

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the research methodology used in this study discussing the research techniques as well as the design implemented for the study. In this, the feasibility of the methods chosen is discussed as well as their effectiveness for the kind of data to be analyzed.

### **4.1 Application of qualitative content analysis method.**

This research was carried out through the content analysis method, which has proved to be a popular method in media research according to Gunter (2000), Deacon et al (1999) and Krippendorff (2004). Content analysis according to Krippendorff (2004:3) entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images and symbolic matter, not necessarily from an author's or user's perspective. The research finds appropriate Berelson's definition of content analysis wherein he says content analysis is 'a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (Deacon et al, 1999:115). Gunter (2000:60) notes that the central thrust of content analysis is to provide a descriptive account of what a magazine text contains, and to do so in a fashion that can be reproduced by others.

Specifically, this research was carried out using qualitative content analysis method with data mainly derived from the *Standard* and the *Nation* in interpreting how the media covered Kenya's 2002 presidential and general elections. Qualitative data methods have been used before to draw policy-relevant conclusions project case studies. In conducting a qualitative inquiry, my aim was to delve into what Kevin Durrheim (1999) calls the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions and interrelationships. This begins by exploring genuinely open questions rather than testing theoretically derived hypothesis (in Blanche and Durrheim, 1999:43). The research questions posed in this study are such as Durrheim would be interested in.

Patton (1990) argues that the purpose of classifying qualitative data for content analysis is that it will facilitate the search for patterns and themes within a particular setting or across cases. In my research, data analysis of the news reports centers on the categories of issues deemed important by the media at that time- which will be drawn from the two newspapers sampled. The patterns and themes that were found are analysed in chapter 5 of this research. These themes were what the newspapers debated on, found appropriate and eventually chose to run with as their news stories. Case studies have become a mainstay of educational research and evaluation (Meriam 1988) and for this reason; content derived from the *Nation* and *Standard* were used as units of analysis in this research. The two provided similar comparisons because of their reach and audience and they are both private newspapers.

Front page headlines, news reports and lead stories were analyzed for the months of 4<sup>th</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002. The period chosen for the research was strategic in that parliament was dissolved on October 25<sup>th</sup>; the Rainbow coalition merged in October and generally, election campaigns set off in that month. Elections were held on December 27<sup>th</sup> of that year and results announced soon after.

Analysis of front page headlines and lead stories is important because it sets the agenda for what the papers think are important current affairs for readers to engage with. It is by this that the media plays the role of information during an election period. As stated above, the emphasis will be placed on citing the themes and debates that were featured by the media in this coverage, thereby adopting a thematic analysis approach. Thematic development according to Kelly (1999) is a kind of pattern-finding process where we identify a 'type' of occurrence by virtue of it being perceived as an underlying 'common form' found in different contexts. He adds that in delivering themes, we intuitively tend to look for generality and, in so doing, we necessarily overlook certain contextual differences in the things we are comparing (1999:412). Thus, a general outlook in the themes found in the *Nation* and *Standard* will be studied for this research, not necessarily for the purposes of comparisons but for a general outlook. The primary sources for such

perceptions include candidates' exposure, parties' manifestos or campaign rallies. It was then reflected in the opinion and analysis sections of the press.

The research also sought to measure the extent to which the two main political parties were given prominence in each of the two newspapers. In looking at this, I took into account the positive and the negative coverage. The use of editorials, in particular paying attention to the tone of these editorials to see if they were overtly critical of one party and favourable towards another was of key focus of the study. Editorials were analyzed mainly because they convey the views of the editor and (by extension) the newspaper as a whole. In this, the research tried to ascertain whether the media's role of providing a forum for analysis is well played out. The editorials used were those that fell in the days chosen through the sampling method in the analysis.

Additionally, the research looked into various reports of the elections which were not covered in the lead stories, headlines or editorials. This was done so as to look into the opinion/analysis component of the news reports. Lead stories and editorials were mostly located on pages 1-6 of the newspapers in question. However, critical analysis on the elections was carried out by both the *Standard* and *Nation* teams in subsequent pages. These included the constituency round-ups, the manifestos of the various candidates and parties in question and on various occasions, question and answer sessions that were carried between various political writers and the candidates. In informing this study, I looked into the commentaries of political analysts Barack Muluka, Bob Wekesa, Mwenda Njoka (*Standard*) and Mutuma Mathiu, Macharia Gaitho (*Nation*). The choice of these columnists whenever they fell on the days sampled was because they were not just primary definers picked from outside but seasoned and regular journalists working for the stated newspapers at the time. As Gunter (2000:82) offers, qualitative content analysis procedures emphasize the capacity of texts to convey multiple meanings depending upon the receiver. The analyses they provided on the political scenario was important in informing the people adequately of their choices and helping them to know what to look for in candidates when casting their votes. This meant that I had to delve into the entire contents of one newspaper when gathering the data.

In paying attention to such details, I found it necessary to drop an aspect of the methodology that I had intended to use. A multi-method approach of quantitative and qualitative data analysis had been privileged for this study but the raw data found in the *Nation* and *Standard* libraries was too large for the limited research period. The combined use of qualitative and quantitative research methods in data analysis is widely accepted for social science research. For instance, Chicago Sociologist Morris Janowitz in his 1952 / 1967 study of the community press used both qualitative and quantitative methods which he said was an attempt to incorporate more systematic research procedures than participant observation. However for this research, it was later established that using a quantitative analysis method would need to be carried out over a longer period. Further, one method is just as sufficient in drawing conclusions for the research. The researcher was also constrained by time in collecting the data required and chose to focus on the issues rather than the qualitative aspects of the data collection.

Amongst others, the benefits of using content analysis are that the data can be computed and it deals with events both current and past. Further, content analysis has been proven to be more useful when they have historical or comparative dimensions to them (Berger, 1991:92-95), aspects well covered in this research. Content analysis can be used to identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution as well as what is important for them<sup>45</sup>. Further, Jensen and Jankowski (1991) found that most valuable research done on news has been qualitative. In considering the impact of news on either individuals or institutions, the best answers are process-oriented and require examination of either micro-interactions. For example, unfolding events would be election coverage which is the central focus of this research.

The issue of objectivity in media has been discussed in Chapter Two but it is also an important aspect of the methodology. Guba (1981) touches on the issue of objectivity in

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<sup>45</sup> Uses of content analysis in <http://writing.colostate.edu/references/research/content/com2a2.cfm>. Retrieved from the internet November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

qualitative research, suggesting that evaluators can learn a great deal from the stance of investigative journalists. His findings proved that journalists in general and investigative journalists in particular are moving away from the criterion of objectivity to an emergent criterion, usually labelled 'fairness'. Objectivity assumes a single reality to which the story or evaluation must be isomorphic; it is in this sense a one-perspective criterion. Journalists are coming to feel that objectivity in that sense is unattainable and are choosing fairness instead which take on defining characteristics. To begin with, fairness assumes multiple realities or truths, hence a test of fairness is whether or not 'both' sides of the cases are presented. I will be seeking to examine such imaginings as represented by both newspapers. Fairness is adversarial rather than one-perspective in nature. Rather than trying to hew the line with the truth, the fair reporter seeks to present each side of the case in the manner of an advocate- with the presumption that the public, like a jury, is more likely to reach an equitable decision after having heard each side proposed. Lastly, the research will be gauging fairness as a relative criterion, measured by balance rather than by isomorphism to enduring truth (see Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). It will be interesting to work out the balance that these newspapers brought out in their reports.

#### **4.2 Sampling.**

A systematic sample has been taken from each of the newspapers for purposes of the research. Systematic sampling according to Newbold (1998), is a sampling procedure in which the population list is arranged in some fashion unconnected with the subject of interest. Fowler notes that it is one of the most common methods of sampling as it is more precise than the random sampling and is mechanically easier to create. Gunter (2000: 61) adds that in describing patterns and trends in media portrayals, a sampling frame is usually devised for the selection of media content, probably in a random or quasi-random fashion. This is the case especially where interest may centre on the general status of media coverage, and in our case, that given to political issues over a timeline of weeks.

The study used 25% of the population members because in statistics, it is generally agreed that 25% of the population is a representative sample (see for example, Newbold

1998). The sample includes every 4<sup>th</sup> element on the list and by this; a paper for each day of the week will be sampled. In my case, the 4<sup>th</sup> element is a constant; creating what Krippendorff (2004:115) calls a biased sample when it correlates with a natural rhythm in a list of units, such as seasonal variations.

Using the systematic sampling method then, I selected 23 copies of the *Standard* and another 23 copies of the *Nation* for analysis. The copies were picked for the same days to provide a fair comparison of their news articles. Weekends were included for the study as each of the papers are dailies but also produce copies over the weekend as *Saturday/Sunday Nation* and *Saturday/Sunday Standard*. The weekend copies of these papers were especially informative on the opinion-ed pieces.

The selected sample was taken as follows and used for the analysis:

Month	Date	Day
<b>October</b>	4 <sup>th</sup>	Friday
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday
	12 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday
	28 <sup>th</sup>	Monday
<b>November</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>	Friday
	5 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday
	9 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday
	13 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday
	17 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday
	21 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Monday
	29 <sup>th</sup>	Friday

<b>December</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tuesday
	7 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday
	11 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday
	15 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday
	19 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday
	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Monday
	27 <sup>th</sup>	Friday
	31 <sup>st</sup>	Tuesday

In conclusion, it is important to reflect upon Fair's (1996) argument on philosophy of social inquiry. This research does not presume it possible to discover a true single interpretation from examining press content. Instead, it seeks to render content meaningful by including relevant context to it. This study has been my attempt to produce a work that is informed by Kenyan and other African perspectives of a liberal press in so far as they operate in an election.