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Poll-"pollution"?: The politics of numbers in the 2013 elections in Kenya

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Abstract

The 2013 opinion polls for the general elections in Kenya were discredited by politicians, academics and the general public as partisan. This was despite the enactment of the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 which meant to ensure the scientific standards are upheld by pollsters. The purpose of this article is to interrogate the methodological issues of one of the leading pollsters, namely, the Ipsos Synovate, in order to ascertain the validity of such claims. It notes that after the official nomination by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) on 18 January, Synovate, behaving like a weather forecaster conducted only four polls in just a week time, that is, between 12 and 19 February and projected for the entire elections. The article reveals that the sampling, question design as well as reporting by the Synovate were flawed culminating into a controversial poll outcome.

Introduction

Pre-election opinion polls, if conducted scientifically and impartially, are essential in projecting voting intentions of the electorate in a democratic polity. They also provide candidates with necessary information on variations of their likely support from voters thereby shaping their campaign strategies. In that case, polls are not mere political gimmicks since they influence the timing, strategy, course of election campaigns and the results (Snock and Loosveldt, 2010; Althaus, 1996; Crewe, 1992). Notwithstanding, there has been a rise and fall in the credibility of polling since 1930s (Hillygus, 2011; Moore, 2008; Crewe, 1992; Mark and Richard, 2005). Worldwide, polls are steadily questioned especially with regard to their

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motivation, methods and results consequently tarnishing the credibility of the entire polling industry. To be sure, the most spectacular failure by pollsters to project electoral outcomes was in 1948 when they considered that the Republican Thomas Dewey would beat the incumbent Democratic president Harry Truman. More recently, polls got it wrong in the 2008 election when they predicted that Barack Obama would defeat Hillary Clinton in the New Hampshire Democratic primary (Walker, 2006; Biemer, 2010; Hillygus, 2011; Young, 1966; Crespi, 1988; Jackman, 2005). It is against that backdrop that scholars like Stuart Chase made comments long before to regulate the polling industry in order to assure scientificity. He posited that "American Association for Public Opinion should appoint a good tough committee on ethics to reduce fraud and misrepresentation as the doctors and engineers reduce quacks in their profession" (Chase, 1958). In his seminal work *"The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth behind the Polls"* David Moore, one of the senior editors of the George Gallup, reveals the untold story of the pollsters in America as he once put:

> For years, we pollsters have systematically misled the American people about the accuracy of our polls, claiming a degree of precision in assessing public opinion that is far removed from reality. We do acknowledge, of course, a 'margin of error' associated with the size of our samples, that well-known 'plus or minus 3 percentage points' phrase suggesting that our polling numbers are usually very close to what we would have measured had we interviewed every living adult in the country (Moore, 2008: xiv).

Normally, pollsters refrain from admitting limitations of their methodology and polling outcome. In most cases they do not even state the non-probability sampling factors and the extent to which they affect the quality of the polling outcome. Although polls have a truth benchmark, that is, election results obtained from a free and fair election, the credibility of polls rests on their "scientificiness" as well as their ability to project close to the actual results on a voting day. In this regard, (Newport, *et al*. 1997) argue that "Public opinion polls would have less value in a democracy if the public - the very people whose views are represented by the polls – didn't have confidence in the results." For example, the death of the *Literary Digest* was attributed to their failed prediction of the 1936 election despite successful predictions from 1916 to 1932 (Squire, 1988). Similarly, John Zogby, labelled the ''prince of pollsters'' after a successful prediction of the 1996 elections, saw his reputation tarnished by poor predictions in subsequent years, with *NY Times*

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election blogger Nate Silver calling him ''the Worst Pollster in the World'' (Silver, 2009). In contrast, in authoritarian regimes it is difficult to project since electoral rules are skewed such that the winner is known long before the actual ballot takes place. In such circumstances the projection in most cases becomes obvious and certain.

In Africa, polls are relatively new. Yet, they have a significant impact. This is so due to the fact that the majority population constitutes rural dwellers, most of whom with low civic competence. In that case, poll findings are in themselves significant to influence the actual voting as well as voter turnout (Riuta, 2007; Yeshanew, 2004; Marsh, 1985). Usually, the electorates take such findings as final results. There are two major reasons for this state of affairs. First is the fact that since the inception of multiparty politics in 1990s, it was mainly public universities that used to conduct polls. The involvement of professors, lecturers and students in poll undertaking made the general public believe that the educated and "neutral" actors were always right and scientific (Makulilo, 2011; 2012). However, over the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of pollsters across the continent including private companies. As a matter of fact, to every election held there have been projections by pollsters. Second is that there is a myth propagated by pollsters that research should be disputed by another research, implying that one should do another "scientific" research to query polls (Makulilo, 2011; 2012). Though this claim gave pollsters a leeway to defend themselves as being "scientific" for quite some time, opinion polls, however, are not perfect. As with any measurement strategy, the use of survey data comes with its own collection of potential problems (Berinsky and Tucker, 2006:74). Yet, another fact about Africa is that there are rarely reliable sources of data from which a sample is drawn. More so, the use of technology is limited. In Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Kenya, and many other African countries, the trend of disputing the works of pollsters is quiet alarming. It is not uncommon to find out that in some of these countries there are laws which were specifically enacted to regulate the polling industry. For example, Kenya enacted its law, namely, the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 which meant to ensure the scientific standards are upheld by pollsters.

Notwithstanding, polls have received mixed reactions. Usually, those who are favourably rated, tend to claim that they are scientific. In contrast, those who do not fair well, consider such findings as simply fabrication. Unlike in the past where only opposition parties protested poll findings, in the recent

years, other stakeholders such as academics, civil societies, and the general public appear so strongly in the scene dismissing the polls. The usual critique is that pollsters are biased and their findings are unrealistic. The source of biasness might either be by default or design (Makulilo, 2011; Moore, 2008). In turn, pollsters have always defended their "science". While occasionally such defence has been legitimate, in most cases, it is extremely weak. David Moore corroborates this position when he maintains that "But the truth is that most of today's polls claiming to measure the public's preferences on policy matters or presidential candidates produce distorted and even false readings of public opinion that damage the democratic process"(Moore, 2008:102). To be sure, the Synovate, for example was spotted in the 2010 elections in Tanzania. The pollster demonstrated a very poor understanding of the political system in Tanzania thereby culminating into a disaster. While Tanzania is a United Republic made of Tanzania Mainland (then Tanganyika) and Zanzibar, the pollster proceeded to sample only from Tanzania Mainland and projected for the post of the president of the United Republic. Similarly, it projected a voter turnout of 83% which was very far from the actual low voter turnout of 42.8% (Synovate, 2010; NEC, 2011). Despite some of the cited fault-lines, Synovate without any regret insisted that its findings were scientific. To be pricise it stated:

> As a company we are not affiliated to any political organisation and have no partisan interests in the politics. This company has its own procedures of engaging the Media. Our work, process and procedure are open to scrutiny and we invite any interested people/institutions to audit our work. This company is ISO 90012000 certified and we endeavour to maintain these standards in all operations. Our Opinion Polls are a professional undertaking that must meet these very high internationally acceptable standards.[1]

The above defence is a testimony that pollsters can manipulate and politicise numbers and yet proceed to defend their positions. This can be due to two main reasons. One is that Synovate being a market research company, as we shall see in due course, could lose customers and hence profit. Second is that the company's admission would have tarnished the image of the entire polling industry.

In the same elections, the Tanzania Citizens' Information Bureau (TCIB) blatantly manufactured data which exceeded its sample size. The pollster claimed to have sampled 3,047 respondents. Surprisingly, when this figure

was further broken into age categories it increased to 3,182 (TCIB 2010). This was an addition of 132 respondents (Makulilo, 2012). Since the scientific foundation for a survey methodology has its roots in mathematics, probability theory and statistics, problems concerning calculation distort entire findings (Biemer and Lyberg, 2003: 8). Like Synovate, the TCIB did not include Zanzibar in its sample. Interestingly, for the first time since the history of polling in Tanzania, it was TCIB which projected an opposition leader to win the presidential post.

In Zanzibar, the Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania (REDET) conducted two polls in relation to the 2010 elections but failed to publish its findings. Surprisingly, there were no reasons advanced to that effect. It was considered that the ruling party was fed by the findings of such polls and could therefore strategize its campaigns at the expense of the opposition. This allegation to some extent discredited the pollster (Makulilo, 2012). In Zambia, the situation is not different. Cheeseman (2008: 169) notes that the polling industry in Zambia completely missed the point in the 2006 elections. He puts "A similar phenomenon occurred in Zambia in 2006, when polls mainly conducted in urban areas predicted a landslide victory for opposition leader Michael Sata, prompting incredulity among his supporters when the incumbent, Levy Mwanawasa, was declared the victor." It is against that backdrop that the poling industry in Africa has remained controversial and progressively incredible.

In Kenya, opinion polls came in a full swing after the introduction of multiparty system in 1991. The most leading pollsters in Kenya include the Ipso Synovate, Infotrak, and Strategic Africa. These have involved themselves in projecting the outcome of every election. It has to be noted that their projections have always met with protests from political parties, academics and the general public. For example, with reference to the 2007 elections, Cheesman (2008: 168-9) notes:-

> These polls, conducted by companies including the Steadman Group, Infotrak Harris, Consumer Insight, and Strategic Research, were painstakingly pored over by voter and aspiring politicians alike. The opinion polls themselves became the subject of great controversy and disagreement...These misleading polls contributed to the disappointment and outrage at the declaration of a Kibaki victory in pro-Odinga areas.

It is this growing mistrust of polls that culminated to the enactment of a law in 2012 to regulate the polling industry namely the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012. Despite this law, opinion polls for the 2013 elections were dismissed on the claim that they were biased. To be sure Martha Karua remarked "I cannot accept the results of a research that have been financed by my competitors to be the perceptions of Kenyans" while Peter Keneth denounced polls claiming that "we are not bothered by the opinion polls, those doing it can continue playing to the interests of their candidates, but luckily there will be the real pollster when Kenyans turn to the ballot."[2] Ahmednasir Abdullahi held:

> A cruel hoax is being recklessly but gleefully played on innocent Kenyans. This hoax is the self-serving computer-generated numbers touted as opinion polls by pollsters. These pollsters, if one blindly believes them, are showing that the two leading presidential candidates are tied and we should prepare for a second round of voting. Nothing could be further from the truth. These polls are utter nonsense and I refuse to believe any single one. I am a religious believer in pollsters, but credible ones that use science and not fiction, black magic or fantasy.[3]

The above quotations are just few examples among the protests against polls in Kenya. Consequently, these concerns about the credibility of polls require a critical examination. The purpose of this article is therefore to evaluate opinion polls in Kenya in order to understand the extent to which they provide quality and accurate polling outcome. In order to allow an in-depth analysis, only one pollster, the Ipsos Synovate, is taken for that purpose. This choice is by no means random. However, it is based on the fact that the pollster is one of the oldest, the most popular and leading companies in Kenya. It is hoped that the observations made by this work will be useful to the entire polling industry in Kenya in the course of improving their working to assure scientific and credible polling outcomes for the benefit of democracy.

Framework for Analysis

The value of a poll is its quality and accuracy. However, there are many factors that may bias poll estimates. They include but are not limited to the sampling frames and the procedures used to select respondents, the questions asked and the response mechanisms employed, the interviewers' characteristics, the timing of polls, honest of answers from every respondent,

the identification of likely voters, and the treatment of undecided respondents (Traugott, 1987; Collins, 1988; Crespi, 1988; Perry, 1979; Jowell, Hedges, Lynn, Farrant and Heath, 1993). In Kenya, the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 restates these factors. Section 4(1) requires the first person who publishes the results of an electoral opinion poll during election period and any other person who transmits those results to the public within twenty four hours after they are first transmitted to the public must provide the following information together with the results: (a) the name of the sponsor of the opinion poll; (b) the name of the person or organization that conducted the opinion poll; (c) the date on which or the period during which the opinion poll was conducted; (d) the population from which the sample of respondents was drawn; (e) the number of people who were contacted to participate in the opinion poll; (f) the methodology used; (g) the educational levels of the participants; and (h) if applicable, the margin of error in respect of the data obtained.

Section 5(1) provides addition to the information referred to in section 4. The following information must be provided in the case of a publication by means other than broadcasting: (a) the wording of the opinion poll questions in respect of which data is obtained; (b) the name and address of the sponsor of the opinion poll; (c) the name and address of the person or organization that conducted the opinion poll; (d) information about the methodology used to collect the data from which the opinion poll results were derived, including; (i) the sampling method; (ii) the population from which the sample was drawn; (iii) the size of the initial sample; (e) the number of individuals who were asked to participate in the opinion poll and the numbers and respective percentages of them who participated in the opinion poll, refused to participate in the opinion poll or were ineligible to participate in the opinion poll; (f) the dates and time of the day of the interviews; (g) the method used to recalculate the data to take into account in the opinion poll the results of participants who expressed no opinion, were undecided or failed to respond to any or all of the opinion poll questions; (h) any weighting factors or normalization procedures used in deriving the results of the opinion poll; (i) the wording of the opinion poll questions; and (j) where applicable, the margins of error in respect of the data obtained.

Section 7(1) prohibits publication of the results of any electoral opinion poll on the day of the election or during the period of five days immediately preceding the date of an election. It is important to understand that any person who contravenes any of the provisions of the law commits an offence.

This offence attracts penalties liable to a fine not exceeding one million shillings or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year, or to both.

The above law provides the benchmark for assessing the quality of opinion polls in Kenya. However, one of the major limitations is that there is no agency that has been mandated to scrutinise polls in order to ascertain their quality and ultimately the enforcement whenever a breach occurs. It is worth noting that the government until to date has not yet come out and certified the polls despite the outcry noticed during the last general elections. This article attempts an evaluation of polls alongside the criteria put by the law as well as the literature. Hence, the following factors are considered for the purpose of this article:-

The first factor is sampling. Opinion polls are based on probability sampling in which every member of a population has an equal chance of being included in a sample without undue influence (Berinsky, 2004; Curtice, 1995; Wlezien, 2003). The sample should always strive to present the typical characteristics of the population. This is important not only to assure a high degree of "representativeness" of the characteristics of the population but also would allow for generalization (Traugott and Wlezien, 2009). Though on average polls are considered fairly accurate, occasionally they fail to project what happens in the real world (Magalhães, 2005). One underlying problem associated with this state of affairs is a failure to sample correctly hence "sampling bias." Heckman (1979:155) posits that "Sample selection bias may arise in practice for two reasons. First, there may be self selection by the individuals or data units being investigated. Second, sample selection decisions by analysts or data processors operate in much the same fashion as self selection." Normally, the first bias of any research is detected from its sampling design (Rothschild, 2009; Gelman and King, 1993). There is no way that this can be repaired in due course. As a result, the findings can either be overestimated or underestimated due to a defective sample (Wlezien and Erikson, 2006). This is despite the fact that occasionally, with a defective sample, a pollster can happen to project close to the actual reality. In that scenario it can be argued that such findings remain defective or arrived at by design and not by chance. In pre-election polls, manipulation of this nature can be possible if there is a prior arrangement between a pollster and a candidate or a political party to manoeuvre what the findings should be in relation to the actual voting outcome (Makulilo, 2011:4).

The second factor is question design. There is no specific rule on how to design questions. However, it is mandatory that the questions are first and foremost impartial. Scholars agree that they should not be too general or insufficiently specific; use the simplest language in line with the intended respondents; avoid prejudicial language; avoid ambiguity; eliminate vague words; avoid leading questions; ensure that respondents have the minimum knowledge to answer questions; do not presume that respondents follow the patterns of behaviour you wish to know about; avoid hypothetical questions; avoid personal questions; and do not assume respondents are liars (May, 2006; Zaller and Feldman, 1992; Achen, 1975; Young, 1992). Questions can be designed in such a way that they seek objective information or simply opinion.

The third factor is the context within which a poll is taken. As a general principle, science should always appreciate the socio-economic and political context of a given people. This affects the choice of methodology, the nature of questions as well as reporting. It is often asserted that attitudes and behaviour of a population are not independent of the circumstances within which they are liberated (Hyman, 1954). It is on that basis that Young (1966:82) posits that "no matter how skilfully the questions posed, how adequately the population is represented, how completely the report is tabulated, the very nature of the polling precludes a systematic knowledge of the cultural backgrounds and the social settings which motivate the respondents." This means that variations in designing a study are common across societies. For instance, the methodologies used in a strong divided and war torn society cannot be the same as in a less divided one. Pollsters who have been projecting electoral outcomes in a society like Zanzibar, which is a multi-racial and highly polarized between the people in Pemba and Unguja have been missing the point by applying a simple random sampling. The core assumption of such studies is simply that "science is a size that fits all."

The fourth factor is honest of answers. An opinion poll depends entirely on the willingness of respondents to participate and give honest answers. If there is no trust and confidence on the part of respondents to a poll, chances are that they will lie. This distorts the entire poll. Indeed, there is no way a pollster can press hard on respondents to give honest answers. However, the study can be designed in such a way that a pollster may detect those elements of dishonest. Perry (1979:312) argues this point quite clearly when he posits that dishonest may distort poll findings. He argues that many issue advocacy groups routinely engage in blatantly biased polls on their petty

topics. Surveys are intended to elicit honest information for academics and consumers.

The fifth factor is the expertise of a pollster. It has to be noted that political opinion polls are significantly different from market research. In the former, one deals with political power which is key in determining resource distribution, law making that affects the entire population, to mention some. Definitely, it is a contestation. In some fragile societies, that alone is sufficient to bring a country into blood-shedding. In Africa, this has been critical to the extent that the African Charter on Democracy and Elections of 2007 was devised to regulate power transfer. Hence, the scope of interests on elections and for that matter opinion polls is wider. Market opinion polls, on the other hand, are about buyers and sellers. They understand market behaviour. This implies that the central approach is market analysis. While competition in the world of market is for profit maximization, in politics competition is about power and therefore can lead into conflicts. Katz (1948: 469-80) contends that "the social scientist has a dual responsibility with respect to public opinion polls. He should distinguish in his own thinking between basic research in the social sciences and the applied research of the market place." Thus, a pollster that is specialised in market analysis is incompetent to use the same methodology to understand pre-election opinion polls as the two are grounded on different philosophical assumptions (Makulilo, 2011:20).

The sixth factor is timing. By this I simply mean the time a poll is conducted and when it is released. It is clearly known that human behaviour and attitude however dynamic cannot change so abruptly like "weather". Usually, there must be some forces that inform the change. During elections, the change can either be due to campaigns or an intervening variable that is so unique. Scott Althaus thus argues that "polls are used to chart trends in behaviour and attitudes over time. Tracking polls, which consist of small samples taken every few days during the course of an election campaign, clarify how citizens respond in the short term to campaign activities."[4] While there is no specific time to undertake a poll, it is reasonable to have sufficient time between one poll and another so that to allow potential voters to make up their minds. In the U.S, for example, the known pollsters like the Gallup conduct two to three nationwide pre-election polls in a month as was the case with the 2012 elections. Notwithstanding, polls can be taken whenever an unprecedented phenomenon occurs to the extent that it can change the minds of potential voters. In the Africa's context where technology is still low, polls are in most cases conducted using face-to-face interviews. This

means that undertaking a poll is very expensive and takes longer than in the developed countries where telephones are preferred. Similarly, it is difficult to ascertain the size of samples i.e. how respondents are selected to participate in those studies. For example, on internet or television, the same respondent can participate in a poll more than once by using different mobile numbers or e-mail addresses. This is to say that pollsters have no capacity to define a clear sampling frame thereby making it almost impossible to replicate the study and verify the authenticity of findings (Makulilo, 2011). Another issue related to time is when the poll findings should be released. I mean that a poll should be conducted timely and its findings be released immediately. This is important in Africa since as I said from the beginning that polls are considered by some people as the actual election outcomes.

The seventh factor is voter turnout. Turnout affects negatively error estimation. Magalhães (2005: 415) posits that:-

> Unsurprisingly, turnout in the election has been found to be negatively related to errors in poll estimates. On the one hand, whenever voters' preferences are significantly different from those of no-voters, the inability to correctly distinguish between them leads to biased estimates, a bias that becomes bigger in low turnout elections, where the gap between actual turnout and the reported intention to vote is likely to become larger. On the other hand, even if likely voters are correctly identified, low turnout elections tend to result in lower effective samples of actual voting intentions, and thus more error.

The above quotation would mean that a pollster is required to comprehend the level of voter turnout if it wants to project realistically. Interestingly, most pollsters tend to avoid this parameter. In Tanzania, for example, voter turnout has for many years been over 70%. In 2010 elections, this trend ceased. The actual turnout was 42.8% (NEC 2011). This was one of the reasons which made all pollsters fail to project correctly. No pollster was able to foresee this situation. Of course it was only the Synovate that asked this question "If elections were called today would you vote?" The responses were as follows: "I will most likely vote 83%"; "I will not vote at all 16%"; and "DNK/RTA 1%." As can be noted, the projection by the Synovate was too far from the reality thereby questioning its expertise in the field.

Politics in Kenya: An Overview

Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963 and from then up until 2002 was ruled out by the Kenya African National Union (KANU). KANU's dominance was achieved by banning opposition parties in 1969 leaving Kenya a *de facto* one-party state to a *de jure* one-party state when a constitutional amendment in 1978 ruled that no other party was able to contest in the elections. In 1991 after much pressure from Kenyan activists and the international community multi-party elections were re-introduced. Several opposition parties emerged (FORD Kenya, FORD Asili, Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, National Development Party of Kenya and other smaller parties). Nonetheless KANU remained in power winning the general elections of 1992 and 1997 amid violence and allegations of electoral irregularities.

Since its independence, Kenya's politics has been organised around ethnicity as its building block. However, there is no single ethnic group that can manage to mobilise itself to capture state power. Owing to this fact, there have been alliances of the major ethnic groups with the minorities. In Kenya, the Kikuyus comprise of about 20% of the entire population. This is followed by the Luos who are about 14% of the population. The next group in terms of size is Luhya (13%). The Kalenjin and Kamba comprise of 11% each. The next on the list include Kisii (6%) and Mijikenda (5%). The rest ethnic groups are less than 3% each (Census, 2009). For example, during Moi's era, it was observed "all political parties are ultimately built on ethnic foundation: Then ruling, KANU was associated mainly with the Kalenjin and other smaller tribes-Maasai, Samburu, Turkana; The Democratic Party (DP) and Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) Asili who are largely Kikuyu parties, FORD Kenya is predominantly a Luhyia party, Social Democratic Party (SDP) belongs mainly to Kamba and National Develpment Pary (NDP) is for the Luo"(Jonyo, 2002: 96-7). Oloo (2005: 169) shows explicitly the role of ethnicity in the 2002 elections by exploring the Raila factor in Luo Land. He states that although Raila had changed parties from FORD Kenya, NDP, KANU, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Rainbow Alliance to NARC, he still managed to convince his Luo people to vote for Mwai Kibaki, the fact that Moi underplayed when he unanimously appointed Uhuru Kenyatta as KANU's presidential candidate. This pattern has not changed. The 2013 elections were also organised around ethnicity.

In addition, Kenya parties are generally weak in two senses. One is that they fail to recruit representatives of all sections of society into political force,

which is usually one of the functions of a political party. Parties in Kenya are not organised around ideological basis and for that case they fail to offer alternative policies. Instead, parties are driven by personalities which reflect ethnic cards. Elischer (2010: 220) posits that "the high salience of ethnicity in Kenyan political parties thus remains the greatest burden to the sustainability of democracy and national cohesion".

In Kenya, the culture of mutual suspicion and political violence is not uncommon. The social economic and political life is organised around ethnic identity (Lebas, 2011). The issue of resource distribution normally follows this identity line. Throughout, the debate has been on devolution of powers from the central government to provinces. However, such provinces reflect ethnic identity. To be specific, during the 1992 elections, the Kalenjin (the ethnic group of President Moi) believed that the capture of the state by the opposition would at once mean the loss of economic privilege which they had enjoyed for over a decade. Similarly, every major ethnic actor believed that their party's victory would end their relative deprivation. These perceptions were functionally conflictual (Oyugi, 1997:48). It was on that basis that the 2007 general elections were marred with deadly violence.

The 2013 election took place within a "new" context. Indeed, it was a testing election. First, it was conducted using a new constitution of 2010. It was believed that the constitution would have solved some of the critical problems in Kenya with regard to politics, social and economic aspects. Second, the election was supervised by the new election management body commonly known as the Independent Election and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). Third is the fact that the election took place in the context whereby some of the candidates namely Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto had a case in the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague. As usual, the election was conducted in an environment of mistrust. The final IEBC results indicated that Uhuru Kenyatta won the Presidential seat with a slim margin of 50.07% against Raila Odinga who scored 43.31%.

It is important to understand that opinion polls took place within the above environment. That means in a society where there is a deep social cleavage around ethnicity. It was also characterised by mistrust of members of the society to the extent that telling lies was a high possibility. Election in Kenya was thus a struggle beyond the capture of state power in order to serve all the citizens but rather to promote interests of one's own identity groups. It is on that basis that opinion polls in a conflict torn society should exhibit some

unique methodologies in order to provide an objective projection and analysis of politics in such a society.

Ipsos Synovate: Evaluation of its Polls

Synovate is a worldwide international market research firm located in over 60 countries. In Africa it is found in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia. The pollster is a specialized company that deals with business consultancies and research and hence its grand approach is market analysis. This is to say that it is best placed to understand market behaviour. Synovate states "From the earliest stages of innovation to brand maturity, our experts provide world-class solutions to help marketers: generate insights and ideas, develop and optimise their mix, and model and forecast sales volumes."[5] For this reason, its specialisation dedicated to survey management, data collection and data delivery for clients across all sectors that need research to support their business. It also does its research basically for profit making. Contrary to its area of expertise, Synovate involves itself in political research which is premised on a totally different philosophical outlook. Political research and more particularly political behaviour need the knowledge of political science. Since such research touches a very critical issue in politics that is "power", it requires a very different method from the marketers (Makulilo, 2011). Though Synovate can still commission someone with the knowledge of Political Science, the philosophical outlook of the company may have a bearing on its research undertaking in one way or another.

It is also important to understand that Synovate claims to have self-sponsored all its opinion polls. Although I have no sufficient data to provide proof of who exactly funded the polls, it is still valid to raise some questions. One is that opinion polls are expensive undertakings; if Synovate claims to have funded them, what was the motive behind it? I know, in Kenya it is mandatory to state the source of finance. While in Tanzania this requirement is not there, Synovate has never disclosed its funding agents. This raises a lot to be desired. In the absence of audit and scrutiny by the government agency how are Kenyans sure of the funding agent of these polls? The following section examines Synovate polls alongside the sampling, question design, and reporting of poll findings.

Poll Timing

Table 1 indicates that since the official nomination was over on 18 January 2013, Synovate conducted only four (4) polls in February 2013. Interestingly,

all polls were conducted in a period of hardly one week. This in itself is an anomaly. Wolf (2009: 289) contends that one of the primary objectives of opinion polls is to inform campaigns during elections. He states "First, they give political 'merchants' and their prospective 'customers' a better idea of the former's electoral prospects, thus encouraging the campaign teams to discover and address more precisely key bases of electoral support, while allowing voters to make more 'strategic' choices." While I agree with Wolf on this crucial role of polls, I am not convinced that the February Polls were useful to give the electorate the so called the strategic choices and key bases of electoral support to candidates. To undertake four polls in a week suggests that human behaviour is as dynamic as weather and this could have reduced opinion polls to mere "weather forecast." I still reject this scenario. In its polls of 21 January 2013 as well as poll 4 from table 1 below, Synovate asked one question which might challenge the reasoning of human behaviour to change like weather. It asked "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?"[6] This question assumes that behaviour can be studied after a relatively longer period. It is interesting to note that nomination of candidates by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) was done on 18 January 2013. Hence, in the first place there was no such a thing like "presidential candidate" over the last 2 months. Synovate admitted this fact on its polls released in November and December 2012 implying that official campaigns were not yet launched. From this background, there is no way Synovate could be able to capture the trend of a changed choice.

Table 1: Ipsos Synovate Polls for February 2013

	POLL 1	**POLL 2**	**POLL 3**	**POLL 4**
Polling Dates	12th Feb.	13th – 15th Feb.	15th-19th Feb.	15th-19th Feb.
Release Dates	13th Feb.	18th Feb.	22nd Feb.	24th Feb.

Source: Extracted from Ipsos Synovate Polls 2013.

Yet, there were two surprises with regard to the timing of conducting and releasing poll findings. One is that two polls were taken on the same issue, that is, the presidential debate of 11 February 2013. Poll 1 namely *"Political Barometer Survey: Post-Presidential Debate Poll"* revealed that the overall candidate who performed the best was Uhuru Kenyatta with 37%. This was followed by Raila Odinga with 23%, Peter Keneth 15% and Martha Karua

8%. The rest of the candidates performed below 4%. Surprisingly, Synovate undertook another poll on the same presidential debate as Poll 4 namely *"Presidential Debate Opinion Poll aired on 11th February 2013"*. The poll was released just one day before the second presidential debate on 25 February 2013. I suggest that the timing of this poll was by design in favour of one candidate. In order to argue this case I examine one question which was asked by Synovate in poll 1, poll 3 as well as the 21 January 2013 poll. This question was about the change of voters' preferences over time. In the January poll Synovate asked "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?" The pollster observed that 92% respondents said "No" while the remaining 8% respondents said "Yes". This could mean that voting patterns in Kenya are relatively stable.

In contrast, in Poll 1 (that of 13 February 2013) Synovate asked "Did the debate on Monday evening change your mind on whom you will vote for as president?" The pollster noted a significant change. To be sure it found that only Uhuru Kenyata made a remarkable increase from 36.9% before changing mind to 39.8% after changing mind. Raila Odinga dropped from 35.3% before changing mind to 33.1% after changing mind. This means that the previous gap between these two candidates increased from 1.6% to 6.7%. Almost all other candidates scored negatively.[7] Surprisingly, poll 3 (that of 22 February 2013) asked the same question as that of the 21 January 2013 poll "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?" The pollster noted a very slight change hence confirming the claim that Kenyans are founded upon strong social cleavages that are relatively resistant to abrupt changes. To be sure, 93% respondents replied "No" and 7% held an affirmative answer.[8] In a total of more than four months, there was only 1 respondent who "changed his or her mind with respect to the presidential candidate." Now, if Poll 1 was taken in between the 21 January and the 22 February 2013 polls, how could it be possible to warrant a significant change while it was an inclusive of the January and February polls? It can therefore be submitted that the 24 February 2013 poll (Poll 4) was undertaken as a continuation of manufacturing data in favour of one candidate against another.

Although both polls (1 and 4) were methodologically flawed, poll 4 was worse since it lacked the demographic profile of the sampled population as I shall discuss it in due course. One raises doubt if it was really conducted or simply fabricated in the pollster's office. There is no way one can verify or replicate it. An interesting discrepancy between these two polls is that those

who said that they watched TV in Poll 1 were 66% while those who listened on radio were 34%.[9] In contrast, in Poll 4 the number of those who watched TV increased to 93% while those who listened on radio decreased to 7%.[10] The second surprise is that two polls (Polls 3 and 4) were conducted on the same dates, that is, between 15 and 19 February, 2013. I am not sure of the justifications of doing this. In a nutshell, methodologically, it leaves a lot to be desired.

Question Design

The design of questions by the Synovate was highly problematic to the extent that it asked and reported what it did not measure. I will just pick two questions to argue my case. I start to examine the question that was designed to understand preferences to presidential candidates and/or running mates. Table 2 below presents four different types of questions but purporting to ask and measure the same thing. As can be seen, four polls that were released on 22 February 2013, 25 January 2013, 14 December 2012, and 20 November 2012 had the same question "Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?" This question assumed that the list of presidential candidates did not exist hence suggesting "if that person was a candidate". While this could be true before 18 January 2013 when nomination was not done, it could not be proper afterwards. Thus, the question could be valid for November, December, and January but not February. Synovate itself admitted to this fact when it stated "Most interviews were also conducted before the "shambolic" party nominations process, which may affect actual voter choice (as well as turn-out itself)."[11]

Table 2: Ipsos Synovate Survey: Question Design Variations

Poll Release Date	Question Wording
22 Feb. 2013	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?
18 Feb. 2013	Which of the following pair of candidates for president and deputy president/ running-mate are you going to vote for in the next general election?
13 Feb. 2013	Who are you going to vote for as the fourth president of Kenya?
25 Jan. 2013	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential

	elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?
21 Jan. 2013	Apart from President Kibaki, whom would you vote for as president of Kenya at the next general elections?
14 Dec. 2012	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?
20 Nov. 2012	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?

Source: Extracted from Ipsos Synovate Polls 2012 and 2013.

The question asked in the 21 January 2013 poll was slightly different. It stated "Apart from President Kibaki, whom would you vote for as president of Kenya at the next general elections?" This question had two problems. One is that it assumed that the list of candidates was already known to respondents something which is doubtful. This is so because the poll was conducted between 17 and 20 January 2013. As already noted elsewhere in this article, nomination was done by the IEBC on 18 January 2013. The second problem is about the timing of the preference. Unlike in the previous question which insisted "if presidential elections were held now" in the present formulation, the time is stable i.e. next general elections which was of course 4 March 2013. From its face it predicted who would be the president without anticipating dynamics which could change the direction of such a choice. It is unfortunate for "experts" to reason this way. Surprisingly, Synovate admitted "Together with such other unknown factors as turn-out rates in various parts of the country on Election Day, there is no solid basis for predicting the actual outcome as of now."[12] It is important to understand that opinion polls normally provide expressions of preferences by the time the polls are conducted and not otherwise. Yet, the 13 February poll was the worst in terms of its design. It simply stated "Who are you going to vote for as the fourth president of Kenya?" As can be noted, this question was not specific in the sense that it assumed the respondents were aware of the complete list of candidates something which might not be correct. Like most of the questions asked on the similar issue, it had a problem of time "fourth president of Kenya". It is also noteworthy that apart from the 13 and 18 February polls, the rest begin with a phrase "Apart from President Kibaki..." suggesting that Mr. Kibaki was already included in the list or rather excluded. It thus provided an ambiguous statement.

The second set of questions is related to changing of position by respondents with regard to the choice of the presidential candidate. It states "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?" This question was asked in two polls between November 2012 and February 2013 i.e. on 22 February and 21 January 2013. In January the responses were that 92% said "No" while the remaining 8% respondents said "Yes". In February there was a very slight change. 93% respondents replied "No" and 7% held affirmative. This question had three critical problems. One is that it assumed respondents had already had a choice. And the issue was whether or not that position had changed. This is typically a bad question. Moore (2008: 37-8) describes it as a "forced-question" i.e. it forces respondents to give answers. He notes "Oversimplifying complex issues, using the forced-choice format, avoiding questions that might reveal how little people know or care about issues, and feeding respondents information are all part of the manufacturing process." The other weakness is that the phrase "over the last 2 months" could mean December 2012 and any time before. Interestingly, the nomination of presidential candidates was not yet done. How could one go to that far to trace the trend of one's preferences on a presidential candidate? Related to that, how is it possible to capture the trend in the context where sample sizes kept on changing? For example the 13 February 2013 poll had only 1,074 respondents; that of 18 February 2013 had a sample of 2,500 respondents; and that of 22 February 2013 had a sample size of 5,971. Can the researcher make a follow-up of the previously sampled people to see how they changed their minds over time?

Sampling

The Synovate sampling design was defective in several respects. One of the major problems is that the polls did not appropriately appreciate the context. As I stated elsewhere in this article, sampling procedures in a deeply divided society with strong social cleavages is indeed challenging. By any account, it is a fact that Kenyan society is founded on strong ethnocentrism and so do elections. Oyugi (1997:41) argues that the politics of the 1992 general elections show how ethnicity continues to be a major force influencing the behaviour of politicians and voters alike. Bratton and Kimenyi (2008: 287) corroborate this observation:

> If recent post-election violence in Kenya signals strong ethnic identification, our analysis confirms it. Although Kenyans resist defining themselves in ethnic terms, their actions in making electoral choices show a country where voting patterns hew largely to ethnic

> lines. Respondents also show a high degree of mistrust of members of other ethnic groups and consider the behaviour of these other groups to be influenced primarily by ethnicity. In general, voting in Kenya is therefore defensively and fundamentally an ethnic census.

Synovate samples for different polls ignored this critical factor. This has been the centrality of the "tyranny of numbers" debate. Although pollsters have vehemently dismissed it, terming it as a blanket assumption,[13] there is no way one can turn blind when doing polls. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that Tom Wolf rejected the "tyranny of numbers" the Synovate which he associates with had found long before the critical problem of ethnicity and voting patterns in Kenya. To be sure, the Synovate notes "Over the last few years, the Survey results from Ipsos Synovate have consistently indicated the ethnocentric nature of presidential and political support and the same trend is seen in the current survey results."[14] The question is why did Synovate avoid finding out this phenomenon in its subsequent polls? As I argued before, science cannot liberate itself from the society. It is here that I question the nature of the sampling design itself.

Similarly, the unit of analysis has remained problematic. While some polls based on counties others focused on provinces as their unit of analysis. For example the 13 February 2013 poll was based on provinces as its unit of analysis. In contrast the 18 and 22 February 2013 polls were premised on counties. Still, other polls like that of 24 February 2013 did not show even the unit of analysis. Surprisingly, Synovate used the findings from these different polls to do a comparative observation. Related to that, the demographic profiles were problematic across polls. In some polls, like that of 24 February, 2013 such a profile was not found. This makes it difficult to ascertain if in the first place the poll was authentic.

Yet, in the 13 February 2013 poll, the pollster sampled 51% females and 49% males. Surprisingly, this gender proportionality changed in the 18 February 2013 with 54% females and 46% males, a difference of 8%. In the 22 February poll Synovate reversed the proportionality when it sampled 46% females and 54% males. It has to be appreciated that women are slightly the majority population in Kenya. One wonders, how arbitrary Synovate had been in sampling. There were no explanations for this change. Taking into account that all the February polls were just carried out within a week, it raises doubt as to how and why Synovate kept on changing this gender proportionality. It

would imply that the pollster does not understand well the context within which it operates.

Another serious problem was related to the sample size. It seems to me that Synovate simply picked the size of its samples arbitrary. For example, in the 25 January 2013 poll, the pollster sampled 5,895 registered voters from 28 counties. Interestingly, it admitted that "the sample was not large enough to generate statistical validity for enough counties to ensure the 25% and > requirement in at least half of the 47 counties has been met."[15] The question which arises here is the size of the sample and the issue of making inferences. If Synovate considered this sample to be small, why then did it sample only 2,500 respondents in 35 counties in its 18 February 2013 poll and did not complain about generating statistical validity? I have to add that what I found strange is the fact that such 35 counties were not even mentioned by names in the polling report. The serious fault appeared in the 24 February 2013 poll which stated the sample size of 5,971 of registered voters but did not state whether these were drawn from counties or regions. Again, the 13 February 2013 poll had the sample size of only 1,074 of registered voters drawn from the eight regions of Kenya representing the total number of registered voters of 14,337,399. From the aforesaid, I cast doubt on the authenticity of samples by the Synovate and as it admitted itself, whether or not such samples could generate statistical validity and inference to the population.

Related to the above was the problem of cross tabulation. Most polls by Synovate had no cross tabulation in relation to the demographic profiles. For example, it was difficult to understand which age groups supported which party or candidates more than others. It was also not possible to ascertain which group according to gender supported which policy, candidate or party. It was even complicated to appreciate support that could be mobilised from people with different occupations. This is also associated to the fact that some of the Synovate polls did not have even the demographic profile. Taking all these together it is easy to submit that these polls were not useful to candidates to allow them identify their potential electoral bases. They also did not show which candidates stood for which policy issues. In any case, these polls were seriously deficient of "science" to the extent that one could simply reduce them to mere tools of "predicting" based on an arm-chaired thinking.

Yet, the classification of the "battleground", "contested" and "stronghold" in Kenya is totally misleading. Indeed, it is simply a cut and paste of the American formulations and its application on a completely different context. Synovate defines "battleground" as the ones where there is a difference of less than 10% between the top two candidates; "Contested": where the difference between the top two candidates ranges between 11% and 20% and "Stronghold" where the difference between the top two candidates is more than 20%. If one follows this classification closely he or she will discover a purely ethnic classification. That means where it is stronger in favour of one candidate and when it is less. Synovate pretends not to know this fact while in one of its polls stated "Over the last few years, the Survey results from Ipsos Synovate have consistently indicated the ethnocentric nature of presidential and political support and the same trend is seen in the current survey results."[16]

Honest of answers

Kenyans mistrust each other. This kind of mistrust stems from the fact that they identify much with their ethnic background (Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008: 287). This state of affairs makes them not to be honest when it comes to dealing with their fellow ethnic groups. Yet, politics is essentially organised around this deep social cleavage (Elischer, 2010: 199). As I noted elsewhere in this work, dishonest affects much the quality and accuracy of opinion polls. There is no available means which is effective to handle this problem. As such pollsters have to rely on what the respondents tell them. Tom Wolf maintains that:-

> Most of these respondents could be lying to us. If indeed they are lying, one could say Kenyans do not generally like to come out honestly on such matters. They always want to be on the correct side of history...If we were to demand proof probably the figures would be different, unfortunately we cannot. It is like a customer in a hotel lying he is a vegetarian when he is not. You do not expect the waiter to go hard on him to table proof.[17]

Wolf noted further that 95% of people approached by polling companies say that they are registered, whereas the true figure of registered voters is something like 63% of those eligible to vote (14.3 million out of an eligible 22.5 million adults) which he argues it is the "hard fact". Although pollsters cannot be blamed for Kenyans not being honest, it is imperative to emphasize that it significantly affects the quality and accuracy of a poll. The

question therefore remains that if telling lies affects polls, to what extent can the claimed science of polling be able to address this problem? Indeed, the Kenyan context is complex as it poses critical challenges which are not easy to be fixed by pollsters.

Voter turnout

Low voter turnout affects the ability a pollster can project electoral outcomes. Throughout multiparty politics since the 1990s, voter turnout has been highly fluctuating in Kenya. Sometimes it is below 50% and in other times about 70%. This fluctuation affects the ability a pollster can project the electoral outcomes. However, pollsters have not taken keen interests in this matter. I noted elsewhere in this article that Synovate projected the voter turnout in the 2010 general elections in Tanzania to be 83% but the actual turnout was 42.8%. This alone was an embarrassment to the accuracy and quality of its polls. I think this experience had informed the pollster to examine this factor critically. To be sure, Syovate was clear about this in the 25 January 2013 poll in Kenya when it stated "Together with such other unknown factors as turn-out rates in various parts of the country on Election Day, there is no solid basis for predicting the actual outcome as of now."[18] Surprisingly, the question on voter turnout in its only four polls conducted between 12 and 19 February 2013 was missing. The question which arises here is that how did Synovate manage to proceed projecting the electoral outcomes in the absence of ascertaining the level of voter turnout? In its 15 March 2013 "Post-Election Analysis" Synovate still maintained that voter turnout may affect the poll outcome.

Conclusion

In its 15 March 2013 Post-Election Analysis, Synovate made reference to its "final poll released on 22 February 2013" and claimed to have projected close to the electoral outcome. Actually, Synovate projected the victory of 44.82% for Uhuru Kenyatta while the actual IEBC results were 50.07%. This is a variance of 5.25% (higher than the margin of error set at +/-1.27 at 95% confidence level). For Raila Odinga it projected 44.36% against 43.31% of actual votes by the IEBC results, making a variance of -1.05% (within the margin of error set at +/-1.27 at 95% confidence level). For other presidential candidates, it projected within the margin of error in comparison to the IEBC results. Synovate further claimed to have projected close to the electoral outcome with a high level of precision at the county level i.e. 91% correct with regards to Kenyatta's counties and 88% correct with regards to Odinga's counties.[19] I hesitate to concur with this conclusion on a number of accounts:-

(a) The final Synovate poll was released on 24 February 2013 carrying a title "Presidential Debate Opinion Poll (aired on 11th February, 2013)" as opposed to that of 22 February 2013. I have to emphasize that this report did not have any single question about preferences by respondents in relation to candidates for presidential or county elections. As I said elsewhere in this article (see table 1), Synovate undertook two different polls on the same dates, that is, between 15 and 19 February, 2013. The findings of these polls were released on 22 and 24 February 2013. I am wondering how these "experts" are not aware of their own polls.

(b) Notwithstanding, going by the 22 February poll, Synovate claimed that even though the projection of Uhuru Kenyatta was higher than the margin of error, it was correct to indicate that Uhuru would be ahead of Odinga. This was despite the fact that the 22 February poll insisted that no one would win the required votes in the first round. Hence, it emphasised on the run-off elections in which Raila Odinga would have 29% and Uhuru Kenyatta 12% among those who did not support either Odinga or Uhuru in the first round. This would mean by logic that in the run-off elections, Raila Odinga would have become the leading candidate in the Synovate poll. That means Raila was popular among those who were still undecided. Surprisingly, in its 15 March 2013 Post-Election Analysis, Synovate did not discuss about the issue of "run-off elections" and insisted that it was correct to project Uhuru as the likely winner.

(c) Voter turnout is central to projecting opinion polls. Synovate admitted this fact in its 25 January 2013 poll stating that "Together with such other unknown factors as turn-out rates in various parts of the country on Election Day, there is no solid basis for predicting the actual outcome as of now." It is important to note that Synovate did not ask any question related to voter turnout in all its February 2013 polls. How then could Synovate project its polls in the absence of voter turnout? Surprisingly it brought the issue of voter turnout to discuss how its 22 February poll was close to the IEBC results. In the last general elections of 2010 in Tanzania, Synovate attempted to project the voter turnout rate to be at 83% contrary to the actual voter turnout of about 40%.

(d) Kenyans mistrust each other. This problem stems from their ethnic background making them not to be honest when dealing with their fellow ethnic groups. However, politics in Kenya is organised around this deep social cleavage (Bratton and Kimenyi, 2008; Elischer, 2010). This problem distorts opinion polls as well as electoral politics. Tom Wolf, the social-political consultant of Synovate's polls admits this fact when stating "Most of these respondents could be lying to us. If indeed they are lying, one could say Kenyans do not generally like to come out honestly on such matters. They always want to be on the correct side of history...If we were to demand proof probably the figures would be different, unfortunately we cannot."[20]

(e) Related to the above is the fact that Kenyans indicate voting preferences which are relatively stable thereby challenging the Synovate's imitated concept of "swing states" from America's politics. In the 21 January 2013 poll, for example, Synovate asked one question "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?" It noted that 92% of respondents said "No" while the remaining 8% of respondents said "Yes". The 22 February 2013 poll asked the same question and found that 93% said "No" while 7% of respondents said "Yes". Against that backdrop, the March 2013 Post-Election Analysis with regard to "last minute swings" is weak to explain the discrepancy between the Synovate poll and the IEBC results. Moreover, at the counties level is where the notion of "battleground", "contested" and "stronghold" classification was paramount. If one examines closely this kind of classification, it will be noted that they coincide to the ethnocentrism of which is dominant in Kenya. If that is the case, the fact which Synovate admits, when it states "Over the last few years, the Survey results from Ipsos Synovate have consistently indicated the ethnocentric nature of presidential and political support and the same trend is seen in the current survey results,"[21] can't it be argued that the pollster predicted the obvious?

(f) Sampling procedures by the Synovate were consistently defective to warrant an accurate poll. Indeed, it did not appreciate the Kenya's contexts such as ethnicity, gender to mention just a few. It can be noticed, for example, that the sample for the 18 February poll had 54% of females and 46% of males. In contrast, just four days later it was reversed in the 22 February poll with 46% of females and 54%

males. In any case the Kenya's demography indicates that women are slightly the majority population. Yet, one wonders, how did Synovate change so abruptly without any explanation? Though one can underestimate this omission, it is significant to question the expertise of Synovate.

(g) Lastly, Synovate had a very big problem of designing questions. Some of the critical problems are indicated in table 2. Some questions were wrongly designed and therefore unable to generate information to measure what was supposed to be measured.

This article was set to examine the works of opinion polls in Kenya. It evaluated the science of polling alongside the methodological issues namely sampling, question design and reporting. Specifically, the article examined a number of factors that can affect the quality and accuracy of polls such as sampling, question design, timing, voter turnout, expertise of a pollster, and honest of answers by respondents. In order to maintain a deeper understanding of the science of polling, the article delimited its scope to the works of the Ipsos Synovate. It found out that almost all the seven elements were problematic in Synovate's polls leading to either over-estimation or under-estimation in projecting the electoral outcome. In some cases, the polls were published without providing necessary information as required by the law. Yet, there has not been any audit or review of polls by the Kenyan government to see the extent to which they complied with the law. Indeed, Synovate polls were by default or design biased. Nevertheless, the reluctance of the pollster to admit omissions in its works remains a major concern.

Notes

1. See Aggrey Oriwo "SYNOVATE Tanzania Press Release 20.09.2010" Dar es Salaam.

2. Africa News Post 14 January 2013.

3. Africa News Post 24 February 2013.

4. Scott L. Althaus *"Polls" in the* International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, 2nd Edition, 2008, pp. 357.

5. http://www.ipsos.com/(accessed July 10, 2013).

6. Ipsos Synovate 21 January 2013 Poll, p. 16; see also Ipsos Synovate 22 February 2013 Poll, p. 41.

7. Ipsos Synovate 13 February 2013 Poll, p.33.

8. Ipsos Synovate 22 February 2013 Poll, p.33.

9. Ipsos Synovate 13 February 2013 Poll, p.10.

10. Ipsos Synovate 24 February 2013 Poll, p. 5

11. Ipsos Synovate 25 January 2013 Poll, p. 37.

12. Ibid, p. 39.

13. See Tom Wolf in the *The Star* "Kenya: Tyranny of Numbers Versus Opinion Polls" February 16, 2013.

14. Ipsos Synovate 2 October 2012 p. 3.

15. Ipsos Synovate 25 January 2013, p. 37.

16. Ipsos Synovate 2 October 2012 p. 3

17. The Kenyan Daily Post "Kenyans LIE on OPINION POLLS - Tom Wolf (IPSOS SYNOVATE), http://www.kenyan-post.com/(accessed July 8, 2013).

18. Ipsos Synovate 25 January 2013 Poll, p. 39.

19. Ipsos Synovate "Post-Election Analysis" 15 March 2013.

20. The Kenyan Daily Post "Kenyans LIE on OPINION POLLS - Tom Wolf (IPSOS SYNOVATE), http://www.kenyan-post.com/(accessed July 8, 2013).

21. Ipsos Synovate 2 October 2012 p. 3.

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