

**Newsroom Practices**

**Assessing the Effects of News Media Competition on Objectivity in Kenya: A**

**Case of Standard Group**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Master of  
Arts Degree in Communication Studies of the School of Journalism and Mass**

**Communication**

**University of Nairobi**

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## DECLARATION

### Declaration by the Candidate

This thesis is my original work attained through research, learning and with the full support of my supervisor Dr. George Morara Nyabuga.

Sign..... Date .....

**Kibisu Martin Mulanda**

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### Declaration by the Supervisor

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University Supervisor.

Sign..... Date .....

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife Catherine Naserian Supeyo, and to my children,  
Nailantei Kadali and Naini Vuyanzi.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Although the accolades for this research will solely be mine, this project would not have been complete without the help of several people. I would like to acknowledge the immense help and guidance of my Supervisor Dr. George Morara Nyabuga during the entire period of this project. It is not lost on me that Dr. Nyabuga offered wise counsel all through the project, correcting and professionally directing the path that the project has taken. He indeed shaped this study and I am forever indebted.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to assess the effects of news media competition on objectivity at the Standard Group. This study was based on three objectives, namely: To assess the effects of newsroom cultures on objectivity; to examine the effects of technology on objectivity; and to determine the effects of competition on newsroom practices. This study adopted in-depth interviews with media experts, namely: News editors, news reporters, producers and correspondents. Data was collected from practising journalists working for the Standard Group. The main focus of these interviews was examining newsroom practices with the specific focus on how objectivity is applied in the news production process. This study used the gatekeeping and framing theories. Data generated from the study was analysed using three themes, including; newsroom cultures, news media technologies and news media competition. Overall, the study reveals that whereas objectivity as a key journalistic tenet is well understood and appreciated by media practitioners, practise remains largely unattainable. This is given by the fact that whereas there is a general understanding of what objectivity means among respondents, they indicate that media practitioners have biases, which largely affect their journalistic practices, and particularly those relating to news collection and production. The study also reveals that news technologies are a double-edged sword; they are both beneficial and obstructive in journalism. In essence, whereas there is a general understanding that there are positive changes brought about by the appropriation and use of technologies, for example efficiency and speed of communication, there are also challenges, for example errors that affect factuality of reports. The research further reveals that these challenges come about by the need by media outlets and practitioners for instantaneity and immediacy, mostly as a consequence of competition and commercialism. Lastly, whereas the study reveals that news media competition has enhanced the quality of news media content and career growth of individual journalists, the counter narrative is that it has also been a source of many errors and distortion of news media reports that have cast the media house in bad light.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>CAK</b>	Communications Authority of Kenya
<b>FTA</b>	Free-To-Air (in reference to Television & Radio)
<b>ICT</b>	Information, Communication and Telecommunications
<b>KANU</b>	Kenya African National Union
<b>KBC</b>	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation
<b>KTN</b>	Kenya Television Network
<b>MCK</b>	Media Council of Kenya
<b>NTV</b>	Nation Television
<b>RMS</b>	Royal Media Services
<b>SJMC</b>	School of Journalism and Mass Communication
<b>TV</b>	Television
<b>UON</b>	University of Nairobi
<b>USA</b>	United States of America

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Overview

There has been a steady emergence of media outlets in Kenya over the years and hence attendant competition for fragmented audience. There have been concerns about the effects of the rising competition on various journalistic tenets (like impartiality, balance, factuality and fairness) on the news production process. Although these tenets are critical, this research is mainly concerned with objectivity, and how competition affects its adherence. Specifically, the research is predicated upon objectivity within newsroom practices.

A newsroom has been defined as a space in a media business where “news is written, produced and transmitted” (Hemmingway, 2008, p.40). In essence, it includes both the space and the human resources required to produce news. It exists primarily to gather, process and disseminate information, otherwise known as news, to a proscribed audience (cf. Hemmingway, 2008). The newsroom has various actors including editors, journalists/reporters, camera operators and photographers. It is the work of journalists to sieve through information on a daily basis and present the same to an audience.

In the course of news production, professional values often underpin the process (cf. Allan, 2010). White (1991 cited in David & Turner, 1995 p.131) argues that the value of news changes “according to its audience, its time, its place, its actors and its competition”.

Irrespective of whether it is print, broadcast or online, all newsrooms operate in a similar manner in terms of process. Palmer (2004, p. 52) identifies six basic newsroom workflow elements, namely: “Researching, planning; gathering; producing;

distributing (output) and archiving”. This forms the body of what newsroom practice is.

Dickinson and Saltzis (2008, p.2), state that “the boundaries between traditional and new ways of communicating are becoming less clear and the relationships between different media are characterized by increasing cooperation, compatibility and connectivity”. This points to convergence as a factor of the ‘new newsroom’. According to Singer, (2004, p.2), convergence refers to “a combination of technologies, products, staff and geography” across the various media platforms of print, broadcast and online. It is these changes that have continually influenced newsroom practices and operations. In many instances, journalists are now, for example, expected to multitask due to the increasing responsibilities and demands to deliver timely news (Dickinson & Saltzis, 2008). These responsibilities and demands have continually exerted pressure on journalistic productions, and affected the ability of newsrooms to sometimes adhere to values like objectivity (cf. Allan, 2010; Geniets, 2013).

## **1.2 The Concept of Objectivity**

Various scholars (for example Cunningham, 2003; Glaser 1984; Streckfuss, 1990) have struggled to find the exact meaning of objectivity, and its application in newsrooms. Streckfuss (1990) points out that journalists and editors tend to equate objectivity with neutrality even though there are differences between the two terminologies. In fact, Brent Cunningham (2003) argues that objectivity means different things to different people. He notes that "ask ten journalists what objectivity means and you'll get ten different answers" (Brent Cunningham, 2003, p.2). Cunningham (2003, p.2) further argues that the term objectivity is viewed from a prism of two common words, namely ‘balance’ and ‘fairness’. Thus objectivity has become “the mantra

chanted by journalists when they wish to signal their privileged status as society's truth tellers" (McNair,1998, p.71). On the other hand, Odhiambo (2002, p.3) argues that objectivity in journalism is an "attitude of mind deemed proper to a commentator" where a reporter or commentator is expected to be "detached, unprejudiced and open to what evidence may reveal".

The concept of objectivity has evolved over time and with that acquired many meanings. Streckfuss (1990, p.973), reckons that in the current use "writers have assumed that objectivity equates neutrality" noting that this misconception arises from many writers not seeking out the original concept. In tracing back the origin of objectivity, it was viewed as an ideology rooted in a positivistic view that forms the workings of journalists (Glasser, 1984). From a positivistic perspective, objectivity is seen as "that which is not affected by one's own assessments" (Wien 2005, p.4), in reference to presentation of facts devoid of one's attitudes and feelings. McNair (2013, p.79) however argues, "the line between fact reportage and opinion commentary is dissolving".

According to scholars like Streckfuss (1990, p. 974), the concept of objectivity did not just come about. The adoption of objectivity as a journalistic norm was based on the realization that humans could not be objective because of inherent weaknesses, like personal biases, opinions and perceptions on given issues or phenomena. Objectivity was therefore meant to safeguard against biases. Accordingly, Glasser (1984, p.4) posits that objectivity "robbed" individual journalists their creativity and imagination. Glasser (1984, p. 4) further argues that the technical nature of its application eroded the passion for the job in America as it striped journalists of their creativity and imagination leading to journalists being "morally disengaged and politically inactive". Despite all the above arguments, objectivity continues to hold a

key place in the practice of journalism, and provides a framework through which the media operate. It is thus generally agreed, across the globe, that objectivity is an important guiding principle in journalism and its practice is not in question.

### **1.2.1 The Media Environment**

McQual (2013, p.16) points out that the practice of journalism has evolved over time and it is about “construction and publication of accounts of contemporary events, persons or circumstances of public significance or interest”. Journalists across the globe operate in diverse and fast changing environments, which to a large extent dictate the framing of information disseminated to audiences. Media outlets are also on the increase across the world, and with it disintegration of audiences.

According to Moggiand Tessier, (2001, p.7), the media landscape in Kenya has changed considerably over the years in tune with the world. Changes in the broadcast industry, for example, started at the advent of political pluralism in 1989. This is as a result of the government’s attempt to create conducive legal operational framework for media, for example the creation of a task force for press laws in 1993 (Moggi&Tessier, 2001, p.8). The growth of media space in Kenya can arguably also be credited to the fight for freedom of speech. The promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 on 10 August 2010 created media freedoms key for growth. Section 34 of the constitution guarantees the freedom and independence of the electronic, print and all other types of media.

According to the Communication Authority (CA) of Kenya Sector Statistics Report Q2 (2016 - 2017, p.31), Kenya now has 66 licensed free-to-air television channels on the digital terrestrial platform, as compared to less than 10 broadcasters in 2010. Consumption of media texts has also changed considerably over the years. There

is arguably a marked increase in the populace in Kenya consuming more of news and current affairs. Various media outlets have taken steps to either increase the number of hours dedicated to news content, or launch dedicated platforms for this service. NTV and Citizen televisions, previously dedicated their news times to the traditional 1pm, 7pm and 9pm timeslots. These channels however have turned most of their daytime space, for example 9am to 2pm, as time for news. The Standard Group on the other hand has started a 24-hour news channel, KTN News. According to the Communication Authority, quarterly report of April to June (2014, p.27), “news, discussions and drama formed a large proportion of local content”.

**Table 1: Percentage of Program Content**

<i>Program Content</i>	<i>Internally (Local) Produced (%)</i>	<i>Third Party Produced (%)</i>	<i>Foreign (%)</i>
<i>Music</i>	22.3	7.5	70.2
<i>Drama/Plays</i>	56.8	13.1	30.1
<i>Movies</i>	4.3	9.4	86.3
<i>News</i>	75.9	3.7	20.4
<i>Documentaries</i>	33.5	24.1	42.4
<i>Discussions</i>	81.2	6.7	12.1

**Source: CA, Operators' Returns**

**Source CA 2017**

*(<http://www.ca.go.ke/images/downloads/STATISTICS/Q4SectorStatisticsReport2014-2013FINAL.pdf>)*

In recent years the Kenyan print sector has been affected by new technological developments, which continue to impart economic challenges to the sector (Tinega, 2013). Two players, the ‘Nation’ and the ‘Standard’, have dominated the print media space in Kenya for years. Whereas the sector’s growth cannot be compared to that of

broadcast, some changes like the advancement in printing presses for the leading media platforms has improved copy to the extent of recruiting more readers. Advancements in digital technologies have also seen availability of copy on online platforms, improving dissemination speed and recruiting of younger audiences not akin to consuming the traditional hard copy.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The media landscape in Kenya has significantly changed in the past 30 years. These changes have impacted the practice of journalism, and particularly newsroom operations and cultures. Until 1989 when Kenya's first independent TV station Kenya Television Network (KTN) was launched, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) remained the sole TV and radio operator. At the time, only 4 major newspapers with a national outlook existed. These were the 'Nation' (owned by the Nation Media Group), The East African Standard (then owned by the Lonrho Group), The People weekly and Kenya Times (a Kenya African National Union (KANU) publication that has since collapsed).

According to the Communications Authority (CA) of Kenya quarterly report for April-June 2017, Kenya now has 66 free-to-air (FTA) television channels and 178 Radio stations. Radio is yet to migrate to the digital broadcasting. The print industry has also seen an increase in publications including The 'Star', The Business Daily and The 'Nairobiian'. These also have editions serving disparate audiences across the country. This is testament to the competition in the media market. Competition has engendered newsroom changes and there is increasing pressure on journalists, which in turn has affected operations and tenets that underpin journalistic practices. One of the most affected tenets, as this study will show, is objectivity, which has suffered as a

consequence of competition. Specifically, this research seeks to examine the effects of newsroom operations and changing nature of journalistic work, on objectivity.

#### **1.4 Main Objective**

To assess the effects of newsroom practices and their effects on objectivity in Kenya.

##### **1.4.1 Specific Objectives**

1. To assess the effects of newsroom cultures on objectivity.
2. To examine the effects of technology on objectivity.
3. To determine the effects of competition on newsroom practices.

##### **1.4.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the effects of newsroom cultures on objectivity?
2. What are the effects of technology on objectivity?
3. What are the effects of competition on newsroom practice?

#### **1.5 Justification and Rationale of the Study**

The media industry, and in particular news media, has undergone many changes over the past three decades. These changes include an increase in the number of players and consequently competition for audiences and revenue. The consequences have in the process affected the practice of journalism, and the attendant quality of media content.

There are few, if any, studies done locally to determine the effects of news media competition on objectivity.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study will be beneficial to media scholars. It will contribute to the body of literature on journalistic practices, and specifically the effects of competition on one of the most important journalistic principles.

The findings of this study will be useful to media stakeholders and policy makers in the country and will inform discourses on news media competition and principles that underpin journalistic practices.

This study will also be beneficial to journalists given the notion that they ought to adhere to professional values, including objectivity. It will also be beneficial to policy makers who may use the findings of this study to hold media to account.

## **1.7 Scope and Limitations**

The study's focus was on how newsroom practices affect objectivity in a competitive news media environment. The study was limited to journalists working for the Standard Group; at the headquarters based along Mombasa road in Nairobi and the organisation's six active Bureaus spread across the country. In total the study involved twenty-three practising journalists with varying job groups, responsibilities and experiences. The study also considered the differentiated platforms within the Standard Group: Print, broadcast and online.

The main limitation of the study was lack of adequate time with some of the respondents because of the demanding nature of their responsibilities. The researcher was, for example, forced to accompany some reporters to the field to be able to carry out interviews.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One offers an introduction, background, statement of the problem, justification and rationale, significance of the study, objectives, research questions and organization of the study. Chapter Two reviews current literature relating to newsroom practices and cultures, and the impact of objectivity on newsroom operations. It also discusses other journalistic values, and offers the theoretical framework used in this work. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology used in the study. This includes a discussion of research design, sampling (size and sampling techniques, and target population), research instruments and their validity and reliability as well as data collection procedures and data analysis. Chapter Four offers data presentation, interpretation and analysis of data. It also covers the discussion of results from the data. Finally, Chapter Five offers a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. It also offers suggestions on other areas for further research on the topic of objectivity.

## **1.9 Definition of terms**

**Objectivity:** A key journalistic tenet practiced across the world. Objectivity holds different meanings to different people. For the purpose of this study it refers to ‘detachment’ and ‘factuality’ in news reportage by journalists.

**Subjectivity:** A writers or journalists own assessment based on one’s personal biases, opinions, feelings, evaluations or speculations.

**Newsroom Practices:** Standard and widely accepted newsroom workflow elements, they include; researching, planning; gathering; producing; distributing (output); archiving.

**News media:** A collective term for broadcast (radio and television), print (newspapers) and new media outlets (internet publications) whose primary role is news production and dissemination.

**News Media Technologies:** New technologies in the field of media that make work easier, efficient and faster.

**News Media Competition:** Competition among media outlets (print, broadcast and online) for audiences for their news products.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Overview**

The changing nature of journalism has been captured in various scholarly works. Journalistic values like factuality, impartiality, balance, fairness, and accuracy have been cited as critical to the practice of journalism. Allan (2010 p. 2) argues “pragmatic objectivity has been outlined to facilitate the incorporation of ethically relevant norms among these alternative ideals as normative parts of a method for acquiring journalistic knowledge”. Despite such arguments, however, there is ambivalence over the import of the values to modern newsroom practices (Allan, 2005; Borden 2013).

Putting these issues into perspective, this chapter critically reviews the literature on newsroom practices. It is particularly concerned with the effects of news media competition on objectivity.

#### **2.1.1 Newsroom Practices and Cultures**

There have been significant changes in modern newsroom practices and cultures (Paquette, 2016; Mabweazara, Mudhai & Whittaker, 2014). The changes are as a consequence of numerous factors including technology (Holmes, Hadwin & Mottershead, 2014; Straubhaar, LaRose, Davenport, 2015), and commercialization and competition (Straubhaar, LaRose, Davenport, 2015). Thus arguments abound that technology has helped journalists to promote their work and engage their audience (Weaver & Willnat, 2012).

Palmer (2008, p. 52) defines news production as “the process of planning, gathering, producing and communicating news content”. This process keeps evolving

over time. This evolution can be classified in terms of operations, technological advancement, and audience demand for information.

Boorstin (2007, p. 256) explains the continued need to be informed by audiences who over time demand for “vividness of the account” and “the spontaneity of what recounted”. This has also given rise to round-the-clock media to try and bridge the gap by constantly supplying information.

In a newsroom set-up information keeps flowing in through various sources, and after deliberation on the agenda of the day in a planning meeting among the team of editors, the assignment editor assigns the same to a team of reporters depending on their strengths. Reporters accompanied by cameramen and /or photographers go out to gather stories and the same stories are fed to the public as they come in, through the various outlets available.

The news production process is thus an intricate process. Palmer (2008, p. 52) identifies six “basic workflow elements” which are shared by journalists across the world. These elements include, “researching, planning, gathering, producing, distributing and archiving”. This forms the main workings of the newsroom and hence newsroom practices.

### **2.1.2 Objectivity and its Impact on Newsroom Practices**

Streckfuss (1990, p.974) argues that, “Objectivity is founded not on a naive idea that humans could be objective, but on a realization that they could not”. The idea of objectivity in journalism has continued to be a contentious issue both in definition and application.

Glasser (1984, p.4) looks at objectivity as an ideology, a set of beliefs enshrined in a “commitment to the supremacy of observable and retrievable facts”. Just like

Streckfuss, Glasser also looks at objectivity from a positivist point of view. He goes ahead to point out key biases that come about as a result of the concept of objectivity. They include the role of the press in democracy as a watchdog, independent thinking and media responsibility. Glasser (1984, p. 4) further argues that the concept of objectivity has negative consequences on the practice of journalism. In his view objective reporting strips journalists off the power of “creativity and imagination”. He looks at objectivity as a ‘technical’ as opposed to intellectual undertaking that has “turned the art of story-telling into the technique of report writing”.

Zapotoczny (2008), a historian who has written extensively on war, reckons that politicians learnt more from watching CNN during the Gulf war as opposed to listening to their own security agencies. Belknap (2002, p. 100) argues that the 24/7 news phenomenon where the “camera never blinks” has had an influence on how “strategic leaders make their decisions and how warfighters direct their commands”. The overriding question here is therefore whether objectivity does really exist, and if subjectivity acts as an impediment in the realization of objectivity?

Garon (1996, p.2) defines subjectivity as “distortion of reality produced in the process of (issuing) knowledge”. Garon further argues that whereas in the case of the Gulf war media may have been a victim of elaborate war propaganda; questions still arise as to the media’s “innocence” in the whole process. He even goes further to suggest that subjectivity may be designed to “attract worldwide audience...a media search for higher ratings and improved positioning”. In the same light, some scholars like Gaber (2010) have argued that objectivity in journalism is dead in the Anglo western countries due to the subjective nature of journalists and editors. For instance, The arguments in breaking down the CNN effect include; personification of the war to be a contest between George W. Bush and Saddam Hussein, control of flow of

information especially by media working at the mercy of the army in terms of accreditation of correspondents in the field, dissemination of raw facts by virtue of live broadcast (unprocessed events) and thus not lending meaning as is supposed to be, censorship and skewed sources of information.

### **2.1.3 News and News Values**

Harrison (2006, p.13) defines news as that which “is judged to be newsworthy by journalists, who exercise their news sense within the constraints of the news organizations within which they operate”. News values are global tenets that guide the practice of journalism and are learnt and passed on through training and socialization. In the midst of all activities of what happens in the newsroom, news values form the foundation of the practice of objectivity. Brighton and Foy (2007, p.1), in their book titled ‘News Values’ argue that news values give journalists and editors a set of rules, “often intangible, informal, almost unconscious elements” within which they eventually work. Allern (2002) asserts that the hasty nature of news production, coupled with the fact that different people have different ideas of what is important or newsworthy, makes news values important. He argues, “certain values, occupational norms and work routines affect the news selection process” (Allern, 2002, p. 139). Harcup and O’Neill (2001), re-examine Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge’s first study on how events become news. The two scholars were interested in finding out how events overseas did or did not become news in the Norwegian press. Their study came up with a list of “values” that is in no way conclusive. Below some of the commonly known and practiced news values as a result:

Frequency refers to a situation where an event that occurs suddenly within the news cycle and fits well within the organization’s description of news is most likely to

be covered. This may be an accident, a murder, or an unprecedented traffic snarl-up. The plane crash that killed Internal Security minister George Saitoti and his deputy Orwa Ojode on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2012 was such an event.

Threshold is the magnitude of an event. For instance, a story on teachers in Kenya is most likely to make it to the news because there are many teachers in the country, or a big corruption scandal in government by the virtue of the fact that it affects the whole populace is also most likely to make news. This is why the ‘Goldenberg’, ‘Angloleasing’ and ‘Eurobond’ scandals in Kenya continue to dominate the news agenda.

Less ambiguous events are likely to get space in media. Complexities in news reportage hog space in an effort to breakdown information for the target audience consumption. The key is to make information easy to grasp.

Stories have to have meaning. Stories have to resonate with the audiences to have a better chance of getting space in media. For example a story on people speaking same language will resonate better with an audience as opposed to those that don’t. Harcup and O’Neill (2001, p. 3), use cultural similarity as a reference to this because “it fits into the news selector’s frame of reference”.

As a result of experience journalists are able to pre-determine or anticipate the outcome of a given event. This points to a journalistic news value referred to as consonance. Harcup and O’Neill (2009, p. 164), refer to this as “pre-image”. The likelihood of such making news is higher as opposed to contradictory events.

Unexpectedness as a news value refers to rare events and relates to the commonly held saying in journalism and attributed to Charles Dana, that “If a dog bites a man, that’s not news. But if a man bites a dog, that is news”.

There is a momentum that is associated with an on-going story. Such a story is likely to get space in media because it is “familiar and easy to interpret” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2009, p. 164). This is referred to as continuity.

Composition is about providing a given balance in news. News should not be looked at as, for example, just politics of the day. It thus means, upon the editor’s discretion, news that may seem of less value will get space in order to offer that balance.

There is a value judgement that refers to elite nations. On the 8 November 2016, for example, the United States of America (USA) went to the polls. In the same month Nicaragua, Bulgaria, Haiti, Moldova and a host of other countries were also holding their elections. The whole world was however glued to the US election, before and after the main event. This is largely as a result of the positioning of the USA in the world.

There is also a value judgement that refers to elite people. The media will have a tendency to give attention to rich, powerful, famous and infamous people. These persons may be drawn from various sectors like politics, show business and business world.

‘Reference to persons’ refers to human interest in journalism. Stories that touch on people create a lot of interest because they have a personal angle and the target audience can relate. During the recent doctors’ strike in Kenya, for example, the stories of those suffering as a result in their quest to get medication and those who died in the process dominated space in media.

News stories related to; death, tragedy, violence, natural disasters and political upheaval (coups, assassinations) find ready space in media. Negativity of ‘bad news’ ranks as a news value because of its interdependence on the other news values. Bad news is likely to be unexpected and of higher threshold.

#### **2.1.4 News Media Competition on Objectivity**

New communications technologies such as mobile, videophones and laptop computers are allowing journalists to gather and disseminate information with ease from many parts of the world. The digitization of the news industry, for example, has led to a compression of time and space in the dissemination of news (Chin, 2000).

A study by Hawkins (2002), of conflict reporting in the world's major news outlets in 2000 shows that the Israel-Palestine conflict was by far the most covered - five times greater than the next most covered conflict. Virgil Hawkins, the researcher who conducted the study, notes: By contrast, conflict in Africa, which has been, in the post-Cold-War era, responsible for up to 90 percent of the world's total war dead, suffered an almost complete media blackout. For instance, coverage of the massive war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which caused in excess of one million deaths in the year 2000, was not covered significantly in media outlets (Virgil, 2002).

With the international news agenda controlled by the world's major media giants, it has become crucial to develop and strengthen media at the local level to maintain diversity of opinion. As media in many developing nations, such as Indonesia, move away from state control towards private enterprise, it is essential for media in Kenya to find their own voice and professional codes. A well-developed media system with professionally trained journalists usually benefits both global and local audiences. It provides a vital link to the outside world during conflict situations. For example, the civilian coup d'état that occurred in Fiji on 19 May 2000 brought worldwide attention to a small web publisher, Fijilive.com, which provided the only communication link out of Suva during the critical first 48 hours of this crisis. The Fijilive publisher, Yashwant Gaunder, a journalist by profession instantly recognized the power of the Internet in maintaining the global communication flow. In an amazing example of

reverse news flow, the world's news media took direct feeds from Fijilive.com to inform international audiences about the events unravelling in Fiji's Parliamentary compounds (Yashwant, 2003). Some of the worst conflicts in the region occurred in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Bougainville in Papua New Guinea between 1987 and 2000. Although the media has largely portrayed these conflicts as inter-ethnic and pro-indigenous in nature, there are other causes, which have found expression in political and armed rebellion. Sensitive questions of land rights, unequal distribution of political power and economic resources, and endemic corruption are at the core of the conflicts. The ensuing breakdown in law and order has had a sustained negative impact on the operation of local media and media practitioners (Robert, 2004).

In a study by Bolytyiene, Raeymaekers and Vartanara (2013), on the changing newsroom cultures in Belgium, it was found out that media convergence and digitalization have greatly altered the journalistic profession. These new developments have changed the job description of journalists and impacted on the newsroom objectivity. For instance, traditional journalists used to focus on one medium but new developments have forced journalists into focusing on several media platforms due to the concept of media convergence.

In another empirical study conducted by Hamza and Mustafaha (2013), on the impact of digital media on Journalists in Malaysia, it was found out that new media technologies have been adopted widely in newsrooms in Malaysia. The study further revealed that Internet had impacted heavily on newsroom cultures. These scholars conducted a survey on 29 major news organizations in Malaysia. The study further revealed that the use of this new media also posed some ethical challenges.

In a case study conducted by Henaku (2016), on news rooms cultures between two radio stations in Ghana namely Radio Joy and Radio Adam, it was found out that

these two stations were following two different set of news culture. The study revealed that Radio Joy had adopted professional ethics in its newsroom culture as compared to radio Adam. The study further revealed that some external factors had contributed to the different news cultures. The study recommended that Radio Adam adopt professional ethics in its newsroom culture.

In another empirical study by Min (2015), on the impact of Internet on newsroom culture on British and Chinese press respectively. It was found out that the two British newspapers namely the Guardian and Daily Mail had incorporated new media into their newsroom cultures and this had enhanced their credibility. On the contrast the study revealed that Chinese newspapers-the China Youth daily and Southern Daily - had failed to adopt new media and this had led shrinking credibility and journalistic integrity.

In another study by Hermida and Thurman (2010), on clash of news cultures in Britain, it was found out that internet has expanded the traditional closed newsroom culture into open newsroom cultures due to the participatory nature of the new technologies. These researchers interviewed several senior newsroom executives.

In summary this section has presented several studies that have been done by scholars on the effects of news media competition on objectivity from the global perspective. Therefore, as far as this study is concerned there is an apparent research gap on studies on the effects of new media competition on objectivity in Kenya. This study seeks to fill this information gap.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The study was guided by two theories namely the gatekeeping theory, and the framing theory.

### **2.4.1 The Gatekeeping Theory**

This study looks at how objectivity is achieved in the newsroom by assessing decisions made by journalists at every stage of news production. These decisions, in an environment where speed is an important factor in disseminating timely news, are not only critical but also a key determinant as to whether information disseminated is objective. The gatekeeping theory is thus an important theoretical framework to determine this.

Shoemaker and Vos (2009, p.1) define gatekeeping as the “process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day”. Gatekeeping theory describes the day-to-day situation in a newsroom setting, which gets a lot of information round-the-clock and thus needs constant sieving to ensure the most important and relevant messages reach the respective targeted audiences. There are thus multiple ‘gatekeepers’ who control various functions along the news production process. Whereas many news events occur each day, a few make it to the day’s news agenda – either to the newspaper, online, radio or television. “Gatekeepers determine what becomes a person’s social reality, a particular reality of the world” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p.3). When an event occurs an individual (the source) has to decide whether to pass the information to another person; maybe a journalist. Many decisions are thereafter made in between the occurrence of the event and eventual transmission that constantly whittle down the information, and continually shaping and reshaping it.

The core of newsroom operations is thus based on decision-making, which is the core principle of the gatekeeping theory, on what is newsworthy. The news editors have widely been known as the ‘gatekeepers’ but this role is, and continues to be played at each stage of news production, from assigning up to and including transmission.

### **2.4.2 The Framing Theory**

This study is also guided by framing theory. News media establishments and/or Journalists, in the line of duty and guided by their respective in-house style or personal preferences, knowingly or unknowingly, propagate meanings inherent within messages disseminated to audiences. It is within these practices that objectivity as a key tenet of journalism is fostered or lost.

Goffman first conceptualized framing theory in 1974, and defined 'framing' as the process in which people interpret, perceive and identify life experiences (Entman, 1993). According to Entman framing theory explains how the media covers an event through framing concept. One of the main assumptions of this theory is that the media has the capacity to create public attention through selecting of salient features of a news story in order to package it into reality (Entman, 1993). This theory further stipulates how media tells people how to think about issues through highlighting of salient features of a new story. Frames', referring to differing perspectives, matter in communication, and have been used to shape opinions and/or influence attitudes and behavior. The main premise of the framing theory is that an issue can be looked at from different perspectives (Chong & Druckman 2007).

In reference to the framing theory then the angle of the picture taken, the font and size of the newspaper article, choice of words among others becomes a significant aspect of news reportage. This may also be part of the in-house style of a particular media outfit.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

As seen above, objectivity is a difficult term to define, and its application in media operations is beset with numerous challenges. The definitional and application ambiguities are a consequence of the different interpretations by media practitioners and newsrooms. Despite the challenges in understanding and practice, the concept of objectivity remains a key tenet in the practice of journalism. A body of widely accepted news values, often informal, intangible and unconscious and passed on through training and socialization, guide objectivity.

This chapter looks at practical examples of how the application of objectivity in the practice of journalism, and specifically news reportage, has come under scrutiny in the newsrooms across the world. It presents a good basis to research objectivity in the context of Kenya

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Overview**

As outlined in chapter one, the media industry in Kenya has seen an increase in the number of players in the marketplace over the years and across all sectors, whether online, print or broadcast media. In broadcast, for example, the digital migration process that began in 2006 and culminated into the eventual analogue ‘switch-off’ in February of 2015 witnessed an entry of many broadcasters (Telecommunications Management Group, 2017). The primary aim of this study was to assess the effects of newsroom practices across industries, and its effect on objectivity as a key tenet of the practice of journalism. In examining this, the study also took into consideration the varied discourses around objectivity versus subjectivity. The study also sought views from media practitioners to give insights into the inner workings of the newsroom. This chapter thus documents the research design and fundamental principles in methodology, sampling and sampling procedures.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This refers to the plan or framework that specifies the methods and procedures used in collecting and analysing information. This study sought to employ use of a descriptive research design. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003, p.160), “a descriptive research determines and reports the way things are. This type of research attempts to describe such things as possible behaviour, attitudes, values, and characteristics” (2003, p.160). Kombo and Tromp (2006), further define descriptive research design as methodology that describes phenomenon or a state of affairs. It may be used to collect data from individuals or

phenomenon with the main purpose of making inferences or deductions of the target population (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). Descriptive research design was used in this study to assess or to describe the effects of news media competition and objectivity with focus on all the news brands of the Standard Group; print, broadcast (TV and Radio) and online.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.10, 11) define qualitative research as that which ‘produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification’. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is built around five “philosophical assumptions” that eventually influence the study. These are: ‘Ontological’ which means the researcher will embrace and report multiple realities from the findings in the field, ‘epistemological’ meaning that the researcher bridges the distance between himself and the participants in the study, ‘axiological’ meaning the presence of values which include the researchers biases, ‘rhetorical’ meaning the personalization of the research and ‘methodological’ meaning the process of research (Creswell, 2007).

In gathering data the study explored in-depth interviewing of select key respondents well versed with the topic of study to give insights into the subject matter. Kvale (1983, p. 174) defines qualitative interviews as those, ‘whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena’. The study employed participatory knowledge claims, narrative design and open ended interviewing so as to gain insights into in the area of study and thereby derive meanings that eventually led to credible conclusions; an extensive investigation into the extent to which objectivity is affected, if at all, by the prevailing situation of newsroom pressure (Creswell, 2007).

By seeking out persons knowledgeable in the topical area, with vast experience on the topic of study, the study hence sought to explore, explain, or describe the phenomena under investigation. These persons included long serving media editors, sub editors, news reporters, news producers, correspondents and other media practitioners involved in newsroom operations.

### **3.3 Target Population**

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (1999), the target population is that to which a researcher wants to generalize the results of the study. The target population in this study refers to media practitioners working at the Standard Group, and specifically those who are involved in news production process across media platforms and genres.

Standard Group has the following brands: the Standard Newspaper, The Nairobiian, KTN (original channel, christened 'Home'), KTN News (a 24 hour news and current affairs channel), Radio Maisha and Standard Online. The Standard Group has 6 active bureaus across the country strategically located in Nyeri, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu, Eldoret and Kakamega, in addition to the head office in Nairobi County. In total there are over 300 journalists working across the media platforms at the Standard Group, at the headquarters and also the groups 6 active bureaus across the country. Therefore, the target population in this study includes bureaus chiefs, news editors, news reporters, news producers and news correspondents working in the aforementioned Standard Group brands.

### 3.4 Sample Size

In coming up with the sample size the researcher considered the organizational structure of the Standard Group to ensure a representative unit that would effectively be used to make generalizations on the findings of the study. The target was to arrive at the most representative sample size for the study. The Standard Group has over 300 journalists working across its platforms and serving in different roles. The sample size of 23 journalists was derived from the total population to participate in the study and was thus arrived at as below:

**Table 2: Print journalists (attached to the Standard Newspaper section) at the Standard Group, job segmentation and the sample chosen from the population.**

<b>Standard newspaper</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Editors / Sub editors	63	2
Reporters / Producers	39	4
Bureau chiefs	6	2

**Table 3: TV Journalists (attached to KTN& KTN News section) at the Standard Group, job segmentation and the sample chosen from the population.**

<b>KTN/KTN NEWS</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Editors / Sub editors	19	2
Reporters / Producers	42	6

**Table 4: Radio Journalists (attached to Radio Maisha) at the Standard Group, job segmentation and the sample chosen from the population.**

<b>Radio Maisha</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Editors / Sub editors	2	1
Reporters / Producers	8	2

**Table 5: Online Journalists at the Standard Group and the sample chosen from the population.**

<b>Online team</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Social media news team	16	2

**Table 6: Total number of correspondents working across all the media platforms at the Standard Group and the sample chosen from the population.**

Correspondents	124	2
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### **3.5 Sampling Method/ Techniques**

There are several sampling techniques that can be used to select a sample from a population. The above target population reflects a stratified formation. Due to the stratified nature, purposeful stratified sampling method was used in this study to select the sample as illustrated in table 1, table 2 and table 3. With purposeful sampling the intention was to select individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clark 2011). Specifically, media respondents who participated in this study were acclaimed media practitioners.

### **3.6 Data Collection Instruments**

This was a qualitative study. The researcher opted for key informant interviews. In collecting data the researcher used his notebook, a recorder where permissible and sought affirmation from respondents where necessary. The recorded work was transcribed for easier interpretation. An interview plan was adopted in this study. According to Creswell (2007), an interview plan is a data collection tool that contains a series of a mixture of closed and open-ended questions (see appendix I). An interview plan has several advantages. It can be used to capture qualitative data and it can also be used to study sensitive topics (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). The researcher in this study used the interview plan to allow the news editors and news reporters to voice their opinions and experiences on the effects of news media competition on objectivity in Kenya.

### **3.7 Data Collection Procedures**

This study adopted in-depth interviews with media experts, namely: News editors, news reporters, producers and correspondents. Data was collected from practising journalists working for the Standard Group.

### **3.8 Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis plan is the process of sorting, cleaning and transforming raw data into useful information (Creswell, 2009). Creswell explains that data analysis can be done through different phases and techniques. In this study, responses from the semi-structured interviews were analysed through the three main themes captured in the research questions. These themes were the effects of newsroom

cultures on objectivity; the effects of technology on objectivity; and the effects of competition on newsroom practice.

### **3.9 Pre-testing Research Instrument**

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), it is important to pre-test the data collection instruments in order to increase the accuracy of information collected. This process also helps the researcher to test if the respondents understand the questions and instructions in the data collection instruments. In this study, one editor from Royal Media Services (Citizen Television) and one news reporter from the Star newspaper (owned by Radio Africa group) were administered with the pre-test data collection instrument. Royal Media Services (RMS) and the Star newspapers were selected for pre-test exercise because the population in the two media outfits have similar characteristics as compared to the target sample.

### **3.10 Reliability and Validity**

Creswell (2007) defines the term validity in research as the consistency of research findings while reliability refers to the credibility of research findings. In this study reliability and validity were enhanced through appropriate sample size selection and the pretesting of the data collection instruments as illustrated in the pre-test section.

Ethical dilemmas and concerns are a key issue in research. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) delve into reflexivity as a concept of qualitative research noting that a reflexive researcher's role goes beyond "recording facts" to active construction and questioning of interpretations (p. 274). In view of this study the researcher is a media practitioner working in the Standard Group newsroom; an insider – insider. To

safeguard from any biases that may have occurred the researcher was accompanied by a research assistant who was key in recording data and thereafter assisted in the process of identifying recurrent themes that guided the findings of the study. Strict adherence to the research methodology outlined above also helped the researcher in limiting any bias that could compromise the study. The findings of this study are thus devoid of influence and a true reflection of the process undertaken.

### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) points out that before a researcher embarks on data collection exercise it is important to ensure that all ethical considerations are followed to the letter. As a result, the researcher carried out all the requisite preparations needed to proceed to the field, and ultimately obtained a duly signed certificate of fieldwork from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) of the University of Nairobi (UON) to conduct the study in question (see appendix II). The researcher also sought and was granted permission by the management of the Standard Group to use the media house as case for the study. This included interviewing the aforementioned respondents who are employees of the group, use of any relevant data that may be of use to the study and quoting any of the officers in the study. In addition all the respondents who participated in this study were assured that they have the right to participate or to decline to be interviewed, and for those who chose to participate that the information they provide would be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

The respondents were also assured that the information they provide would be used for academic purposes only. The researcher obtained a Certificate of Corrections (see appendix III) after making agreed corrections, in consultation with the assigned supervisor. He further generated an Originality Report (see appendix IV) and declared

ownership of the study through the Declaration of Originality Form (see appendix V). All these were aimed at adhering to professionalism and university's code of quality.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the methods used in this study. It details the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling techniques that were used in this study as well as the data collection tools, analysis, validity, reliability and ethical considerations. This study adopted a qualitative research approach. A descriptive research design was adopted and primary data collected from respondents through interviews. The respondents were sampled through purposive stratified sampling method.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Overview**

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. The findings are a result of numerous interviews conducted with key respondents as detailed in Chapter 3. The study generated data from key respondents, experts conversant with both newsroom operations and cultures, and news productions. They gave critical views on the appropriation and application of technologies in the news collection and production processes as well the effects of competition of objectivity. This chapter will proceed as follows: It first presents, interprets and analyses the data. It then offers a discussion of key findings.

#### **4.2 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation**

This section presents data that was obtained from the interview plans to the respondents in order to capture their responses on effects of newsroom culture on objectivity, effects of technology on newsroom objectivity and effects of competition on newsroom practices.

##### **4.2.1 Effects of Newsroom Culture on Objectivity**

###### **4.2.1.1 Newsroom Culture, its Significance and Adaptation in the Newsroom**

Many of the interviewees see newsroom culture through the lens of practice. For instance, respondent one defined newsroom culture as “the regular norms and practices that compromise habits towards maintaining a healthy professional working relationship that fosters optimum productivity in the newsroom” this line of thought

was supported by respondent two and three respectively. Respondent two defined newsroom cultures as “norms and practices, habits and routine of work place that create conditions for excellent or substandard work” while respondent three defined newsroom culture as “cultures, practices and habits a media organization adopts based on the person to person interactions with the intent of achieving excellence while at the same time conforming to professional standards”. Other respondents defined newsroom cultures through the lens of style. Respondent four defined newsroom cultures as “styles used by a particular station in coverage of news and storytelling and also in the unique brand identity”. Therefore, these findings indicates that majority of the respondents defined the term newsroom culture through the lens of practice.

On the significance of newsroom culture to news editors, thematic analysis revealed that many of the respondents who took part in this study were in agreement that newsroom culture acts as a guide to editors. For instance, five respondents were in agreement that newsroom culture acts as a guide to editors in the assignment of roles and responsibilities among reporters and other newsroom staff. In fact respondent two noted “newsroom cultures acts as guide on what to expect from those working in the newsroom”. Other respondents reported that newsroom cultures could assist in the cultivating of discipline or professional cultures in the newsroom. Consequently, respondent eight reported that newsroom culture “is a unifying gel that ensures smooth flow and actualization of roles in the newsroom set up”. This line of thought is further supported by respondent eleven who points out that newsroom culture can be used to shape the news agenda as well as guide reporters.” Therefore, this finding reveals that majority of the respondents were in agreement that newsroom culture acts as a guide to editors.

On the question of how editors adapt newsroom culture in the newsroom, qualitative data outcomes revealed that many of the news editors have adapted newsroom culture through learning and adoption. The interviewee discussions showed that the respondents had adopted newsroom culture through open discussions. For instance, respondent one indicated that he/she learned newsroom culture through open discussions with colleagues. The sixth respondent also pointed out that editors through frequent communication in meetings could adopt newsroom culture. On one hand, respondent two points out that news editors can adapt news cultures by “taking time to study what really is the culture of a particular newsroom”. On the other hand, respondent three revealed that he/she had learned newsroom culture through studying competitors. Therefore, this finding indicates that majority of news editors have adopted newsroom culture through learning and adoption.

#### **4.2.1.2 Objectivity; its Significance and Practice in the Newsroom**

There was a consensus among nineteen respondents that objectivity means reporting news content without personal biases. Respondent eleven was categorical on the importance of objectivity in news dissemination. His views were that “objectivity means ability of journalists to be fair, factual, and non-partisan in news coverage.” Two other respondents further supported this line of thought; respondent twelve pointed out that objectivity “means presenting facts as they are without putting personal biases”, while respondent thirteen summed up the definition of objectivity as “doing balanced stories and evading possible bias when putting up a story”. This finding reveals that majority of the respondents were in agreement that objectivity meant reporting of news without personal biases and further understood clearly the importance of this key journalistic tenet in newsroom operations.

On the issue of significance, qualitative analysis in this study revealed that there was general agreement amongst the respondents that the practice of objectivity enhances credibility of the media outfit. Respondent one also noted that objectivity enhances the culture of credibility amongst journalists and reporters. Respondent ten also acknowledged that objectivity cultivates “trust and credibility in an organization”, the third respondent, who opined that, objectivity enhances “trust and credibility in an organization, also supported this line of thought. He further noted that, “objectivity helps to give non biased stories and news angles”. Respondent four further pointed out that, “objectivity fosters professionalism by making news reporting more scientific.” Other respondents pointed out that, “objectivity guides editors in decision making and at the same time ensure that practitioners stick to the company goals”. This finding reveals that there was an agreement amongst the respondents that objectivity does enhance credibility of the particular media outfit within which it is practiced.

There was agreement amongst eleven respondents that the journalistic tenet of fairness has been used to enhance objectivity in newsroom. Respondent one pointed out that editors can enhance objectivity in the newsroom by “giving a fair representation of opposing sides of a story” or “guiding reporters and ensuring that they produce balanced reports” as pointed out by respondent two. Furthermore, Respondent three explained that editors could promote objectivity by “reviewing stories and ensuring that they do not favor any one side over the other”. Respondent ten further explained that objectivity in the newsroom could be enhanced by “ensuring each side of the story is given equal space on whichever media platform”. Other themes that emerged in this section were training, professionalism and inclusivity. Respondent eight pointed out that editors could practice objectivity in the newsroom by training journalists on objectivity as compared to respondent twelve who explained that objectivity could be

enhanced by “ensuring everyone is bound by the proscribed code of ethics in ensuring transparency, balance, fairness, accuracy and unbiased stories”. This finding therefore implies that the journalistic tenet of fairness is important, and has been used to enhance objectivity in newsroom.

#### **4.2.1.3 Application of the Journalistic Tenets of Fairness and Balance in the Newsroom**

On the question on how editors can achieve the journalistic tenet of fairness in the newsroom, respondent one, three, five, eight and nine explained that fairness can be enhanced by ensuring stories that are being disseminated cover both sides of the divide. Respondent one argued that fairness can be achieved by ensuring “that reports being covered cover both sides of characters involved in reporting” or by “incorporating two sides of the story and giving a right of reply before airing any particular story”, as explained by respondent three. In addition, respondent five argued that fairness could be achieved through “affording every side of the story an equal opportunity to explain or pronounce themselves on the subject matter”. However, respondent seven pointed out that fairness could be enhanced in the newsroom through the adoption of the journalistic code of ethics, his specific views are that “editors can practice objectivity by ensuring that everyone is bound by the code of ethics which ensures that there is transparency, balance, fairness, accuracy and unbiased stories.” Thus, this finding means majority of the respondents were in agreement that ensuring stories that are being disseminated cover both sides of the divide could greatly enhance fairness in news reportage.

On how editors can achieve the journalistic tenet of balance, many of the respondents pointed out that balance could be achieved through the application of the

'right of reply'. This means giving an accused or adversely mentioned party a rebuttal to weigh in, clarify or dispute allegations made. Respondent one explained that balance can be achieved "by providing an equal amount of time and weight for response and rebuttal" or by ensuring that "there is a counter narrative on issues aired or discussed" as explained by respondent two. In addition, respondent nine points out that balance can be achieved through fair "angling of stories...and to ensure that all angles of the story have been told and the right of reply given where necessary." Therefore, this finding implies that majority of the respondents pointed out that the journalistic tenet of balance could be achieved through the application of the right of reply.

#### **4.2.1.4 Application of Social Responsibility, Fairness and Conflict of Interest in the Newsroom**

There was an agreement amongst eight respondents that the social responsibility of the media is to act as public watchdog. Respondent eight explained that "Journalists are obligated to acts as the eyes and ears for the benefit of the society, in informing and educating them on what is going on", this line of thought is further reinforced by respondent three who pointed out that the media acted as the society watch dog by "ethically validating decisions and actions for the benefit of the society". On the contrast, respondents two, five and nine argued that the media social responsibility was the gatekeeping role. Respondent two explained that the role of the media was to "assess what is good and what is not good for publication or broadcast based on the journalistic principles." The fifth respondent, who explained that the media social responsibility was to "improve society or setting the agenda that is for the society", further supported this line of thought. Therefore, this finding implies that there was an

agreement amongst eight respondents that the social responsibility of the media was to act as public watchdog.

Thematic analysis on respondents understanding on the application of fairness reveals two recurring themes: Fair coverage and right of reply. Respondent one explained that fairness in media could be achieved in the newsroom by “presenting divergent views of sources within the story for balance”. This line of thought was further supported by respondents two, three, four, five, and seven who argued that fairness can be achieved by giving all the involved parties in a story a chance to air their views. On the contrast, respondents 10, 11, argued that fairness could be achieved by giving the right to reply to the mentioned parties in a story line. Therefore, this finding implies that majority of the respondents in this study understood the term fairness in relation to fair coverage and right of reply.

Thematic analysis on respondents understanding of application of conflict of interest in the newsroom revealed that there was an agreement across all the respondents that conflict of interest was a major issue in the newsrooms in Kenya. Respondent one and two explained that that conflict of interest was a situation that arises when a media practitioner has an interest in a story which they refer to as “having a stake” or “special interest” in the story as explained by the second respondent. Furthermore, respondent seven further explained that the root cause of conflict of interest in newsroom arises when journalists and sources of news have ‘unprofessional relationship’. On further prodding the respondents explained ‘unprofessional relationship’ to mean a personal relation or that kind of relationship that has individual benefits attached to it. This can be rectified by “avoiding assigning stories to reporters with special interest to special issues” as pointed out by respondent eleven. This finding

indicates that there was an agreement across all the respondents that conflict of interest is a major issue in the newsroom.

On the question of what the causes of conflicts of interest while journalists' report/write news stories are, eleven respondents listed personal relationship with news sources as one of the major causes of conflict of interest; "conflicts came as a result of the kind of relationship a journalist has with the source or a party they are reporting on. It could be family, friendship or business". On the contrast, eight respondents listed corruption as the cause of conflicts of interest while journalist report/ write/news stories. For instance one of the respondents explained that "when journalists are paid to do certain stories they will have a bias on stories". Consequently, media ownership was another theme that was identified as one of the causes of conflict of interest when journalist report/write news stories. In summary, this finding indicates that personal relationship with news sources as one of the major causes of conflict of interest.

#### **4.2.1.5 Processes and Breaches in the Newsroom**

Thematic analysis on internal factors that influence decision-making process in the newsroom revealed three important issues namely, editorial policy, personal bias and media ownership. Seven respondents who participated in this study listed editorial policy as one of the major internal factors that influenced decision-making process in the newsroom as compared to six respondents who listed personal bias. Thus, this finding indicates that editorial policy was one of the major internal factors that influenced decision-making process in the newsroom.

According to the respondents some of the external factors that influence decision-making process in the newsroom that emerged in the thematic analysis were political interest, government legislation and media law. Seven respondents' listed

political influence as the major factor that affected the decision-making process. Four respondents listed government legislation and media law. Therefore, this finding indicates that political interest and government legislation or media law as some of the major external factors that have influenced decision-making in the newsroom.

On the question of how practitioners address ethical breaches, many of the respondents who participated in this study revealed that they address ethical breaches by adhering to the code of conduct due to fear of being summoned or subjected to the disciplinary committees. Respondent one pointed out that media houses can eliminate ethical breaches by “developing a code of conduct to be followed by journalists” or adhering to the company code of conduct as explained by respondent nine. On the contrast, respondent two put forth that media houses could address ethical breaches by “reprimanding culprits and reporting issues to the Media Council of Kenya (MCK)”.

MCK is an independent national institution that was established by the Media Council Act 2013. Its mandate is to ensure adherence to the standards as set out in Article 34 (5) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. This line of thought was further reinforced by respondents six and fifteen who pointed out that practitioners can address ethical breaches by engaging “the Media Council of Kenya and media complains commission” or by “redoing stories that make up for unfairness and imbalance to allow aggrieved parties to be heard and change misconception by making apologies” as pointed out by the sixth respondent. Hence, this finding implies that majority of the respondents who participated in this study revealed that they address ethical breaches by adhering to the code of conduct due to fear of being summoned to the subjected to the disciplinary committee, a situation that could dent the image of the practitioner and media outfit.

Thematic analysis revealed that corruption, weak editorial policy, unprofessionalism, low and poor training were some of the factors that contributed to writing unfair and unbalanced reports. Six respondents listed corruption as one of the factors that contributed to the writing of unbalanced and unfair reports. Four respondents listed editorial policy and three mentioned political leanings. Other factors that were listed as having contributed to the writing of unfair reports were low levels of training and unprofessionalism. Therefore this finding implies that editorial policy, unprofessionalism and poor training were some of the factors that contributed to writing unfair and unbalanced reports.

Thematic analysis on the contribution of the professional code of conduct in reducing conflicts of interest, unfair and unbalanced reporting in the newsroom revealed that the major recurring theme amongst thirteen respondents was the 'guiding' function. For instance, respondent one was of the opinion that the "code of conduct helps newsroom staff understand their spectrum of operations. This ensures that "journalists have a guide on how and what to cover hence making it easy to report". Equally, respondent nine argued that professional code of conduct "directs journalists in judging what is ethical and what is unethical". It also "serves as a guide to what is expected of the journalists", as explained by respondent nine. In the same light, respondent two was of the opinion that the professional code of conduct "helps the reporters to adhere to the accepted standards", this in reference to the Code of Conduct for Journalists in Kenya. This finding therefore points that the major purpose of professional code of conduct was to guide to journalists in reducing conflicts of interests, unfair and unbalanced reporting in newsroom.

Respondents were of the opinion that media houses needs to conduct frequent training of journalists to enable them perform better in their duties in the wake of

protracted news media competition. The training suggested includes on new technologies and editing. It was also the respondents' view that public interest journalism ought to be given more space with one respondent arguing that, "public interest journalism should be elevated in the newsroom".

#### **4.2.2 Effects of Technology on Newsroom Objectivity**

##### **4.2.2.1 Meaning, Significance and Adoption of Technologies in the Newsroom**

On the question of seeking out if the respondents understand the meaning of the term 'news media technologies', fourteen respondents articulated that media technologies refer to the technological developments in the dissemination of news. Respondent one explained that "news media technologies refer to the new way of producing and finally airing media content and it involves things like online newspapers blogs and social media". By the same token respondent twelve explained that news media technologies are "forms of media that are digital or computer based that can be both generative and interactive contrasted to television, radio and print media that most people are familiar with". Equally, respondent thirteen further explained that "news media technologies are evolving platforms mainly digital that helps the average journalist source, process and disseminate news in a faster way". Another respondent further pointed out that:

New media technology refers to emerging developments in media and in the environment within which it operates. The developments could be technological, legal or the way that individuals relate to the media. They affect the access, primary and the way that people consume and interact with news. Today, the new media technologies include but not limited to the Internet as a medium, mobile technology, social media and the worldwide web ((the views of respondent 18)

Equally, respondent five further explained that news media technologies mean “current state of the use of gadgets and means of disseminating information”. Therefore this finding can be summed that news media technologies refer to the emergence of new way of using technology in the newsroom with the aim of ensuring efficiency and efficacy.

Thematic analysis on the significance of new technologies on newsroom operations revealed that these developments have increased efficiency in newsroom as well as disrupted newsrooms operations. For instance respondent one reported that new technologies have changed how news is packaged and distributed. Equally, respondent one explained that the use of new technologies in the newsroom has led to “easy and unlimited access of news in all forms, print, audio, video within a very short of time and one is able to get feedback immediately”. Likewise, “new technologies have fostered speed, confidence and accuracy in news dissemination”, this according to respondent three. In the same token, news media technologies have cultivated a culture of interactivity, specifically, “news media technologies ensure a faster way of telling stories. Content becomes easily accessible and it is easy to interact with the audience just by the click of a button”. On the contrast, respondent six reported that news media technologies are “a double edged sword. As much as they have made communication instant and efficient, a lot of challenges like errors of facts and fake news have emerged putting the credibility of mainstream media at stake”. Equally this line of thought was supported by a respondent, who argued that,

New media has hugely disrupted operations in the newsroom, turning operations on their head. For instance, while many newsrooms would normally work towards a deadline, today, many are taking an online first approach, with news being broken on Twitter, Facebook or myriad of other social media platforms or on mobile with SMS alerts or WhatsApp now in vogue. This means that while people in the past would wait to watch the news at a set

time, they now consume news immediately (the views of respondent 20)

Thus, this finding implies that news media technologies “have basically changed how things are done especially with the introduction of citizen journalism and has left newsrooms scampering to catch up”, as pointed out by respondent ten.

In seeking out how journalists adopt digital media technologies in the newsroom, many of the respondents pointed out that they have learned how to use new technologies in their day-to-day activities. For instance, respondent fifteen pointed out that, “to a large extent journalists learn on the job in embracing modern news production systems to develop and publish content”. Equally, respondent three argued that, “Journalists by their nature are relative faster learners. Many of journalists’ have embraced the use of technology”. Another respondent who argued that further supported this line of thought:

Due to adequate training and ability to take up new technologies, journalists are usually at the forefront of new technology. These means that often they become major influences in terms of usage of new media and then use it to support traditional media. However, different journalist take up new media at different rate and so newsroom contain galaxy of media uptake including early adopter and laggards. (Views of respondent 20)

Equally, respondent eight pointed out that, “journalists are required to keep tabs with new technologies, and innovations and also Information Communication and Technologies (ICTs) that would help them have advantage of media industry”. In the same light, respondent twenty-two argued that journalists could adopt news media technologies “by telling stories through multimedia channels and using various approaches to tell a story”. On the contrast, respondent four reported that they have learned how to use new technologies through training that normally takes place in

schools or newsroom. Thus, this finding implies that majority of the respondents understand and appreciate the role of technologies and have taken it upon themselves to learn how to use them in their day-to-day activities to better output.

#### **4.2.2.2 Technologies and Objectivity in the Newsroom**

Many of the respondents who participated in this study reported that they practice objectivity in the newsroom by being impartial when disseminating news. Respondent one explained that a journalist practices objectivity by “being impartial, giving each side an opportunity to be heard and giving accurate information”. Equally, this line of thought was further supported by respondents two, three, four, five, and six. Respondent two on the other hand points out that, “objectivity in the newsroom is practiced by “enhancing of fairness and accuracy without bias.” Likewise, respondent four pointed out that objectivity could be enhanced by “getting all sides of the story” or “telling the story in truth irrespective of the take of the editors”. On the contrast, respondents nine and twelve pointed out that objectivity in the newsroom can be achieved through research, hence “objectivity and research go hand in hand; research helps in getting the facts right”. Equally, respondent twelve pointed out that objectivity could be achieved through “proper research and relevant interviews”. Therefore, this finding reveals that majority of respondents who participated in this study allude to practicing objectivity in the newsroom by being impartial when disseminating news.

Thematic analysis on the effects of objectivity to journalists revealed that there was consensus amongst sixteen respondents that objectivity in newsroom enhances credibility of journalists and the media outfit for which they work. For instance, respondent twelve explained that objectivity helps in boosting “an individual journalist’s credibility and secures his image as a professional journalist”. On the other

hand objectivity “enhances professionalism and subsequently the reputation of the fourth estate” as explained by respondent eleven. This line of thought was further supported by respondents fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. Respondent fourteen pointed out that, “objectivity promotes credibility, believability and business opportunities from investors”. In the same light, respondent fifteen pointed out that objectivity makes the work of a journalist credible and thus earns them trust and respect”. In the same token, respondent eight points out that objectivity enables journalists to “carry out their work without getting bogged down by the emotive aspects of stories and bringing in their biases”. Equally respondent nine pointed out that objectivity promotes the culture of doing quality stories. Hence, this finding reveals that there was consensus amongst the sixteen respondents that objectivity in the newsroom enhances credibility of journalists and media outfit with which they work for.

### **4.2.3 The Effects of Competition on Newsroom Practice**

#### **4.2.3.1 News Media Competition; Meaning and Manifestation**

Thematic analysis on the responses revealed that there was a consensus amongst fifteen respondents that news media competition refers to the scramble for the audience. For instance, respondent two explained that news media is situation “where media houses scramble for audience and huge market share with the aim of boosting profits” or “the tendency of various media organization wanting to outshine each other in broadcast matters” as explained by respondent four. Equally, respondent six further explains that news media competition is the “constant effort by media houses to bring good ratings which in turn translate to advertisements and profits”. In the same token, respondent seven explains that news media competition is a strategy that “employs all the necessary tools that would outdo competition through audience tractions.”

Therefore, this finding means that news media competition refers to the scramble for the audience.

On the question of how news media competition manifests, thematic analysis revealed that news media competition has manifested itself by “each newsroom wanting to be the first in breaking, stories, showing visibility in many locations as possible”. This in reference to wants to have the most of the audience members consuming ones media products. On the contrast, news media competition has manifested itself “through competition to attract and retain audiences”.

Thematic analysis revealed that sixteen respondents explained that news media competition has enhanced the quality of news media content. For instance, respondent four argued that news media competition is healthy because, “it ensures each newsroom improves their quality and serves the audiences as they expect”. Equally, respondent five argued that news media competition serves “well with the recipients of the content since they receive quality and variety”. In addition two respondents argued that news media competition has impacted positively on their career growth saying that, “it is also healthy for journalists as it helps them benchmark with some of the best in the industry”. Equally, respondent fourteen explained that news media competition is “healthy because it keeps media personnel on toes and always looking for ways to improve their products”. In the same light respondent eighteen explained that news media competition is important because “it improves growth, creativity and widens the scope of news gathering”. Thus, this finding reveals that news media competition had enhanced the quality of news media content.

#### **4.2.3.2 News Media Competition on the Quality**

Quantitative analysis on the impact of news media competition on the quality of information revealed two recurring, but contrasting themes: Compromised quality and improved quality. Nine respondents reported that news media competition had compromised the quality of information. For instance, respondent one explained that, “since media outfits are always in competition they are more inclined to want to scoop each other. Scoop, as used in the practice of journalism, refers to having an exclusive piece of information reported by a particular media outfit. This practice in some instances leads to stories being adopted without counter checking and as a result this leads to audience consuming half-baked information”. Equally, respondent three argues that, “this speed and rush to deliver news fast sometimes means that news is not well researched or back grounded and there is no time thus impacting news negatively”.

This line of thought is further reinforced by respondent four who argues that “due to rush to scoop other media houses at times unverified information can be broadcast and open the gates of libel”. On the contrast, nine respondents reported that news media competition had enhanced the quality of information that is being disseminated by journalists, editors and media houses. For instance respondent five argues that “the higher the competition the impeccable the quality”. Equally respondent six argues, “media houses will get their staff to work hard to come up with relevant unique content and detailed information in a bid to woo large audiences”. Therefore, this finding indicates that practitioners are divided on the exact impact of news media competition on the general practice of journalism. In essence the advantages and disadvantages weigh out each other.

Qualitative analyses on the strategies that have been employed in achieving competitive edge reveal that six respondents have adopted creativity in order to achieve competitive edge. For instance, respondent one pointed out that he has used creativity as a strategy to improve the quality of his outputs. Equally, respondent three further pointed out that, “he has used creativity to think outside the box, to improve quality of content churned out”. In addition, respondent eight pointed out that he/she has achieved competitive edge by “incorporating graphics to explain some of the stories”. On the contrast, respondent five pointed out that he/she has achieved competitive edge by “being thorough in researching stories and giving detailed narratives of the event”.

#### **4.2.3.2 The Place of Social Media in the Newsroom**

Thematic analysis on the impact of social media on the news organization revealed that social media has had a major impact on the way news is gathered. Majority of the respondents revealed that social media had altered the way breaking news is disseminated, “news often breaks on social media,” explains respondents one and five. On the other hand respondent two pointed out that, “what runs on social media can be used as a pointer to a possible story”. On the contrast, respondents three, thirteen and fourteen argued that social media had impacted how news is disseminated in a negative way; “social media has proliferated the avenue for fake news”. Equally, another respondent further explains that, “social media has a negative impact because of its fake news”. In the same light, respondent fourteen was of the view that social media is “endangering mainstream media in that information is shared faster in that by the time its put on broadcast media or even print, the target audience is already know”. Other respondents pointed out that social media had encouraged interactivity; “media houses can use social media platforms to engage with their audience”.

Thematic analysis on social media platforms used by news organization to distribute news revealed that Face book and twitter are the dominant platforms used by the organization due to their interactivity. For instance respondent one explained that “Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, promotes interactivity with the audience and also helps in reaching people in every platforms all the time”. Other social media platforms that emerged in this study are Instagram and WhatsApp. Therefore this finding implies that the dominant social media platforms amongst the respondents are Face book and Twitter.

### **4.3 Discussion of key findings**

#### **4.3.1 Research Objective One: To assess the effects of newsroom cultures on objectivity**

The study revealed that there was a direct linkage between newsroom cultures and objectivity. One of the effects of newsroom culture on objectivity as explained by the respondents was as follows; newsroom culture acts as a guide to journalists, editors and reporters in the journalistic practice in enhancing objectivity during the preparation of news reports. For instance, thematic analysis in this study revealed that majority of the respondents who took part in this study were in agreement that newsroom culture acts as a guide to editors. For instance, five respondents were in agreement that newsroom culture acts as a guide to editors in the assignment of roles and responsibilities. In fact respondent two noted that, “newsroom culture acts as a guide on what to expect from those working in the newsroom”. Other respondents reported that newsroom culture could assist in the cultivation of discipline or professional cultures in the newsroom. Further, respondent eight reported that newsroom culture “is a unifying gel that ensures flow of roles in the news room”. These findings correspond

with Shoemaker and Vos (2009) gatekeeping theory. Shoemaker and Vos (2009, p1) defines gate keeping as the “process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day”. This describes the day-to-day situation in a newsroom setting, which gets a lot of information round-the-clock and thus needs constant sieving to ensure the most important and relevant messages reach the targeted audiences. There are thus multiple ‘gatekeepers’ who control various functions along the news production process. Whereas, many news events occur each day, a few make it to the day’s news agenda – either to the newspaper, online, radio or television.

#### **4.3.2 Research Objective Two: To assess the effects of new technologies on objectivity**

Qualitative analysis on the significance of new technologies on newsroom operations revealed that these developments have increased efficiency in news dissemination. The study also revealed that as much as they have made communication instant and efficient, a lot of challenges like errors of facts and fake news have emerged putting the credibility of mainstream media at stake as explained by some of the respondents. For instance qualitative analysis in this study reveals that there was an agreement amongst the respondents that objectivity enhances credibility. Respondent one noted that objectivity enhances the culture of credibility amongst journalists and reporters. Respondent ten also acknowledged that objectivity cultivates trust and credibility in an organization. These findings are supported by Chin (2000), study which revealed that new communications technologies such as mobile and video phones and laptop computers are allowing journalists to gather and disseminate information with ease from many parts of the world. The digitization of the news

industry, which has led to a compression of time and space, means seeing news images of demonstrations, riots or coups within minutes of these occurring in the streets. These images not only inform global audiences, but may instigate further campaigns of violence at their home countries (Chin, 2000).

#### **4.3.3 Research Objective Three: To examine the effects of technology on objectivity and to determine the effects of competition on newsroom practice**

The study also revealed that news media competition had enhanced the quality of news media content. For instance, thematic analysis revealed that sixteen respondents explained that news media competition had enhanced the quality of news media content. Respondent four argued that news media completion is healthy because “it ensures each newsroom improves their quality and serves the audiences as they expect”. Equally, respondent five argued that news media competition serves well with the recipients of the content, “since they receive quality and variety”. In addition, two respondents argued that news media competition had impacted positively on their career growth “it is also healthy for journalists as it helps them benchmark with some of the best in the industry”.

Equally, respondent fourteen explained that news media competition is “healthy because it keeps media personnel on toes and always looking for ways to improve their products”. In the same light,” respondent 18 explained that news media competition “improves growth, creativity and widens the scope of news gathering.” Thus, these findings reveal that news media competition had enhanced the quality of news media content. These findings correspond with Min (2015), study on the impact of Internet on newsroom culture on British and Chinese press respectively. It was found out that the

two British newspapers namely the Guardian and Daily Mail had incorporated new media into their newsroom cultures and this had enhanced their credibility. On the contrast the study revealed that Chinese newspapers-the China Youth daily and Southern Daily had failed to adopt new media and this had led shrinking credibility and journalistic integrity.

While carrying out this project the majority of respondents defined objectivity as absence of bias in news reporting. Other words that were mentioned include balance and fairness. It is important to note the views of one of the respondents, to the question of how journalists practice objectivity in the newsroom, argues “Journalists will always bring their own personal biases and nuances to their work”. It is for this reason that it is important to look at issues that in one way or the other affect objectivity to be able to reach logical conclusions.

Banfeld (1985), cited in Abdul-Mageedet al. (2013, p. 1) define subjectivity in natural language as referring “aspects of language used to express opinions, feelings, evaluations, and speculations”. This in essence points to matters of sentiment. Hanitzsch et al. (2011) in reference to the challenges of objectivity decries the role of subjectivity especially in regard to separation of facts and opinion. This points to initial challenge posed by Glasser (1984), where he argues that objectivity has robbed journalists off creativity. Glasser further argues that objective reporting, “has turned the art of story-telling into the technique of report writing” (p. 4). This also points to how one being human, with feelings, biases, interests and opinions, can set all that aside to give a ‘balanced’ story. Being in a political season in Kenya and bearing in mind the long held fears and perceptions between the Kikuyu and Luo communities, one would then ask, if you send a reporter from either communities to cover the same political function, will the reportage be objective? It is at moments like this that framing comes

into play. Framing theory, as conceptualized by Goffman in 1974, refers 'framing' as the process in which people interpret perceive, identify life experiences (Entman, 1993). Additionally, media in serving its roles is looked at to serve social responsibility, public interest and being a watchdog in the society. How does media effectively serve these roles while being objective?

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the interpretation, analysis and discussion of the key findings of the research, conducted among practicing journalists at the Standard Group. Data generated from the study was analysed using three themes, including; newsroom cultures, news media technologies and competition.

The major finding for the study is that news media competition has a direct impact on objectivity. Further corruption, weak editorial policy, unprofessionalism and poor training are some of the key factors that lead to the writing of unfair and unbalanced reports by journalists. The study also revealed that news media competition had enhanced the quality of news media content and that technology has had a positive and negative impact on newsroom culture. The study further established that while competition has enhanced news production as the fight for audiences takes a center stage it has also led to errors and mistakes in the fight for audiences due to the desire to break news first by media houses.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

Overall, the study reveals that whereas objectivity as a key journalistic tenet is well understood and appreciated by media practitioners, practise remains largely untenable. For instance, one of the participants pointed out that editors can enhance objectivity in the newsroom by “giving a fair representation of opposing sides of a story” or “guiding reporters and ensuring that they produce balanced reports” as pointed out by another respondent. Furthermore, another respondent explained that editors can promote objectivity by “reviewing stories and ensuring that they do not favor any side”. The above brings into focus the gatekeeping and framing theories that guided this study.

Gatekeeping theory describes the day-to-day situation in a newsroom setting. There is constant inflow of information that needs constant sieving to ensure that the most important and relevant messages reach the respective targeted audiences. Journalists, editors and other officers in the news production chain are thus ‘gatekeepers’ and they thus open the ‘gates’ to what they feel is important and relevant to their audiences at every stage of production. Shoemaker and Vos (2009, p.1) refer to this process as “culling and crafting”. It is through this process that objectivity comes into play. This is given by the fact that whereas there is a general understanding of what objectivity means among respondents, they indicate that media practitioners have biases, which largely affect their journalistic practices, and particularly those relating to news collection and production. Other important aspects here include editorial policy and training, as pointed out by the respondents. It is as a result of the above that some information gets to make it to the mainstream media and some doesn't.

Objectivity also becomes a factor of framing or ‘lenses’ through which individual journalists view issues. Goffmanin defines ‘framing’ as the process, in which people interpret, perceive and identify life experiences (Entman, 1993). This theory further stipulates how media tells people how to think about issues through highlighting of salient features of a new story. In relation to the aforementioned, seven respondents who participated in this study listed editorial policy as one of the major internal factors that influenced decision-making process in the newsroom as compared to six respondents who listed personal bias. Editorial policy may be manifest on such matters as house style, which in turn informs how a picture taken and displayed, the font and size of the newspaper article or choice of words. It is imperative to note that in an ethnically inclined society, no respondent was able to bring out the tension between objectivity and personal preferences.

## **5.2 Conclusions**

### **5.2.1 News Media Competition affects Objectivity**

Whereas the study revealed that news media competition had enhanced the quality of news media content and career growth of individual journalists, the counter narrative is that it is also a source of many errors in reportage. The research further reveals that these challenges come about by the need by media outlets and practitioners for instantaneity and immediacy, mostly as a consequence of competition and commercialism. Nine respondents reported that news media competition had compromised objectivity. For instance, respondent one explained that, “since media are always in competition they are more inclined to want to scoop each other. This practice in some instances leads to stories being adopted without counter checking and as a result this leads to audience consuming half-baked information”. Equally,

respondent three argues that, “this speed and rush to deliver news fast sometimes means that news is not well researched or back grounded and there was no time thus impacting news negatively”. This line of thought is further reinforced by respondent four who argues that “due to rush to scoop other media houses at times unverified information can be broadcast and open the gates of libel”. On the contrast, nine respondents reported that news media competition had enhanced the quality of information that is being disseminated by journalists/editors/media houses. For instance respondent five argued that “the higher the competition the impeccable the quality”. Equally respondent six argues, “media houses will get their staff to work hard to come up with relevant unique content and detailed information in a bid to woo large audiences”. Therefore, these findings indicate that media houses competition has been a mixed blessing as explained above.

### **5.2.2 Corruption, editorial policy and training linkage**

The study reveals that corruption; weak editorial policy, unprofessionalism and poor training are some of the factors that contribute to writing of unfair and unbalanced reports. As a country transitioning to democracy and having challenges regarding governance, corruption remains a major problem and permeates all sectors of the state, media included. It is therefore not surprising that a section of journalists are involved in corrupt practices meant to influence news coverage. Moreover, the lack of enforcement in regards to the rule of law makes it difficult for journalists to work independently and they remain vulnerable to intimidation, coercion and threats. Their independence is thus compromised at times. In addition the culture of employing correspondents on a retainer basis is likely to negatively impact professionalism. This

is made worse by lack of a standardized training for journalists emerging especially from commercial colleges.

### **5.2.3 Technology is a Double-edged Sword**

The study also reveals that news technologies are a double-edged sword; they are both beneficial and obstructive in journalism. In essence, whereas there is a general understanding that there are positive changes brought about by the appropriation and use of technologies, for example efficiency and speed of communication, there are also challenges, for example errors that affect factuality of reports. The emergence of these errors of facts and fake news have put the credibility of mainstream media at stake. For instance, one of the respondents explained that, stories are being adopted without counter checking and as a result this leads to audience consuming half baked information”. Equally, another respondent argues that, “this speed and rush to deliver news fast sometimes means that news is not well researched or back grounded and there was no time thus impacting news negatively”. This line of thought is further reinforced by another respondent who argues that “due to rush to scoop other media houses at times unverified information can be broadcasted and open the gates of libel”.

## **5.3 Recommendations**

The recommendations below are divided into media operational, policy and further research.

### **1. Media Operational recommendations**

The Standard Group is the oldest media outfit in Kenya. It is also one of the leading media groups in Kenya and the region. Based on the findings of this study, and bearing in mind these findings are representative, my recommendations to the management of

local media houses would be as follows: Clearly define and document the newsroom culture – it could be specific to the various units within the media houses i.e. newspaper, television, radio or online – this in order to better the working environment. It would also be important to take matters of convergence into consideration noting that in the current newsroom set-up there is concerted effort to share resources. Newsroom culture, according to study, will enable/allow/foster unity and togetherness in the organization, and by documenting, used to induct new employees joining the group. The study, as canvassed by the respondents, has shown that newsroom culture is a tool for discipline and a guide.

On technology, there is need for the organizations to continuously adopt use of new media technologies, across the media platforms, to boost the organization's competitive edge in the market place. Apart from continued acquisition, investment and use, there should be structured training mechanisms that bring all players on board. This will help enhance efficiencies, quality and lead to accountability. In so doing, the organization should also ensure robust measures are put in place to deal with the negative effects of technologies that include errors and fake news. This is of utmost importance to avoid the erosion of the organization's credibility.

On news media competition, the media houses should encourage their workforce to embrace competition, but also work towards getting to the 'top' by adequately and efficiently using its resources to its advantage.

## **2. To Journalists/Producers/Editors**

To the journalists, there is need to know what the newsroom culture within the various outfits is, embrace it and work towards enriching it. This is with a view to fostering togetherness and using it as a guide in the day-to-day work. It is also imperative that individual journalists take interest, and adopt use of technologies in

their day-to-day work, in order to better themselves in the market place. Use of technologies however comes with the need to be extra careful and prudent in ensuring proper usage. A wrong report quickly posted/broadcast because of a technology that can beat competition could be detrimental to one's own credibility.

### **3. Areas for Further Research**

During the course of this research, some research gaps were identified. Future research should focus on the effects of news media competition on objectivity in public broadcasters or comparative study on the effects of news media competition on objectivity between private and public media.

In addition, reception studies should be conducted to determine the effects of lack of objectivity on audiences, and their trust on media content.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix I: Interview Plan**

**Section A**

**What are the effects of newsroom cultures on objectivity?**

1. What do you understand by the term newsroom culture?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. What is the significance of newsroom culture to news editors?

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.....  
.....

3. How do news editors adapt newsroom culture in the newsroom?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. What does the term objectivity mean to you?

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.....  
.....

5. What is the significance of objectivity to news editors?

.....  
.....  
.....

6. How do news editors practice objectivity in the newsroom?

.....  
.....  
.....

7. How can editors achieve the following journalistic tenets in the newsroom?

(Fairness, balance)

.....  
.....  
.....

8. How would you explain the application of the below in a newsroom?

Social responsibility

.....  
.....  
.....

Fairness

.....  
.....  
.....

Conflicts of interest

.....  
.....  
.....

9. What are the causes of conflicts of interest while journalists' report/write/news stories?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. What do you think are the main internal and external factors on journalists that influence decision-making process in the newsroom?

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.....  
.....

11. How do the practitioners address ethical breaches?

.....  
.....  
.....

12. What are the factors that lead journalists to write unfair and unbalanced reports?

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.....  
.....

13. What is the contribution of professional codes of conduct in reducing conflicts of interest, unfair and unbalanced report in the newsroom?

.....  
.....  
.....

14. If you have any more idea, please mention?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Section B**

**What are the effects of technology on newsroom objectivity?**

1. What does the term new media technologies mean to you?

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.....

2. What is the significance of new technologies on newsroom operations?

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.....  
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3. How do journalists adapt digital technologies in the newsroom?

.....  
.....  
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4. What are the effects of digital technologies in the newsroom?

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.....  
.....

5. How do journalists practice objectivity in the newsroom?

.....  
.....  
.....

6. What is the effect of objectivity to journalists??

.....  
.....  
.....

7. If you have any more idea, please mention?

.....  
.....  
.....

**Section C**

**To determine the effects of competition on newsroom practice**

1. What do you understand by the term news media competition and how does it manifest locally?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Do you think news media competition is healthy? Why?

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Does news media competition in any way impact on the quality of information you give to the public? If yes how?

.....  
.....  
.....

4. What are some of the strategies you employ in your day to day work activities to achieve and maintain a competitive edge?

.....  
.....  
.....

5. What is the impact of social media on newsgathering in your organization?

.....  
.....  
.....

6. Which social media platforms does your news media organization use to distribute news and why?

.....  
.....  
.....

7. If you have any more idea, please mention?

.....  
.....  
.....

*Thank you for your time and cooperation*

## Appendix II: Certificate of Field Work



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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION**

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This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 26/5/2017 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: K50/82470/2015

Name: KIBISU MARTIN LWLANDA

Title: ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF NEWS MEDIA

COMPETITION ON OBJECTIVITY IN KENYA: A CASE OF STANDARD GROUP

DR GEORGE NYARUBA  
SUPERVISOR

George Nyaruba  
SIGNATURE

26/7/2017  
DATE

Dr Samuel Siringi  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Siringi  
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26/7/2017  
DATE

Dr. Neeti Neeti  
DIRECTOR

Neeti  
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24.10.2017  
DATE

## Appendix IV: Originality Report

### Turnitin Originality Report

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**REF: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS**

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on \_\_\_\_\_ in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project/thesis can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: K50/82470/2015

Name: MARTIN LWANDA KIBISU

Title: NEWSROOM PRACTICES: ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF NEWS

MEDIA COMPETITION ON OBJECTIVITY IN KENYA: A CASE OF STANDARD GROUP

DR GEORGE NYABUGA  
SUPERVISOR

George Nyabuga 14/11/2017  
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Siringi 06/12/2017  
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Dr. Ndehi Ndehi  
DIRECTOR

M 05 DEC 2017  
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