

Television News Coverage and Xenophobic Attacks on Foreign Africans in South Africa: A Content Analysis of Youtube Videos

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Abstract: *The issue of xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans in South Africa has generated debate and discussion among media experts, scholars and policy analysts across the globe. The danger and socio-cultural implications of this issue have triggered an increase of reports and commentaries on national and international news television outlets in the international community. This study examines television news coverage of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, using Youtube videos as examples. The method adopted was content analysis and 9 news videos of 3 selected television stations were analyzed; British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and ENCA. Also, four research questions were raised and adequately answered in this study. From the findings of the study, four predominant themes were identified and discussed as it affects current realities. It was recommended that sufficient attention should be given to matters of xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans by the South African press. Furthermore, the television news media should adequately utilize its developmental theory/function for the positive change and development in South Africa.*

Keywords: television, news, xenophobic attacks, foreign Africans and Youtube

Introduction

Across the globe, the xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans in South Africa have become a perennial issue. The recent xenophobic attack on foreign Africans in South Africa, which began from early March to late May 2015, has raised debate and discussion among scholars, media experts, policy makers, government officials and international observers. According to media reports, the recent xenophobic

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attacks were triggered by controversial statements of the King of the Zulus, who has unbridled influence over 1.4 million Zulus in South Africa (Sowetan, 2015).

In retrospect, there was another drastic xenophobic attack in May 2008 on foreign Africans in South Africa. Reuben (2008) observed that the xenophobic attacks in 2008 resulted in a major humanitarian, political and ethical crisis in South Africa. Numerous African immigrants and suspected South Africans were killed in the violence and hundreds were severely assaulted. Valji (2003, p.4) observed that “attitudes of intolerance and violence are however not manifesting themselves against all foreigners but, rather, xenophobia in this country has a visible continuity with the past, in that intolerance is targeted exclusively at blacks from other African countries. What characterizes this phenomenon as new, however, is that although attitudes of intolerance are pervasive across all sections of South African citizenry, most incidents of violent attacks have been carried out by black South Africans”.

From a broad-spectrum perspective, the concept of xenophobia can be grouped into three hypotheses, namely, 'the scapegoating hypothesis', 'the isolation hypothesis', and 'the biocultural hypothesis'(Harris, 2001, 2002). According to Harris (2001), the scapegoating hypothesis of xenophobia states that the foreign African is used as a scapegoat, someone to blame for social ills and personal frustrations, while the isolation hypothesis suggests that suspicion and hostility towards foreign Africans in South Africa exists due to *international* isolation. The hypothesis also explains contemporary xenophobia by recourse to *internal* isolation, the isolation of South Africans from South Africans, as a consequence of apartheid. The biocultural hypothesis states that Africans are victims of xenophobic attacks due to visible difference in terms of physical biological factors and cultural differences exhibited by African foreigners in the country. For example, Nigerians and Congolese, 'are easily identifiable because of their physical features, their clothing style and their inability to speak one of the indigenous languages in South Africa (Harris, 2001, 2002).

Importantly, there have been various studies on xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Some scholars have focused on historical development of xenophobic attacks in South Africa (Tshitereke, 1999; Hook and Harris, 2000; Harris, 2001, 2002). Another stream of research is based on surveys and statistics of xenophobic attacks in South Africa (Valji, 2003; Reuben, 2008, Laher, 2009). Many scholars have analysed the issue of xenophobic attacks in South Africa in terms of economic implications (Matthew, 2008; Marcos, 2010). However, there is paucity of research investigations on television news coverage of xenophobic attacks in South Africa and its socio-cultural implications to development. Thus, the need to generate empirical evidence on current information on television news coverage of xenophobic attacks in South Africa is critical. This would help in determining the need for continuing mass media and education programmes that could promote racial tolerance as well as improve the knowledge of security issues in

South Africa. This study, therefore, examines television news coverage of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, using Youtube videos as examples.

Research Questions

1. What is the Users' level of prominence given to news media report on Xenophobic attacks?
2. What is the direction of news media report on Xenophobic attacks?
3. What are the predominant themes reported by the news media on Xenophobic attacks?
4. What are the recurring comments of Users on Xenophobic attacks on Youtube?

Scope or delimitation of the study

Considering the scope of the study, this research focuses its strength on the news video contents of three Television Stations with international and national coverage between March – May (2015). Therefore, the study put its searchlight on the xenophobic attacks reported by three television stations, which are BBC, SABC and ENCA, and a total number of 9 videos were examined in the study. The reasons for selection of these television stations were based on their national coverage, popularity viewership rating and ownership structure; BBC is an International television station, SABC is a public service television station in South Africa and ENCA is a private-owned television station in South Africa

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of theoretical backup, the development media theory was critically examined. The development media theory is a normative theory which means it focuses on how the media within a given society function against how they actually function (Mcquail, 2005). This theory postulates that the media should compromise absolute liberty to allow for co-operative work to be done between itself and the government for the purpose of developing the nation or community in which it is situated economically, socially and politically (Baran, 2009).

Development Media Theory was formulated by Mcquail in the year 1987 and as Asemah (2011 p.151) notes:

This theory seeks to explain the normative behaviors of the press in countries that are conventionally classified together as developing countries. It is pertinent to recognize certain common circumstances or characteristics of developing countries that make it difficult to apply the other normative theory of the press these include:

1. absence or inadequate supply of required communication infrastructure;
2. lack of cultural production resources;
3. limited availability of media literate audience;
4. limited supply of requisite professional skills; and
5. dependence on the developed world for technology, skill and cultural product.

The theory focuses on the promotion of industry, national identity and collaborations between the nations in which it is being implemented and its neighbours. In other words the theory's major aim is ensuring that absolute development takes place within the society (Hanson, 2011).

Asemah (2011 p.152) citing the MacBride Report further states that:

This theory is opposed to dependency and foreign domination and arbitrary authoritarianism. It accepts economic development and nation building as overriding objectives...These the media can do by functioning as government instruments for achieving economic growth, political growth, cultural development and, national sovereignty...The media are seen as agents of development and social change in any community thus, the theory says that the media should be used to complement government's efforts by carrying out programmes that will lead to positive behavioral change among the people.

Seen here again, is the necessary role which the media play in the development of a nation. Stated specifically, also is the role that the media should play in the bringing about a national identity and cultural development. The relevance of this theory in this study cannot be overemphasized as it establishes the media especially in developing societies as core agents of racial and socio-cultural development.

Television is a medium of mass communication and one of the most effective in bringing about behavioral and cultural change. With the platform created by development media theory, all programmes produced by television producers will have to be geared towards promoting racial tolerance among citizenry in South Africa. In addition to this, television outlets will spearhead an agenda for socio-cultural development in South Africa,

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Asemah (2011 p.313) observed that "development may be seen as the sum total or the outcome of efforts made by the people to improve on their conditions of living." This definition suggests that development is only a result of the efforts or deliberate actions put in place by the people in question to actualize this occurrence, it is in no way accidental and is not limited to only materialistic development (Asemah, 2011). For it not to be limited to only materialistic development alone he also notes further that "people need to be informed; they need information on the possibilities that exist for improving on their lots and how to effect the necessary changes" (Asemah, 2011 p.313).

The information factor cannot be over emphasized as it is the information that people pay attention to, receive and remember then work upon or act upon that leads to actual development. When information is received and applied the positive or negative results of acting upon that information determine whether the individual in question will uphold the newly held behavior pattern or discard it. In other words it is the

inculcation of information that ultimately determines the development of a people (Mcquail, 2005). Moreover, Asemah (2011 p.314) notes:

The essence of development is the development of the people with change in their attitudes leading to change of habits: just changing things without concurrent change of attitude is not a healthy development. Development is a changing process of knowledge, attitudes and practices. If those things do not help change people individual knowledge, attitudes and practices then those things are not real development.

Television, as instruments of mass communication, are the avenues through which information is communicated to the general public at the same time. Television messages are so influential that they in turn influence the thought processes of the receivers. They could influence the value systems of the audience positively or negatively, depending on the intent of the mass communicated message. Journalists have clearly been defined as the 'watch-dogs' of society. Journalists, more than any other professionals, have (or are supposed to have) the most exposure to the world, ideas, and general human tendencies. This is a sure way through which the media could speak to the people and the people, in turn, can express their true feelings to the media.

Previous studies support the relationship between television exposure and racial attitudes. For example, frequent exposure to positive portrayals of Blacks can lead to a greater endorsement of such images and more positive attitudes toward Blacks in general (Dixon, 2008; Ramasubramanian, 2010). It is therefore important that television serve as a potent tool in promoting cultural and racial tolerance in any modern society.

Importantly, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and other private and public owned broadcast stations in South Africa have surveillance role in respect to information and news, the media being instrument to development are expected to inform and educate members of the society on specific areas of development such as security, racial tolerance, and ethnicity. The reason for media reportage on ethnicity and racial tolerance in developing societies, such as South Africa, is to tackle issues of xenophobia and insecurity in the country. It is this type of thinking that made Vittrup and Holden (2010, p.195) to assert that "television can serve positive functions. Frequent positive portrayals of minority group members interacting with majority group members in a friendly and cooperative manner can send the message that minority group members are just as important and should be regarded as equals". Thus, racism is a perennial issue in any modern society. Nevertheless, television can play a crucial role to help shape positive racial attitudes in countries, such as South Africa. Furthermore, television stations can help portray anti-racial images and provide a platform for contributions and solutions towards tackling issues of hostility, rejection and denial among individuals in South Africa

Method

The method used for data collection was content analysis. Importantly, in communication research, content analysis is regarded a formal system which is systematic and objective for extracting all forms of communication contents. According to (Berelson, 1952), content analysis is a research technique for the objective systematic description of manifest content of communication. Similarly, (Kerlinger, 2000) defines content analysis as a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 2003). Therefore, content analysis was used in this study as a tool to extract data from the content of the selected newspapers. This was done by analyzing the frequency and prominence or importance as well as direction/slant of news on xenophobic attacks in South Africa as content categories. More so, the unit of measurement and news analysis includes features, news stories, editorials, special reports and sources of news etc.

Sample Size

In the context of this study, there is no doubt that it is impracticable to study all the television stations considering the time frame, constraint and most especially unavailability of some of the members of the population to the researcher. Therefore, only three (3) television stations were selected for the study. They are namely British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and ENCA. By statistical calculation, a news video was selected per month for each of the television under study. Using purposive sampling, the researchers selected the top news videos in terms of viewership on Youtube per month, and then multiplied by three months. Thus, a sample size of 9 news videos was used for the study. Importantly, the timeline adopted for the analysis was between April 2016 and May 2016 to achieve the objectives of the study.

Unit of Measurement/Analysis

The parameters of content(s) of the units of analysis frequency slant/direction, prominence etc were tested. In case of prominence, this was determined or tested based on the viewership and users' comments on issues about the xenophobic attacks. On the other hand, slant of the three TV reports on xenophobic attacks was determined by the stand of the television i.e. favorable and neutral categories.

Results

The data analysis of this research work was based on the 9 TV news items content analyzed. These were the various TV news reports on xenophobic attacks as reported by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and ENCA between March and May 2015. In addition, the data was analyzed with the use of simple percentage and frequency tables. This study in general terms was aimed to find out the attention given by the TV News report to xenophobia issues in South Africa.

Research Question Analysis

Research Question One: What is the Users' level of prominence given to news media report on Xenophobic attacks on Youtube?

Table 1: Distribution of Issues based on TV report

s/n	News title	News source	Number of views	Number of comments
1	South Africa: Xenophobic violence against foreigners spreads - BBC News	BBC	280,965	723
2	South Africa Xenophobia: 'Foreigners are taking our jobs' - BBC New	BBC	45170	223
3	South Africa: Xenophobic attack captured on camera - BBC News	BBC	22133	60
4	Africa 360 - Xenophobia in South Africa: myth or reality?	ENCA	52656	428
5	Xenophobic violence may cause revenge attacks - Sisulu	ENCA	192,732	249
6	Xenophobic violence not discouraging refugees	ENCA	1718	2
7	Mugabe expressed shock and disgust at ongoing xenophobic attacks	SABC	24,753	56
8	The spate of looting of foreign national's shops in Isipingo: Nomagugu Mlawe	SABC	35,444	95
9	African leaders condemn on going xenophobic attacks in SA	SABC	3,803	0

Table 2: Users' Level of Prominence to TV reports

S/n	TV News Station	Users' Viewership		Users' Comments	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	BBC	348,268	52.8%	1006	54.8%
2	SABC	64,000	9.7%	151	8.2%
3	ENCA	247,106	37.5%	679	37%
4	Total	659,374	100%	1836	100

From Table 1 and 2, more than 52% of YouTube users viewed news reports on xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans on BBC, which also had 54.8% Users' comments on video. This was followed by ENCA, which had 37.5% viewership and 37% of Users commented on news video. Thus, Youtube users' gave

high prominence viewership and engagement to BBC, which is an international news media organization. In essence, BBC had the highest percentage of viewership and comments on xenophobic attacks

Research Question Two: What is the direction of news media report on xenophobic attacks?

Table 3: Direction of News report

Slant	Frequency	Percent
Favourable	1	11.1%
Neutral	2	22.2%
Unfavourable	6	66.7%
Total	9	100%

Table 4: Direction of News report according to Media Outlet

Slant	BBC		ENCA		SABC		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Favourable	0	0	0	0	1	11.1	1	11.1%
Neutral	0	0	1	11.1	1	11.1	2	22.2%
Unfavourable	3	33.3	2	22.2	1	11.1	6	66.7%
Total	3		3		3		9	100%

From Table 3, more than 65% of the news reports on the xenophobic attack on foreign Africans were unfavorable, only 11.1% of the reports on the xenophobic attack on foreign Africans were favourable. From table 4, SABC was the only media outfit gave a favourable report on report on the xenophobic attack on foreign Africans. On the ground of neutrality, both ENCA and SABC gave reports on xenophobic attack on foreign Africans. Thus, from table 3 and 4, the direction of news report on the xenophobic attack on foreign Africans was primarily unfavourable.

Research Question Three: What are the predominant themes reported by the news media on xenophobic attacks?

From the findings of this study, four major themes were reported by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and ENCA between March and May 2015. These themes were:

1. **African Countries' disapproval of xenophobic attacks-** Many African leaders condemned the attacks on Foreign Africans. Most African leaders noted that most African nations have been

working and cooperating with South Africa; these xenophobic attacks would hamper relationship and development in African countries. For example, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe vehemently opposed the xenophobic attacks of foreign Africans; admonished the South African government to strengthen internal security in the country.

2. **Looting of properties and Killing of Non-South African-** Most news television reported that properties of foreign Africans were looted in Durban and Johannesburg. Most properties looted belonged to Ethiopians and Somalis compared to other foreign Africans. However, it was later reported that the government sent police to provide security for the property. It was also reported that no fewer than five foreign African were killed in the first week of the xenophobic attacks. One major implication of xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans could be reprisal attacks on South African in other African countries. Some African countries like Nigeria warned South Africans that they are not immune to socio-economic attacks in other African countries. Some Nigerian threatened that they would stop patronizing and hinder the operations of over 100 companies in Nigeria
3. **Need for Orientation of young South Africans-** the need to re-orient young South Africans about African solidarity; how foreign Africans have contributed to the end of apartheid and the development of the economy of South Africa. Media reports emphasize the need for young South Africans to be educated on national solidarity at schools and other institutions.
4. **Lack of political will of SA Government to tackle Xenophobic Attacks.** Media reports also portrayed the viewpoints of South Africans who believed that the government has been reluctant to acknowledge xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans; since the last xenophobic attacks in 2008, there had been no arrest or orientation programme to tackle xenophobic attacks. Media reports stressed the need for the government to pay attention to xenophobic attack on foreign Africans because it seems that there is lack of political will to tackle xenophobic attacks. These reports stressed the need for deterrents against xenophobic behavior, which must be spearheaded by the criminal and the justice system in South Africa. Furthermore, the government must make explicit regulations and laws that guide foreign Africans to legally integrate in the business community in South Africa.

Research Question Four: What are the recurring comments of Users on TV news report of xenophobic attacks on Youtube?

For this study, there were 1836 comments made from Youtube Users that watched news videos of xenophobic attacks. Importantly, three major recurring comments were identified for this study. These three recurring comments are:

1. Zulus responsible for Xenophobic attacks

Users' comments on xenophobic attacks against foreign Africans reveal that many South Africans do not support or encourage racial intolerance. However, a significant ethnic group, which represents the Zulu people in South Africa, is the bane of racial intolerance in South Africa. According to the majority of comments, the Zulus were responsible for the xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans. Importantly, the Zulu tribe is one of the dominant ethnic groups in South Africa, which accounts for 1.4 million citizens in South Africa. Most comments on Youtube accused the Zulus for the recent xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans. Some of these comments can be read below:

- a. *"How can immigrants who are self employed take anyone's jobs. They use their ingenuity to find a need and fulfil it. The problem is these so called Zulus don't have the fortitude and power of will to do what the immigrants have done and pull themselves out of their predicament, so they attack the more resourceful immigrants out of jealousy.i bet you one of these Zulus have the skills needed to do the jobs of the immigrants, but in South Africa that doesn't matter as affirmative action allows unskilled blacks to fill roles they are not qualified for anyway. Affirmative action is nothing more than saying you are qualified for a job simply because of skin color, no wonder South Africa is in the shit when their government endorses that nonsense"- Adam fisher*
- b. *"Lindiwe Zulu you and your king of beast Zulu are hyena hungry for innocent Africans who supported and liberated you from the apartheid cage. Now you show that you us your real face that is beast in human skin. Why nor suck the blood of whites not the poor black Africans who liberated you and you beast zulu king from the cage of apartheid zoo. Shame, hope to see you soon back into your cage.!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"- AbdiSalam AfricanDiamond*
- c. *"Aparthied was so good, very good system that kept these savages at bay...Where are the whites that ruled Africa, please come back to your subjects... Kikuyu savages maim and murder Kenyans in broad day light.. In South Africa ,Zulus are burning people alive.. Where were these animals when whites were in power. They were peace full and obedient or in cages"- Adam Eeleye*

2. Disapproval of killing and violence against only foreign Africans

A majority of users' comments elucidated that they disapproved the xenophobic attacks targeted to foreign Africans in South Africa. Many users commented that violence against foreign Africans was rooted in racial intolerance, which has hampered mutual coexistence in most communities in South Africa. Many users argued that they are many immigrants in South Africa, but it was only foreign Africans that are singled out to be attacked. Some of these comments can be read below:

- a. *"It's not violence against foreigners, its violence against foreign Africans which is very ironic. Africa stood with South Africa in its struggle against apartheid, and now some black South Africans have created a new apartheid against other Africans, but the principle is the same, segregation and prejudice, D. F. Malan would be very proud of his new black champions of his legacy"- Denis Mutabazi*

- b. *"Why do you try to stir up hate instead of trying to calm the trouble. I am white but I hated every second of the senseless attacks on foreigners by South African blacks . Even though I understand my peoples anger at the foreigners , I feel that the matter could have been dealt with forcibly but without killing . Please try not to create more hate and anger between white and black South Africans if you want to live in South Africa"- Abraham Eshetu*
- c. *"Some proof.... Do u see a single white in any of these videos??? And whites are very common in South Africa... When someone from America comes into my shop do i burn him??? Noooooo because we are civilized... I know some black people... But im sorry i believe there is a reason why apartheid excited... Because of what u see in these videos... U dont just kill whites u kill each other like savages"- runek10*
- d. *This is just evil. Burning your African brothers and sisters alive because they got a better life than you. Did it ever acaur to you the reason you not getting a job is because you fucking lazy. Can't wait for the white south African to start killing them but this time you will not get nowhere to run u evil people- aicha sagbeh*

3. Contribution of Foreign Africans to South African Economy and Development

A majority of users' comments elucidated that xenophobic attacks targeted on foreign Africans in South Africa was not justified because foreign Africans contributed significantly to the eradication of Apartheid in South Africa. Some users argued that foreign Africans have been contributing significantly to the economy of South Africa in terms of trade and knowledge transfer. These users complained that xenophobic attacks targeted on foreign Africans in South Africa can be seen as an act of ingratitude and intolerance. Some of these comments can be read below:

- a. *This is how they pay us back. We helped them to get Independents. We welcome them in out Countries and gave them a places to stay with free educations. We fought for them until they become free Nation with freedom.. But today they have forget where they came from. They have the power to chased and killed there fellows Africans.. They have the power to say all Africans should go back? Oh my God- Kerry Johnson*
- b. *There are lots of foreign people (black and white) that have invested and work in SA, they have created jobs and paid tax into SA's economy, are the black people going to protest about them, carry on and see all the foreign company's and their staff pack up and leave and you will have another Zimbabwe to live in.- Sue F*
- c. *Do you know president zuma lived in mozambique 10 years illegally. President Tuto. Do you know how many Mozambicans died because of South Africa people. Did you know president samora machel died helping south africa. You people one day will see that you are very idiote and choose your black neighbors to kill- Osvaldo Cordeiro Checo*
- d. *I am African, so how do you go kill someone who is African as well ?? I cant seem to understand, why kill the peace?S.A is a great country, i don't get how someone can do this to fellow African, we are suppose to unite as one ? Killing people for what? I have never felt so ashamed pf south Africa, you kill foreigners from the same continent as you. Do you know that those foregners are what makes a country grow ????????- Lorraine Alberto*

Conclusion

Importantly, the problem of xenophobia in South Africa can be interlinked to discrimination against foreigners, which takes place around the world, especially in countries experiencing political or economic upheaval. The rise of sentiments of racial intolerance against foreigners in South African society has occurred for a very long time. The television news media as a social institution is expected to report all issues that affect racial intolerance and human right advancement in any modern society. This becomes necessary because the fundamental right of individuals is of equal importance to the sustainable development of any nation. As observed in the study, it would be necessary for the television news media to give equal attention to the problem of xenophobia in South Africa. It was likewise observed that issues on xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans did not receive a favorable coverage by the TV news media. It is recommended that the television news media should make significant effort to set agenda or make racial intolerance more important through information dissemination and packaging of reports. In essence, sufficient attention should be given to matters of xenophobic attacks on foreign Africans by the South African press. Furthermore, the television news media should adequately utilize its developmental theory/function for the positive change and development in South Africa.

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