



# THE XYZ SHOW

Impact Survey 2020

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## INTRODUCTION

The XYZ Show is a satirical puppet series that is designed to address serious socio-political issues through comedy and parody, and is aimed at encouraging better political awareness among Kenyans, promoting democracy, good governance and transparency, and stimulating dialogue over conflict, while activating citizen participation. The series has been broadcasted on Kenyan television for 13 seasons, spanning 10 years (from 2009), and has also been occasionally distributed on Kenyan radio stations. Online distribution has delivered the series to global audiences on different platforms.

The Show has tackled a wide variety of issues including: corruption and impunity in government, business and society; tribalism; transparency in government; gender and sexuality; Sino-African relations, especially in Kenya; and two general elections in Kenya (2013 and 2017).

Over the years, The XYZ Show's audience has grown and changed. At the start, this project and its concept were viewed as highly unconventional – almost unacceptable. To depict our national leaders as puppets, and then go ahead and make them do and say things that they would never do in real life – things that refer directly to the social and political problems facing the country? Outrageous!

At that time, our audience mainly consisted of the politically engaged Kenyan, who was hungry for a platform that didn't shy away from the controversial perspectives of our socio-politics – and, perhaps reluctantly, the cautiously curious Kenyan, who sometimes felt compelled to write to us advising that it is 'un-African' to disregard our leaders to such an extent as to depict them as trouble-making puppets.

In 2013, an independent study conducted by Infotrak Research & Consulting highlighted The XYZ Show's impact as a watchdog, fearlessly putting Kenyan leaders in check. Many Kenyan youth reported that to them, The XYZ Show is a source of news and information, and that they refer to the Show as they form their opinions on current affairs.

In-house surveys that Buni Media has conducted (in 2012 and 2015) have also affirmed that The XYZ Show has played a role in shaping public opinions about governance, democratic processes, and some related social issues like insecurity.

With time, and with the explosion of social media and internet usage in the country, the lampooning of our political, business, and religious leaders has become widely accepted. The XYZ Show no longer an outlier, and our audience is now much broader; surveys indicated that the Show is watched by children as well as their parents, all across the country.

Internally, there have been developments in the quality of production owing to skills development, new approaches to puppeteering, and the adoption of new technologies. As Kenya faces increasing restrictions to Freedom of Expression, the content development and editorial processes have adopted to ensure that we continue to address the socio-political issues that we're passionate about, while staying within the Law and maintaining practical partnerships with our distributors. However, the structure/format of the Show itself has largely remained the same: 20 – 25 minute episodes, divided into 2 – 3 minute skits (which can be distributed independently), and presented by a host.

With new media gaining prominence and changing the ways in which content is consumed, The XYZ Show is set to evolve and adapt for the future. While maintaining our core objectives, this evolution is intended to re-invigorate The XYZ Show with a fresh approach that is relevant to our existing fans, while attracting new audiences and building sustainability for the future of media.

This survey is an important step in our evolution. It is intended to give us an updated snapshot of our audience: their perspective of the Show, the impact that our content has had on them, especially with regards to issues that we're passionate about (corruption, citizen participation, etc), and what they would want to see in the future. This will illustrate the Show's strengths, as well as areas in which we need to improve as we seek to contribute to nurturing a democratic culture.

## SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this survey was to assess any changes in audience's perception of the following issues as a result of watching The XYZ Show:

- Corruption and governance
- Gender equality
- Public service delivery
- Freedom of Expression
- Participation in governance

As such, the survey will also allow for an assessment of the audience's perception and level of understanding of The XYZ Show.

This survey also intends to generate suggestions that will help to improve the Show

## OUR APPROACH

To achieve the survey objectives, we took the following approach:

1. A questionnaire distributed online and through social media (received feedback from 119 persons)
2. Collection of 'stories of change' from selected members of the audience, representing diverse backgrounds.

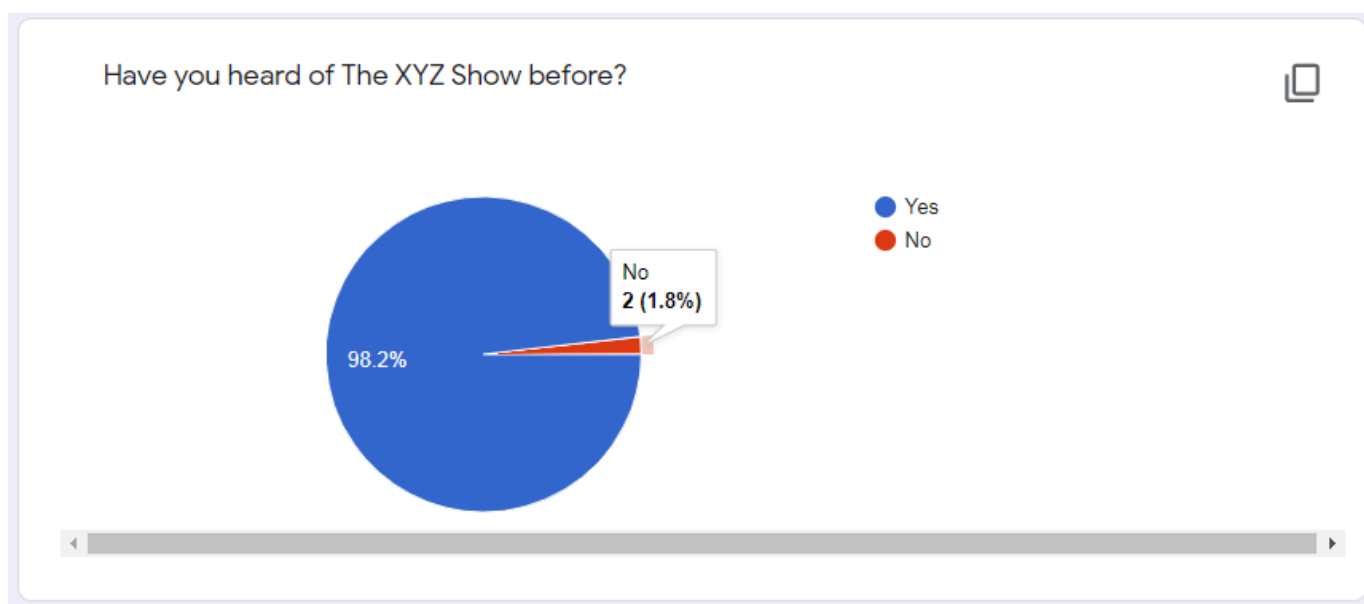
We sent out the questionnaire with the intention to capture a reasonable representation of the Kenyan population – our primary target audience – using data from the 2019 population census (as released by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics) as a reference point.

We leveraged our networks to distribute the questionnaire beyond our own circles.

## KEY FINDINGS

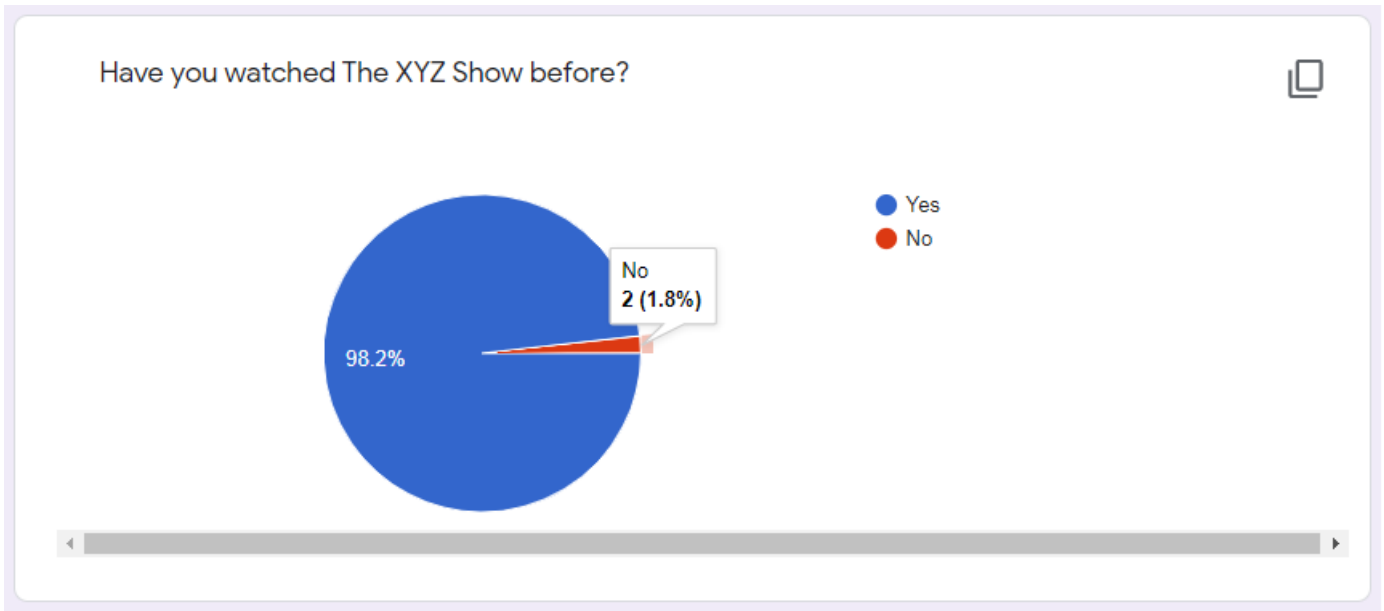
### I. PERCEPTION & UNDERSTANDING OF THE XYZ SHOW

**Have you heard of The XYZ Show before?**



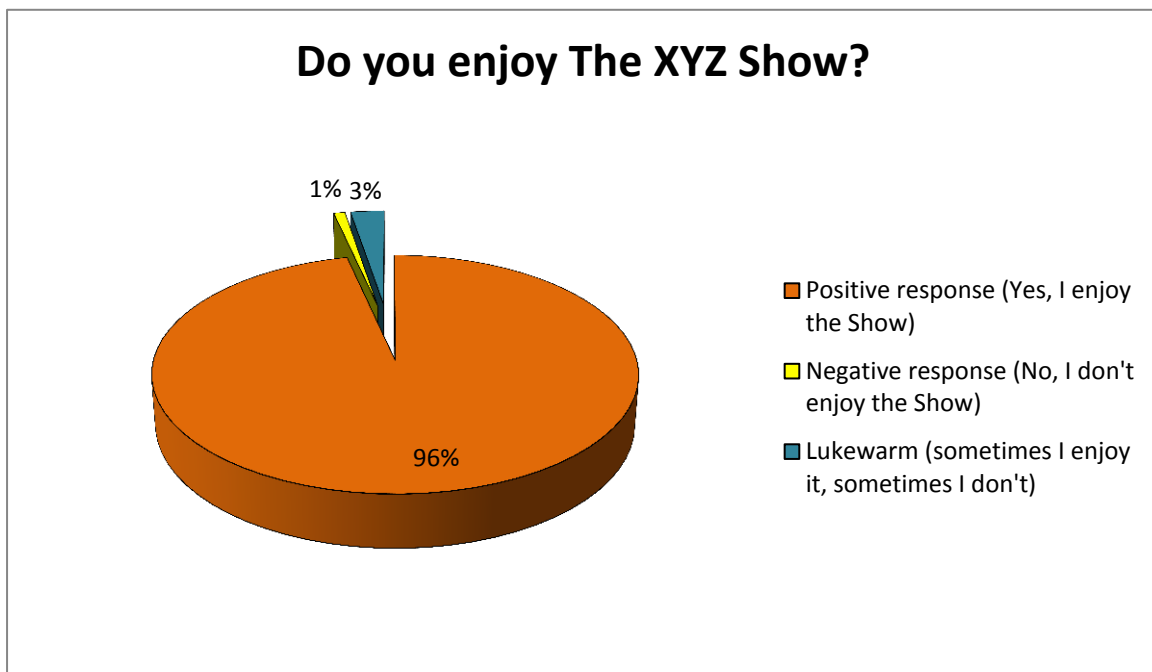
Only two respondents had not heard of The XYZ Show before.

### Have you watched The XYZ Show before?



Only two respondents had not watched The XYZ Show before.

**Do you enjoy The XYZ Show? *If yes, please share what you like about it. If no, please share what you dislike about it.***



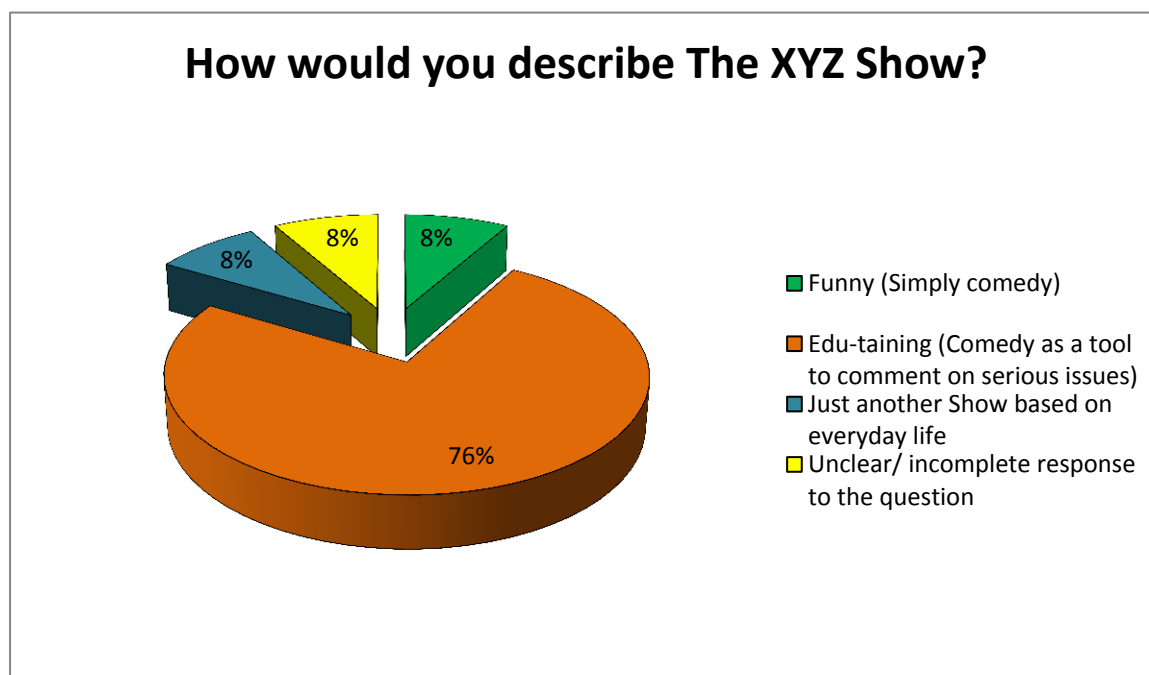
96% of respondents said that they like or love watching The XYZ Show, with only 1% saying that they do not. 3% of the respondents admitted that while sometimes they enjoy the Show, there are times /episodes that they do not enjoy.

A large number of the respondents like the show for:

- The humour
- The fact that the Show highlights societal and political issues
- The depiction of political figures in an unflattering and comical way

A few respondents felt that the Show was enjoyable in its early years, but is no longer enjoyable now. One respondent commented that it is not the type of humour that they like, so they do not enjoy the Show.

**How would you describe The XYZ Show? (What is it about, and who should watch it?)**



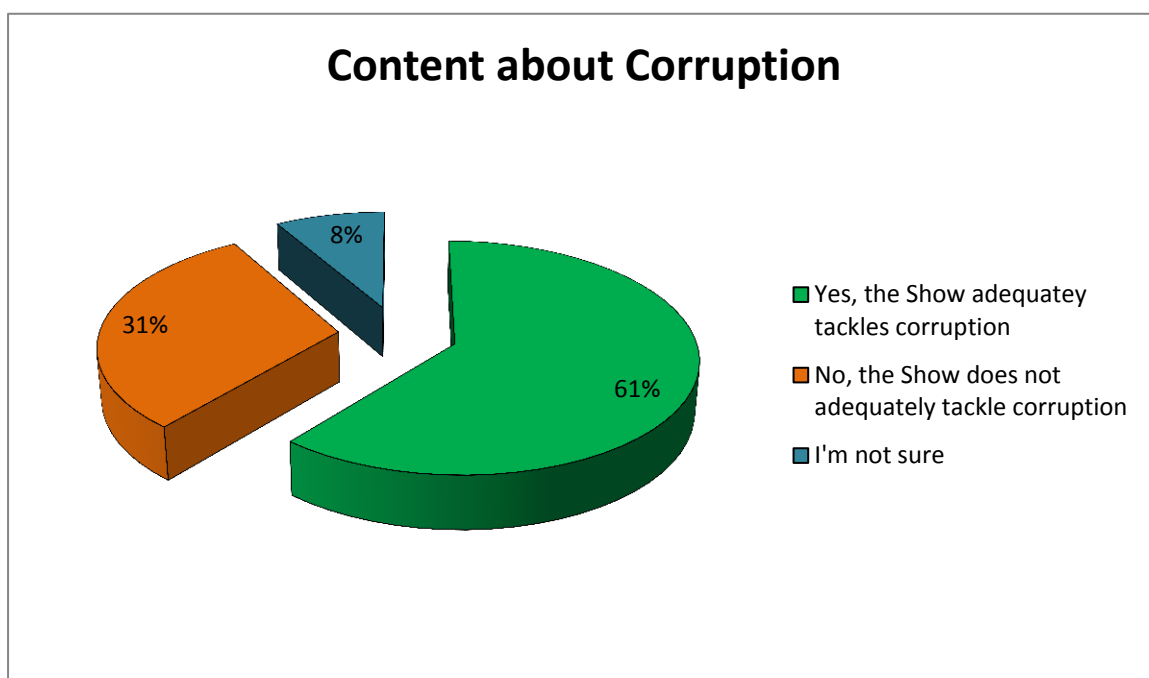
Most respondents view The XYZ Show as both educative and entertaining, using comedy as a tool to comment on current affairs.

Most respondents felt that 'all Kenyans should watch it' due to the relevance and entertainment value of the content. It is generally viewed as best for people that are interested in politics.

## II. RELEVANCE OF CONTENT TO OBJECTIVES

In the past two seasons, The XYZ Show has maintained focus on particular key issues: Corruption and governance; Gender equality; Public service delivery; Freedom of Expression; and Participation in governance. We sought to find out if we have had an impact on our audience.

Does The XYZ Show adequately tackle issues of corruption? Please explain.



While most respondents noted that the Show does adequately tackle corruption, a significant number said that the Show can do more. Many respondents stated that simply highlighting corruption, and making people laugh about it, is not enough. They note that the Show should go a few steps further; some suggestions are to offer solutions or action points that people should take to fight corruption, to get people more tangibly involved in anti-corruption through engagement with the audience, and to be more consistent and hard-hitting.

(8) Does The XYZ Show adequately tackle issues of corruption? Please explain.

Yes. It discuss about them hence allowing the public to know and invokes discussions on the same in communities. This pushes the government to take action on the issues.

Yes it does in a clever way as exchange conversation in a form of jokes they reveal the extent of deep rooted corruption in the government.

Not aware

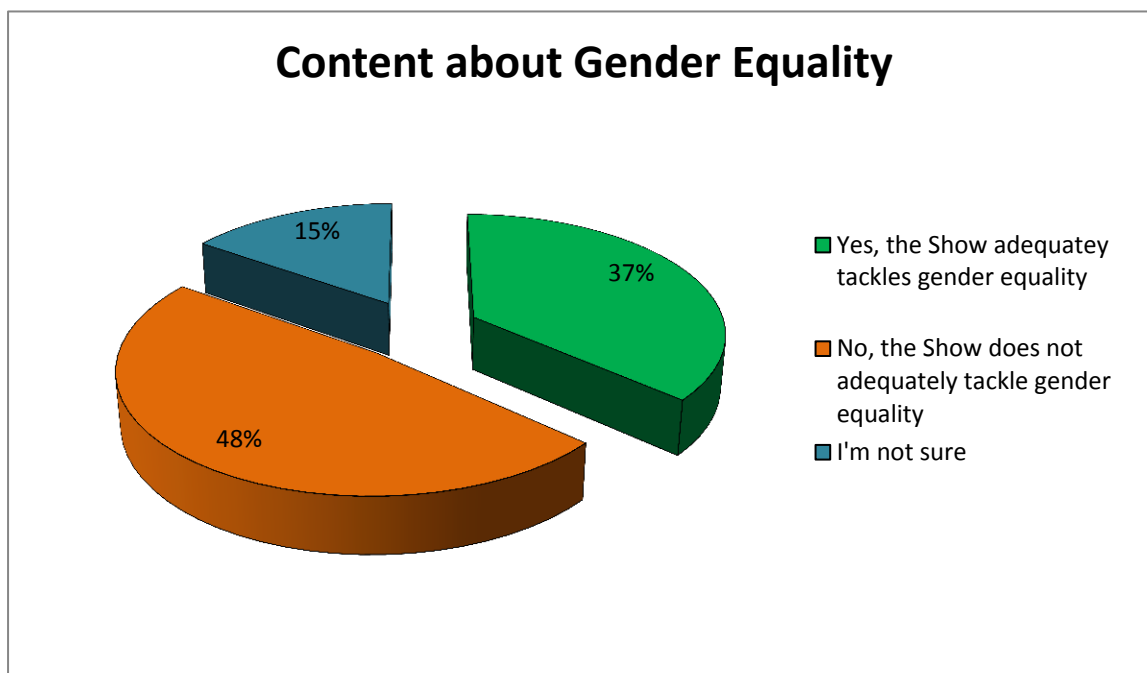
Yes, it does in a satirical manner

It does to a certain degree, however the content can be improved especially with the depth of the script.

Wish there was a way for the show to link up with policy guys and lawyers/courts so that there's follow through on the issues highlighted. A way of tracking the corruption cases highlighted and where they are (i.e. stage in court etc)

Yes it does but I believe it can do more. Sometimes I feel as though you are being careful with the content.

Does The XYZ Show adequately tackle issues of gender equality<sup>1</sup>? Please explain.



Almost 50% of respondents say that the show does not adequately tackle the issue of gender equality. There is general consensus that the Show's focus is on politics. Several of the respondents in this category said that they had not watched any episode in which gender was raised or addressed.

37% of the respondents said that the Show does adequately tackle gender equality.

Of those that responded "yes"; that the Show does tackle gender equality: 83.8% said that they responded "yes" only because the Show depicts both male and female characters on screen. 16.1% did not elaborate on their answer.

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<sup>1</sup> The equal treatment and access to opportunities, regardless of gender.



(9) Does The XYZ Show adequately tackle issues of gender equality? Please explain.

107 responses

Mildly yes. As much as gender equality awareness is met by the show, I believe there is need of more content to closely if not balance the male dominated material.

I'd say not as much.  
Female characters are not as many and at times the males outshine the female.

Not at all. Gender equality is quite different from women empowerment which is what is advocated for more. Men too have issues that are hardly addressed in the show

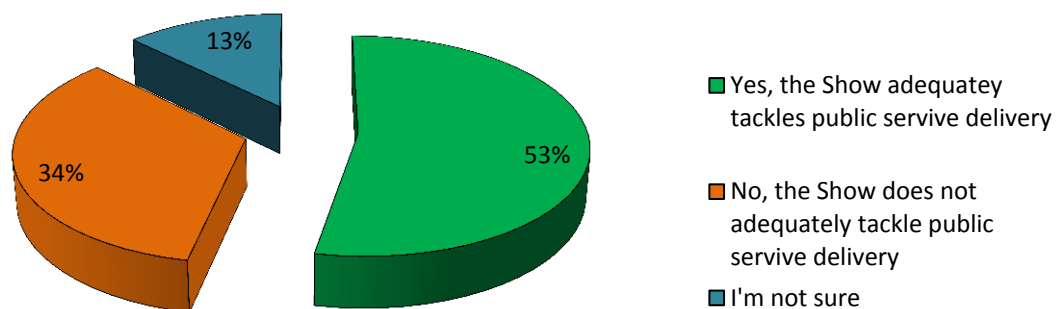
Yes it does,,,even in their concerns women and men both are included,,,and in any chance given no one favours another person this shows that both equality is handled and portrayed very well.

Partially...I would say most of the shows have watched the woman comes out as an helper even political wise

Yes because there is gender equality in the artists used

**Does The XYZ Show adequately tackle issues of the delivery of public services (education, sanitation, water, healthcare, etc)? Please explain.**

### Content about Public Service Delivery



More than 50% of the respondents feel that the Show adequately tackles issues of public service delivery. However, a significant number feel that the Show can do more in this regard.

(10) Does The XYZ Show adequately tackle issues of the delivery of public services (education, sanitation, water, healthcare, etc)? Please explain.

Yes it does and as highlighted in my reply in question 7 all these boil down to the form of leadership that exists in the country, good leaders ensure such public services are prioritised and well funded and avenues of theft are removed, which unfortunately not much can be said about Kenya

Yes, because it imitates doctors, teachers, politicians, common mwananchi Etc

Yes. This is covered in previous shows where in daily social segment individuals are sensitized on these sectors even in adverts played while the program is being aired

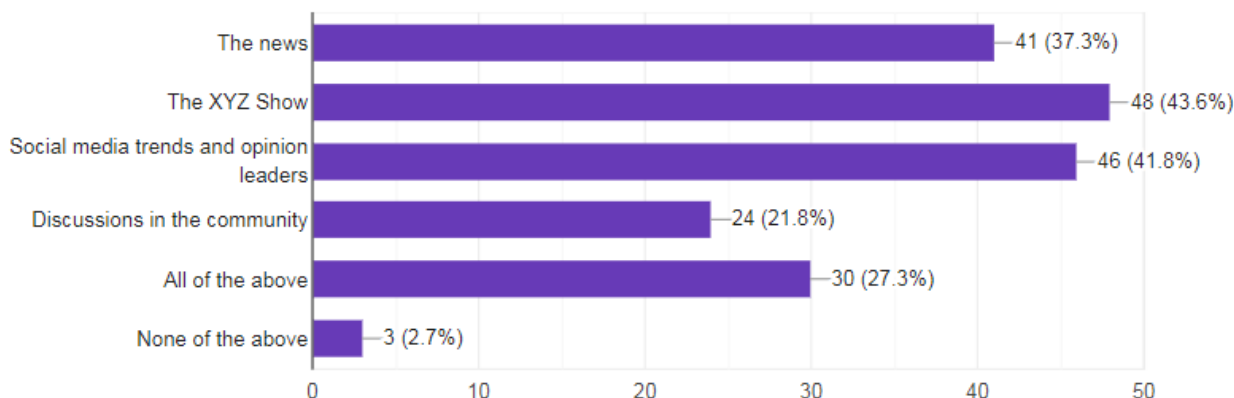
Yes it does. The jokes around back office deals around public funds hit the point home. I particularly liked the season where a public official permanently had a maize cob as a jab to the maize scandal. This was very effective in provoking thought and was a hit in my household and made me more conscious of the governance of my country, not to be lax about these issues

Yes, it does e.g the CBC operation Clip shows how some government officials "wanatumia kifua" with no clue of what they are doing,

No.the episodes I have watched touched only on political issues.

**Which of the following has had significant impact on your thoughts and actions towards political and social issues in recent years?** (The news/The XYZ Show/Social media trends and opinion leaders/Discussions in the community/All of the above/None of the above)

(11) Which of the following has had significant impact on your thoughts and actions towards political and social issues in recent years?



Majority of the respondents noted that while they access information from all the listed sources, social media allows for fast access to information, making it influential; as influential as traditional news, for

some. Some respondents watch the news as a way to fact-check information that they have received on social media.

Majority of the respondents watch The XYZ Show to get the highlights, discussions and/or analysis of current events.

Please explain your answer to question (11) above:

The media, community and social media at large each express their opinions and suggestions on how social and political issues can be solved and managed in our country. From these opinions, I gradually got a worldview on how politics and social issues affect me as a citizen and my thoughts towards it are always challenged.

I try to be well-informed on topical issues by reading widely from a variety of sources in order to form an independent opinion.

I prefer to get the facts and then interpret for myself thus the news is the best source of the facts.

It lets us know the reality.. How people behave when they're in power..

By watching news, XYZ show and social media trends, I am well informed..

News has evolved from just telling the happenings to holding discussions, debates and interviewing experts in various fields, that has had quite an impact in making me comprehend society vividly

News provides updates. XYZ show highlights issues in an entertaining way which one might not have paid

### III. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE SEASONS

**Which political issues are prevalent in your community, or in the country, that The XYZ Show should address?**

Respondents raised a wide variety of issues that they would like to see on future episodes of The XYZ Show, including:

- Proper asset management for ordinary citizens
- Raising awareness on the role & importance of political participation (targeted at both the general population, and the youth).
- Solutions to corruption
- Police brutality
- Mental health
- Gender issues

**Which social issues are prevalent in your community, or in the country, that The XYZ Show should address?**

Respondents raised a wide variety of issues that they would like to see on future episodes of The XYZ Show, including:

- Poverty and unemployment / economic inequality
- The Boy child: education, opportunities for boys to ensure that they are not left behind
- Healthcare
- Drug abuse

- Gender-based violence
- Sexuality

**Please share your suggestions on how The XYZ Show can improve on its content and impact.**

Majority of the respondents feel that the Show should have more time on air: either running throughout the year, or releasing longer episodes, or both. Other suggestions include:

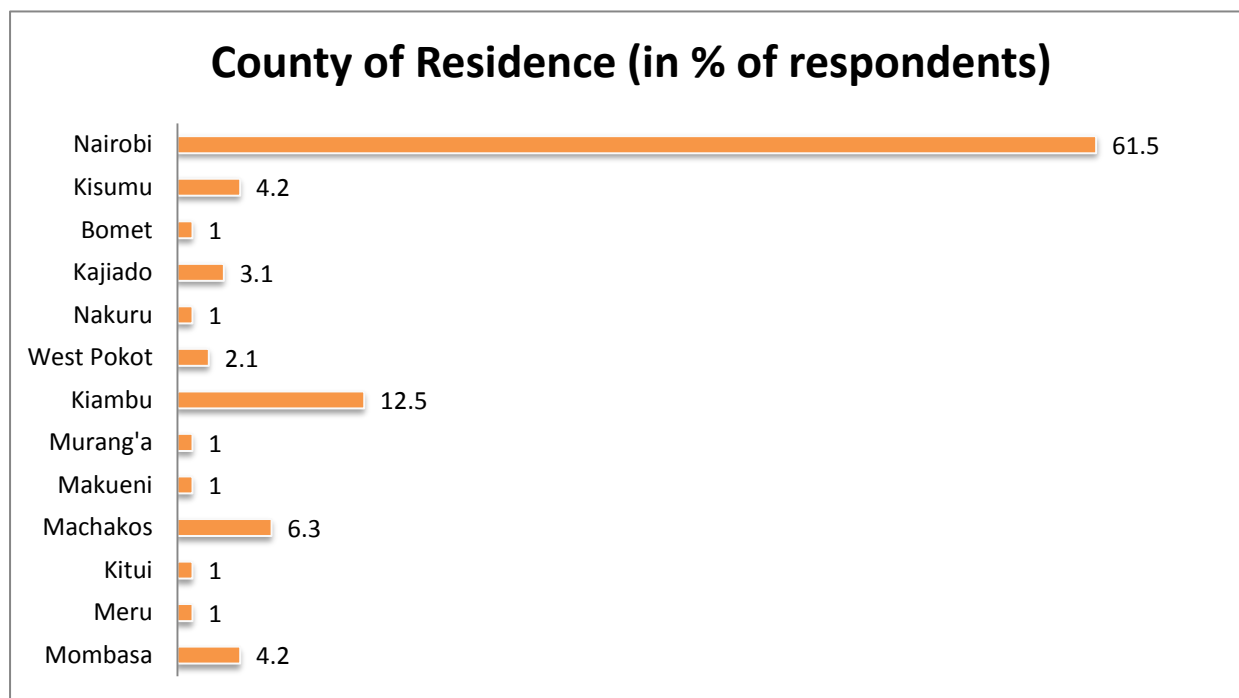
- Offer solutions to the issues raised/have a call to action
- Balance social and political issues in the Show; politics is already overwhelming, so diversifying would make the Show more relatable
- Consider engaging more with audiences offline through roadshows and community outreach, and online through social media
- Tackle issues affecting people at the grassroots, rather than sticking to the somewhat removed and elitist world of national politics

#### IV. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS:

Our questionnaire was filled by 119 people.

##### Respondents' County of Residence

We sought to find out the distribution of respondents across the country:

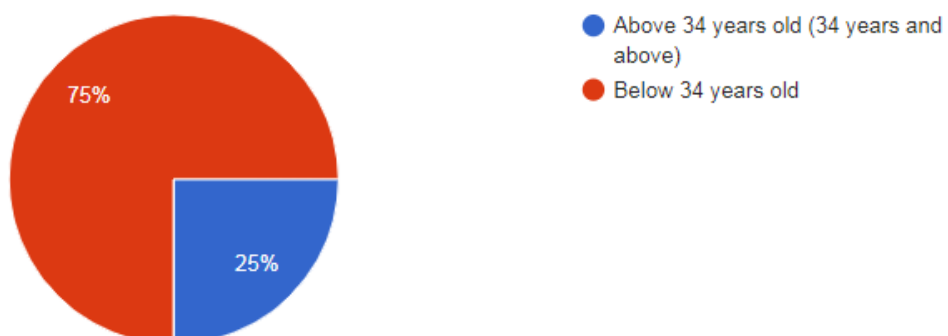


Most respondents were from Nairobi County, followed by Kiambu County. These two are also Kenya's most populated counties. Respondents were spread across the country, representing several regions: The Coast, Western, Central, Eastern, Rift Valley, Nyanza, and Nairobi. Unfortunately, we did not get respondents from the North-Eastern region of the country.

##### Age Group of Respondents

We wanted to know how youthful the respondents were.

What is your age group?

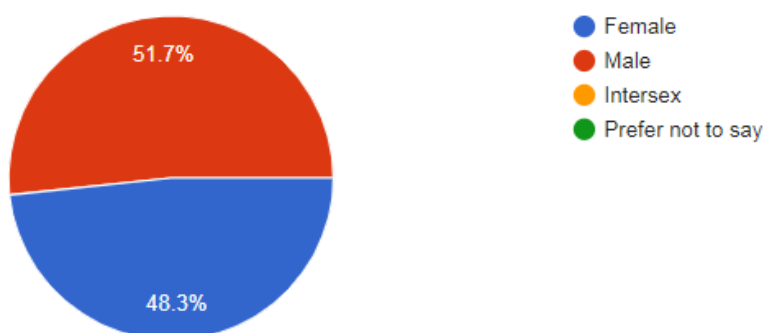


75% of respondents were below the age of 34, which is a satisfactory representation of the Kenyan population.

#### Gender of Respondents

We sought to find out the gender of the respondents.

What is your gender?



There was an almost even distribution of male and female respondents, which is a satisfactory representation of the Kenyan population.

## V. STORIES OF CHANGE

We asked a few members of our audience to share personal stories about how The XYZ Show has shaped their opinions and actions around social and political issues and participation in recent years. Here are some relevant excerpts from the responses we got:

Since I was Young, I enjoyed watching the XYZ Show and it really had a huge impact on my political and social thoughts. In terms of actions, I grew up knowing that it is my responsibility as a Kenyan to make the changes in our society and also be the change. I have even taken initiative and volunteered in community cleaning events and programmes conducted by Church youths, helped the street families with basic needs like food, helped My friend run for a political Office as well as voting, I ran for a Political Office In Maseno University and won Twice in a row and Served in a political office as a Secretariat in the School's Student government.

- Njoroge Emmanuel

The XYZ show has impacted my thoughts in a very enlightening way especially in the way the politicians take bribes and how they are corrupt leaders. The XYZ show has had an impact in my actions to participate in civic process especially in the year 2017 during elections. I wanted to stand up, woke up early in the morning to go and vote for my leaders especially our President. Clearly, the question is as (sic) he done great things for the last three years in helping and promoting kenyan citizens out there in their daily activities?? The XYZ show has always been a role model to me in focusing and perfecting the way to live life in togetherness without the act of favourism.

- Edu Mutugi

First and foremost the show is amazing and has made me realize that we have a lot as a country to learn about that's the politician's will never be for us but for themselves. At one time I thot (sic) of joining politics and being the Youngest MCA at 29 but after all that I just decided to back off cause... I didn't have all that money to splash, all I had were ideas that would benefit my ward and also transform lives but with the mentality that we have, you ought to have money so that you can be able to speak and get heard.

- Esther Wanjiru

The XYZ show has not had a huge impact on my thoughts as we almost have the same lines of thoughts, I'd however love to say that it has given me a more enlightened way of looking at some of the issues from a different perspective as I was before. The XYZ show has helped me to understand that it doesn't have to be a leader to provide the needed help as most of them don't go through the ordinary people struggles every day. Through the influence of the Show, I joined AIESEC. I'm a member of AIESEC and we are a youth leadership group that equips the youth with the necessary leadership skills and also we do volunteer in line with the SDGs. I also signed up for the UN volunteering programme because I believe I have so much to offer to the world and my community in general. This was influenced by one of the episodes where there was donations being made to the people.

- Erick Williams

I cannot really say that the show has directly had an impact to my thoughts or actions concerning the political and social issues highlighted in the show. But I would like to mention an episode in the previous season that pokes fun at the various lending sites in Kenya like "Tala" etc. That episode really hit home since everyone my age has borrowed from them and it's a reflection of the debt crisis we are facing as a nation particularly. I have not actively taken action on a community level to that effect but on a personal level it has made me review my finances and my attitude towards money and credit. It has been by far the most personal I've been with a TV show. I suggest to explore the issue of debt in Kenya in the coming seasons as I think it's a very relevant topic to discuss.

- Michelle Abuti

## THEN AND NOW

As mentioned above, The XYZ Show has been analysed in the past: in 2012, 2013, and 2015. There are some consistent findings that have echoed through the years:

*The XYZ Show is known for humour.*

In the 2013 survey, 74% of respondents admitted that they are most attracted to the Show by its humour. This year, 76% of respondents described the Show as "edutainment" – one in which humour is used to comment on serious issues. An additional 8% said that The XYZ Show is funny.

*The XYZ Show drives behaviour change.*

In 2012, Over 90% of the respondents indicated a change of perception on Kenya's political leaders after watching The XYZ Show.

Then in 2013, 1 in 3 respondents claimed that The XYZ Show had changed their perception of politicians, while another 3 in 10 respondents indicated that The XYZ Show had changed their expectations of leaders. 25% of respondents indicated that the show has influenced their democratic choices.

Similarly in 2015, 52% of the respondents noted that The XYZ Show either "likely", or "very likely" influenced their opinions and discussions on issues to deal with Ethnicity; 70% said the same about Corruption; 61% said the same about insecurity; and 41% said the same about devolution.

This year, 43.6% of respondents admitted that the Show has a significant impact on their thoughts and actions about social and political issues.

#### *Demand for a longer season / year-long TV presence*

Suggestions generated in the 2015 included that “a majority of viewers also felt that The XYZ Show should last longer and appear throughout the year.” This sentiment has been echoed by several respondents this year.

#### *The XYZ Show is better known in Nairobi than in other parts of the country.*

In 2013, Infotrak researchers found that awareness of The XYZ Show is higher in Nairobi (at 71% of those interviewed) than outside the capital (at 50% of those interviewed, except for North Eastern, where only 28% of the respondents knew about The Show).

This year, 61.5% of the respondents were from Nairobi county. This is indicative of a higher awareness of the Show in the capital city county.

#### *Perception of the Show*

In 2013, 15% of viewers stated they did not think the show was relevant to politics – and that it was only for entertainment. This year, only 8% said that the Show is simply funny, with 76% recognizing that the entertainment/ humour is actually used to address more serious issues. This implies a good – and growing – understanding of the Show and its messaging.

## LIMITATIONS OF THIS SURVEY

- Due to the pervasion of news and information through traditional and digital media, the impact and behaviour changes reported in this study are attributable to a combination of factors, The XYZ Show being one among several.
- This study was conducted online, with respect to the social distancing guidelines outlined by the Ministry of Health – Kenya, in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic. As such, it was limited to people that had an active internet connection.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS SURVEY

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the findings are encouraging, and offer practical insights for the continued growth of The XYZ Show.

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The XYZ Show is a well-recognized brand which, over the years, has amassed a following of loyal and dedicated fans. Most of the Show’s viewers recognize that beyond the humour, each episode is intended to foster reflection on important issues.

Political current affairs dominate The XYZ Show, with corruption being a prominent theme. Other themes, including public service delivery, gender, and citizen participation are either overshadowed or invisible. As a result, many people conceive that The XYZ Show should be watched by people interested in politics, and/or activists.

In its evolution, The XYZ Show should consider presenting viewers with a call to action, however subtle. With most viewers regularly attending to the news and social media discussions around current affairs, it is no longer enough to highlight the same issues (albeit with puppets). By the time an episode is being broadcasted, most viewers already know the current affairs stories that will be highlighted; they’ve watched analyses of these stories on the news, and participated in online discussions about them. They would appreciate a good laugh, but the question remains: *So what can*



*we do about it?* By answering this question, The XYZ Show will meet its goal to encourage citizen participation.

The XYZ Show is also in a position to reveal the link between politics and everyday life. Many viewers perceive politics – especially national politics – as an isolated matter, separate from what they face day to day. In truth, politics grossly affects the everyday lives of ordinary Kenyans; public service delivery, human rights, security, and much more, are directly dependent on politics. By helping viewers to connect the dots, The XYZ Show's political content will be even more relevant and impactful for viewers.

Nonetheless, it is important to consider addressing more social and grassroots topics, while maintaining an overall focus on the Show's core thematic areas. Beyond reflecting on current affairs and enjoying entertainment/humour, viewers are interested in improving their own lives and situations. A majority of survey respondents noted that they would like The XYZ Show to raise the issue of poverty, unemployment, and economic strife and inequality. Content that inspires, teaches, and shares ideas on socio-economic self-improvement would be relevant.

10 years after its launch, The XYZ Show remains as relevant as ever. It continues to play a major role in the wave of efforts that have stemmed from various civil society actors to encourage better political awareness among Kenyans and promote citizen participation, dialogue, and good governance.

The XYZ Show's role is a very special one, first because of the extent of its multi-platform reach, which dwarfs most other civil society initiatives, but also because of its ability, through humor, to effectively and deeply touch its audience. Contrary to many awareness campaigns, The XYZ Show does not talk down to its viewers. Instead, through laughter, it opens up the door for hope and change.