perceptions drive the view a community holds about their identity, their issues and their leaders. A negative emphasis of the identities of others creates fundamental divisions, grounded upon mutual suspicion, which are often exploited by particular actors.

Land issues have always been a source of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. Where land access in Kenya had traditionally been considered as relatively egalitarian, existing inequalities in land ownership means land is
one of the most serious causes of conflict (Veit, P., 2011). It is suspected that, among other things, land was the cause of the 2007/2008 post-election violence which caused 1,300 deaths and the displacement of as many as 600,000 people. Much of the violence was linked to long-standing land disputes. Kenya has endured a long history of land conflicts, dating back to its colonial period when first the Germans and then the British promulgated policies and practices that alienated people from their customary land and pitted one ethnic group against another. These policies were extended after independence.

Ethnic divisions, especially over traditional land, were exploited for short-term political ends. Kenya’s Constitution (2010), however, provides hope that some historical injustices will be addressed. Discussions on land issues lie at the core of community interactions in majority of societies in Kenya. Vernacular radio stations act as important platforms and key channels for the discussion of land matters. According to publications by *Climate change and conflict* (2009). It has been proven that local land conflicts can erupt into large-scale civil strife and political tensions. Thus local language radio stations offer people a platform through which they can make their views known. Accordingly, they should be factual as inaccuracies and unverifiable claims have the potential to cause further harm.

**An examination of the radio Landscape in Kenya**

Radio remains the most common and widely used media platform Kenyan (KARF, 2014). The first vernacular radio station was set up in 2000. Since then, the number has grown steadily (MCK, 2011). Today, there are over 100 vernacular stations with about 30 on air. Of these, Royal Media Services (RMS) has the largest comprising 11 radio stations while Kenya Broadcasting (KBC) has 5 stations. According to a BBC World Service Trust report, by 2007, vernacular radio stations constituted 27 per cent of the market share. The mainstream media contributed 33 per cent (Orao, J.2003)

This growth can be attributed to the liberalisation of media sector and the Constitution of Kenya 2010, in particular, articles 33 and 34. Article 33 states that “Every person has the right to freedom to seek, receive or impart information or ideas; freedom of artistic creativity and academic freedom and freedom of scientific research” Article 34 states that “Freedom and independence of electronic, print and all other types of media is guaranteed”

A law passed in 2004 liberalised the media industry. This paved the way for many other vernacular FM radio stations that targeted listeners from different ethnic communities. Some of these stations include: Kass FM and Chamge broadcast in Kalenjin, Kameme, Inooro and Coro in Kikuyu, Ramogi and Lake Victoria FM in Dholuo, Mulembe FM and West FM in Luhyia, Mbaite and Musyi FM in Kamba and Muuga in Meru.

Before the liberalisation, KBC offered a limited opportunity for local language broadcasting. Local languages shared approximately four hours daily, divided into two segments, for the approximately 18 local languages covered at the time. Today there are several FM radio stations dedicated mainly to broadcasts in the various local languages. Moreover, enhanced radio receivers in public transport and increased use of mobile phones that receive radio signals have also facilitated the growth in the radio sector. This is according to UNESCO publication titled *Empowering local with ICTs in Kenya*. In most cases, many of these vernacular stations are commercial ventures and target particular ethnic communities and other groups who understand the language.

Most of these vernacular FM radio stations focused on music and entertainment but this was to quickly shift to public discussions due to audience demand. The stations have therefore set aside much of their airtime to talk-shows and phone-in programmes especially in the morning.

Overall, there are over 300 frequencies and licenses issues by Communication Authority of Kenya (CA). This including those that have not been utilized their licenses. This is according to Africa Barometer report (2012). In spite of the growing number of vernacular radio stations, their efficacy in terms of communication
is still in doubt. Nonetheless, they remain part of Kenyan culture and ethnic identity. They are viable and commute-free channels of contact with the confines of the village and rural lives. They are an indispensable source of broadcast rich in local relevant content.

Additionally, it is important to point out that radio listenership continues to grow. By March 2014, there were over 4.4 million average weekly listeners (CA, 2014). Generally, vernacular radio stations compete with radio stations which have higher penetration in the urban areas both in business as well as content despite their differences in focus and language of broadcasting.

In terms of their role, vernacular radio is an important development agent. A 2011 report by MCK shows that editors and media owners acknowledged the essential role played by vernacular radio stations in rural areas because of their ability to reach a vast majority of the population who can speak out about issues affecting them. The Media Council of Kenya believes that vernacular stations can have a serious impact in society if effectively used. By broadcasting in the local language, vernacular stations can promote cohesion. In fact, morning talk shows provide audiences with a platform to share views over particular issues affecting them like alcoholism, crime, education etc. In other words, the platform offered by the stations is important to marginalised communities who can use it to talk about issues affecting them.

Listenership patterns and base of vernacular radio stations in Kenya
Vernacular radio stations enjoy a wide reach and audience-share across the country despite the fact that they appeal mainly to communities that live in particular regions of Kenya. This means that some of the vernacular radio stations invest their operational infrastructure in the regions where their audiences are based. According to audience research data by the Kenya Audience research Foundation, some of the leading vernacular radio stations in terms of audience reach and share include Kameme, Inooro, Coro, Ramogi, Musyi, Kass and West FM.

Kikuyu based vernacular radio stations enjoy the highest audience in terms of reach and share partly because of the population proportionate sampling that is used by KARF in the longitudinal study. Besides, the Kikuyu contribute 21% of Kenya’s population, followed by Luhya 14%, Luo 13% and Kalenjin 12%. This explains the listenership figures. In addition, vernacular radio excites a high followership and loyalty because of the nature of interactive programmes that are aired. The use of rich language (laden with ethnic metaphors, similes and other elements of oral language) brings out some of the discussions in a manner that borders between humor and grotesque imagery that audience are strongly attracted to.

The rise and continued rise of vernacular radio stations reach and share among its audience is an irreversible and inevitable with the impending digital migration and the establishment of counties. It is expected that some of the counties will adopt vernacular radio stations that will be considered as part of implementing article 94 and 95 of the County Government Act, 2012. The ability and inevitability of vernacular radio stations to reach niche audiences in various regions in Kenya has been exploited extensively by advertisers. This is especially because media houses are always on the lookout for new markets and audiences.

As indicated above, despite the growth in numbers and listenership, professionalism and ethical issues remain key challenges facing the stations. Such maladies can of course be cured by proper training of the journalists working with the stations, media literacy and sensitization of audiences on the quality and character of call-in contributions.

Vernacular radio stations have proved that the most effective way of communicating with the grassroots is through local languages which audiences can understand and relate to. Besides, as many Kenyans cannot fluently in English and Kiswahili, local language stations remain their preferred choices. This truism perhaps informed Royal Media Service’s investment in numerous local language stations. Radio continues to be the leading media platform across all regions in Kenya due to its high penetration or access levels. Besides, as
indicated above, there has also been a significant growth of vernacular radio stations which has increased the geographical footprint compared to other media. Statistics indicate that on average, a radio listener tunes in to four different channels in an average week. According to the Kenya Audience Research Foundation, rural and urban radio listeners tune in to the same number of radio stations in a week. Interestingly, those in rural areas spend one and a half hours more listening to radio than those in urban areas.

**Power of vernacular radio stations as agents of socio-Economic and Political ameliorations**

The proliferation of vernacular, community and local media in many sub-Saharan countries has had both positive and negative consequences. In terms of governance, for instance, community radio in Mali has led to more transparent and accountable management of public resources as they help expose corruption and bribery (GFMD (eds.) 2006).

Generally, vernacular radio stations are involved in mass communication like any other mass media. Here they are supposed to carry out various functions including surveillance of the environment, correlation of parts of the society (interpretation), education and transmission of social change, persuasion, entertainment and mobilization (Metcalf, L., Harford, N. and Myers, M, 2007). In terms of health and educational gains, evidence from Madagascar, for instance, has shown that knowledge about HIV/AIDS, safe motherhood and child vaccination is higher among local radio listeners. In countries like Tanzania, radio dramas have helped significant numbers of couples adopt family planning methods.

Local radio can also act as a warning system in natural disasters, a messaging system for far-flung communities, a price-index for poor farmers, and a lifeline giving vital information in humanitarian emergencies. It has also proven its worth in terms of fostering community cohesion, from urban youth radio in Senegal to peace radio in Northern Uganda, to township radio in South Africa. According to Howard (2002), vernacular radio stations, like other media, play an important role in the growth and development of the community and country by, for example, providing health awareness and information, education and entertainment. What’s more, radio stations have played positive roles in the development of democracy in Kenya (Panos.H, 2007)

By offering a platform for political discourse, through political discussions, phone-ins, interrogations and interviews with various public figures, radio it has opened up the space for political debate and public engagement. In addition, civil society organisations now have their voices heard through such media platforms while the minority language speakers in Kenya have been accorded the opportunity to hear and contribute to debates in their mother tongue. This has promoted the culture of inclusive socio-economic and political discourses in society as even the illiterate can participate in discussions.

However, it can be a double-edged sword, used for negative purposes that, for instance, can undermine social cohesion and encourage violence by propagating messages of intolerance and disinformation that have the tendency to manipulate the public to resort to violence. Abdi and Deane (2008), for example, argue that FM stations were responsible for hate speech and ethnic prejudice that preceded the post-election violence of 2007/2008.

Despite the seemingly positive effects of the use of vernacular languages in local radio broadcasts, a number of questions regarding the usefulness of local languages in a rapidly developing world (with new terms in politics, economics, and every social sphere) still linger. Can they, for instance, be effective as means of communication in fast-paced global environments with regular developments and innovations? How can they cope with the dilemma of having to relay information about things and concepts for which the target language community might not have equivalent terminology?
Offensive and provocative discussions in vernacular radio

The expansion of political space and freedoms in Kenya has given politicians and others entrepreneurs the right to own various media platforms. While some did it for genuine reasons, others had hidden motives. Some did so with little understanding of the power the media possesses, and its ability to shape and influence public opinion. However, some who understood the strategic role of vernacular radio have sought to use it to advance their political interests. This is compounded by the fact that some of the broadcasters employed in the vernacular radio stations lack proper training and are often unaware of the power of their broadcasts. They often make light-hearted remarks that are sometimes offensive and provocative.

The use of obscure and metaphorical language rich meaning in vernacular language coupled with the contextualisation of discussions make vernacular radio stations very powerful incitement agents. A few untrained broadcasters in some of the vernacular radio stations also lack experience and are unable to respond appropriately to issues. They are often unable to contextualise and balance issues during live shows. Lack of or inadequate resources in some radio stations, increasing corporatism coupled with poor pay makes the vernacular radio station unable to withstand pressure or courage to fend off wealthy guests intent on using such platforms to incite listeners or denigrate opponents (Crecq, 2012).

Nonetheless, the tools of mass media including vernacular radio stations can be used to manage conflict, and promote peace and reconciliation in the country. This can be done by the media through Inculcation of a culture that respects the sanctity of human life that restrains people from the use of violence as an instrument of resolving personal and community disputes. In essence, vernacular radio stations can offer ideal platforms for conflict-prone, marginalised, and rural and peri-urban populations to promote good and accountable governance and peace agenda (Bratic, V., & Schirch, L. (2007).

The influence of the media, particularly the electronic media, continues to grow with time. This is demonstrated by the increasing number of media outlets, such as radio stations. Because of the influence it has over society, the media can play a significant role in fostering peace. For instance, media events can be used in times of conflict to build confidence, facilitate negotiations or to break diplomatic deadlocks to create a climate conducive to negotiation. In any society, youth are the primary consumers of media services, thus media events targeted at them such as music concerts, or radio programmes can facilitate peace agreements and negotiations (Puddephatt, A, 2006)

Findings and conclusions

Table 1 indicates that 24% of the discussions analyzed did not differentiate comment, conjecture and factual contributions on the various sensitive issues during discussions that threatened peaceful co-existence and conflict situation in Kenya. The discussions allowed non-bridled discussions on various issues with no clear guidelines from the host on what constituted caller comments and facts. Generally, the hosts should try to inform the listeners about the issues and events as they occur and interpret reality in a way that contributes to constructive dialogue about issues of public concern. The lack of separation between comment, conjecture and fact during discussions makes audience to believe in negative discussions and this can be a setback when dealing with conflict situations in the country.

From Table 2, about a third or 31.4% of the shows analyzed contained unsubstantiated claims. The unsubstantiated claimed bordered on negative ethnic contributions, insensitive contributions to topics without understanding the content and also criticizing concerned parties without proof of fault. Such unsubstantiated claims threaten peaceful co-existence and conflict situations in the country. Some of the unsubstantiated were made by guest and other leaders. Considering that they wield considerable influence in society, such claims may have serious consequences in society. Accordingly, it is important to ensure that guests are not only informed of what is expected of them but also asked to use palatable language and not express hatred and offensive views.
It is evident from the Table 3 that some discussions (8 %) threaten cohesion, amity and peace. While it may be difficult to identify statements or words that may contribute to ethnic tensions, sometimes radio stations offer space to people whose assertions may be offensive. Some of the statements that were made in vernacular radio stations were not factual and served to misinform the public about the various topical issues. Such misinformation is in-appropriate in that has the potential to create mis-understanding that can lead to conflict.

Table 4 indicates that politicians were the most invited guests (51.2%) to discussions on vernacular radio stations. Experts came in second with 25.6% while ordinary people were invited 17.4% of the time. It is of course common knowledge that guests can influence discussions. Despite this assertion, it is important to choose guests wisely given that sometimes they can be the source of hateful and offensive sentiments.

Slightly over 46% of the talk-shows and interview discussions challenged common stereotypes while 20.7% did not. This is evident in Table 5. Even though only about quarter of those surveyed did not challenge the stereotypes, the power of radio stations to manipulate people’s attitudes and opinions means the stations have to think critically about their capacity to challenge people’s viewpoints. People organise their knowledge about the world by sorting and simplifying received information. Such information may form the basis of formulation of stereotypes which may impact relations between people from different backgrounds.

From the key interview discussion, the editors and media managers stated the following as common challenges of managing content in vernacular radio stations: Lack of or Inadequate resources, and inadequate capacity, Audience demands that are unpalatable to greater society tastes, poor planning, lack of creativity and innovation resulting from lack of resources and capacity, and growing corporatism, Interference by some media owners in terms of dictating what content to be aired and Lack of modern technology to assist in quality content production and management

Some untrained or unqualified broadcasters are often unaware of the power their words. In effect, their pronouncements are sometimes offensive and provocative. Some of the presenters are actually not trained journalists or presenters but celebrities with little understanding of media operations and requirements. In effect, issues like land, terrorism and others may be quite complex for presenters without the requisite knowledge and skills to work in radio. They may also not possess research; interview and people skills which are critical in many talk shows and interviews.

From other studies, it is indeed evident that media can be sensitive towards the task of promoting tolerant and diverse viewpoints can be both informative as well as entertaining and have a large potential audience. In strengthening local capacities’ efforts, assistance can focus on three different aspects of local media structures: creating an open media culture that allows different voices to emerge and be heard, enhancing professional training and education for journalists, and supplying technical equipment to local media institutions.

The media can also further build confidence and mediate between conflicting parties by fostering communication, generating alternative options to violent conflict, reflecting the ordinary person’s desire and need for peace, communicating the process of negotiations to the constituencies involved and providing a forum for on-going dialogue.
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The Kenyan constitution, 2010
Table 1: Separation between comment, conjecture and fact

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Table 2: Blame and accusation in discussions bordering on ethnicity

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<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>64.0</td>
<td>95.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
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Table 3: Non-conducive discussions in vernacular radio stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-conducive discussions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>87.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Background of guest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background of guest</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
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<td>51.2</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholars</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man/woman on street</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
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Table 5: Does the discussion challenge stereotypes that might lead to conflict escalation

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<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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</tbody>
</table>