

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS REPORTING TOOLS: CHANGES & CHALLENGES
FACING JOURNALISTS AND NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA**

By

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A Project submitted to the School of Journalism and Mass Communication in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Master of Arts Degree in
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DECLARATION

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution.

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Date:

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

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Date

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Dedication

To my husband Wanyonyi for keenly following my research and offering great insight every step of the way. To my parents for their financial support and belief in education.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the invaluable guidance and insight provided by Dr. Sam Kamau my supervisor. I am grateful for his availability and timely feedback.

I thank my interviewees for agreeing to contribute to my study despite their busy schedules. I am also grateful to Dr. Hezron Mogambi, Chris Kituto and Mutua Mbithi of SOJMC.

Finally, I wish to thank God for ensuring the completion of my studies.

Abstract

This study sought to investigate how journalists and news organizations were responding to the changes and challenges brought about by social media. The study employed a qualitative approach and used the descriptive research design. The study obtained qualitative data through in-depth interviews. The study drew a sample of journalists from five top news organizations in Kenya. The data was analyzed thematically.

The study shows that social media have become everyday tools among journalists, with the two main platforms being Facebook and Twitter. Journalists use social media for a variety of tasks such as following local and international news organizations, looking out for breaking news and following developing stories. The study shows that social media have brought about significant changes to the practice of journalism. The concept of breaking news was cited as the biggest change that journalists and news organizations have had to grapple with.

The study shows that of the five news organizations sampled; only two had a social media policy. The study also shows that social media are going to be very commercial than they are now; they will be massive tools for corporate advertising and top revenue earners for news organizations.

Contents

DECLARATION.....	i
Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 How the Media Landscape Has Changed Over the Years	1
1.2 The Rise of Social Media	3
1.3 Statement of the Problem	5
1.4 General Objective of the Study	6
1.5 Specific Objectives of the Study	6
1.6 Scope of the Study.....	6
1.7 Justification of the Study.....	7
1.8 Limitations of the Study	7
CHAPTER TWO.....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.0 Introduction	8
2.1 The Role of Journalism	8
2.2 When Did Social Media Become A Big Deal?	9
2.3 The Rise of Citizen Journalism	10
2.3.1 Interpretations of Citizen Journalism.....	11
2.3.2 Impact of Citizen Journalism	12

2.4 Social Media and Journalism	12
2.5 Social Media from an Audience Perspective	14
2.5.1 Facebook	15
2.5.2 Twitter	17
2.6 Blogging	21
2.7 Social Media as Reporting Tools	24
2.7.1 Social Media Use	25
2.7.2 Benefits and Challenges	29
2.7.3 Approaches to Social Media	30
2.7.4 Journalists' Organisations	30
2.8 Key Takeaways about Social Media and News	31
2.9 Theoretical Framework	33
2.9.1 Social Exchange Theory	33
2.9.2 Technological Determinism Theory	35
2.10 Summary of Literature Review and Study Gap	37
CHAPTER THREE	38
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	38
3.0 Introduction	38
3.1 Research Design	38
3.2 Area of Study	38
3.3 Target Population	38
3.4 Sampling Technique	39
3.5 Data Collection Methods	39
3.6 Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments	39
3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation	39

3.8 Ethical Considerations.....	40
3.9 Limitations	40
CHAPTER 5	56
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	56
5.1 Introduction	56
5.2 Summary of the Study	56
5.3 Summary of Findings	56
5.3 Conclusion.....	58
5.4 Recommendations of the Study.....	59
5.5 Suggestions for Further Research	59
References	61
Appendices	67
A. Request for Participation in a Focus Group Discussion.....	67
B. In-depth Interview Questions	69

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of social media and journalism, statement of the problem, general and specific objectives, justification of the study, scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 How the Media Landscape Has Changed Over the Years

The media landscape is constantly changing with technology and its applications evolving every so often. Everyone involved in the production of creative content – journalists, photographers, writers and musicians are forced to keep re-inventing their practice. The structure of the newsroom and the news industry is also undergoing a fundamental transformation. There is also a re-alignment of the relationships between and among news organizations, journalists and their many publics including audiences, sources, competitors, advertisers and governments.

People's access to information has shifted from relative scarcity to oversupply. Billions of people whose access a generation ago to daily information was a few locally printed newspapers, two or three television channels and a couple of radio stations, can now access virtually all of the world's news and information instantly at home, office, or wherever they are. Digital technologies have fundamentally altered the nature and function of media in our society, reinventing age-old practices of public communication and at times circumventing

traditional media and challenging its privileged role as gatekeepers of news and entertainment (Kaul, 2012)

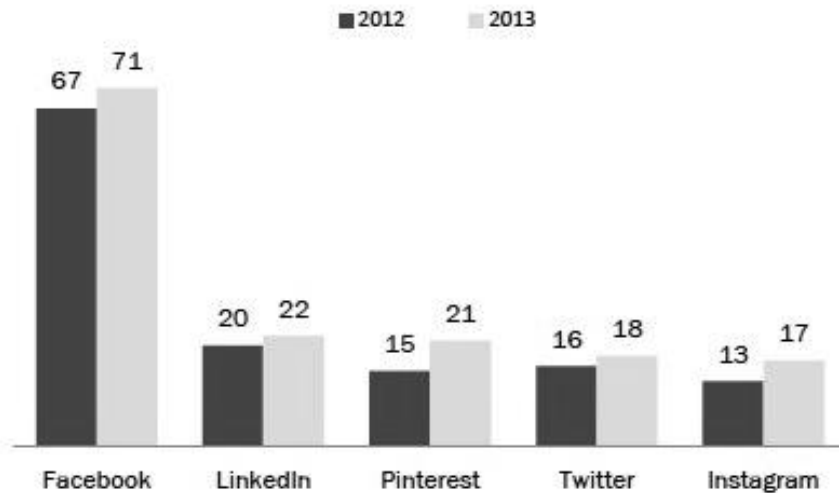
People are also crafting their own forms of media and creating their own content without waiting for traditional institutions (record labels, publishers, film studios) to sanction it. Tools like iMovie, Final Cut Pro, Garage Band, Cubase and PhotoShop have democratised creativity – now anyone can make films, art and music from their bedrooms. New social networks and content aggregators have sprung up to host this generation's creative output.

Do these developments mean that journalism's role and values are changing? Claire Wardle, Director of News Services for Storyful, Ireland, says that news values are staying the same but there has to be recognition that audiences are looking at the same raw content that journalists survey. Audiences can compare what's happening in the social web and what's happening on the BBC in real time and when there's a discrepancy, it might look like censorship to them. Particularly on high profile stories, this means that there is no room to hide things anymore.

1.2 The Rise of Social Media

Social media sites, 2012-2013

% of online adults who use the following social media websites, by year



Pew Research Center's Internet Project Tracking Surveys, 2012-2013. 2013 data collected August 07 -September 16, 2013. N=1,445 internet users ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. The margin of error for results based on all internet users is +/- 2.9 percentage points.

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Figure 1 is a depiction of social media growth

In 2010 a national survey conducted by Cision and Don Bates of The George Washington University's Master's Degree Program in Strategic Public Relations, found that an overwhelming majority of reporters and editors now depend on social media sources when researching their stories. Among the journalists surveyed, 89% said they turn to blogs for story research, 65% to social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and 52% to micro blogging services such as Twitter. These findings indicate that while the role of a news journalist to gather and disseminate news has not changed, social media has not only added to the tools available to news journalists but has increased the number and range of sources available.

The uptake of social media in news organisations is growing and today journalists are “romancing new communities by blogging and posting updates and stories on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook,” (Emmett, 2008). The Arab Spring and the Egyptian revolution are two classic examples of how the multiplicity of information through social media was able to bring about social and political change. What makes social media of particular interest to journalism is how they have become influential as communication and news-breaking tools. The role of a traditional news organisation in a breaking story is changing significantly. In June 2009, the U.S. State Department asked Twitter to delay scheduled maintenance on the service because protestors angered by the results of Iran’s disputed presidential election were using it.

While social media can be perceived as a threat to journalists because they can be used by participatory journalists to ‘scoop’ the media on developing news stories; they provide an opportunity to enhance news reporting – not through interviewing those involved (as remains one tool within traditional news reporting practice) but through sharing the lived experiences of those who are on the ground via the social media messages they produce themselves.

Social media are not going to crowd out traditional journalism or destroy its rules for accuracy and fairness. However, they present both a challenge and an opportunity for news organizations and trained journalists.

Picard (2009:11) reiterates this point and adds that with social media, journalists can get information, ideas and feedback from their audiences. Through constant interaction with users, journalists develop a different type of relationship than the

“arms-length” connection created by traditional mass communication. Used correctly, social media connects journalists and reporters to people and information.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The last few years have seen social media sweep through newsrooms given their convenience, utility and immediacy. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is reported to have 23 journalists working in a User Generated Centre (UGC) to process information, photos and text coming in from the general public. Cable News Network (CNN) also has a similar platform known as iReport where stories, photos, texts and videos are uploaded by the audience.

Social media have become an indispensable part of the practice of journalism in the following ways. There is now increased access and faster movement of information compared to delivery through traditional channels i.e. newspapers, radio & TV. Social media have brought about a multi-directional flow of information which has contributed to the growth of citizen journalism. Feedback is one of the biggest elements that social media have enhanced by creating a high level of interaction between and among audiences and journalists.

Besides playing a complimentary role to the practice of journalism, social media have on the other hand posed challenging questions to journalists and news organizations. For instance, is a journalist allowed to have a personal blog independent from the news organization he/she represents? What is the line between personal opinion and objective reporting for a journalist? How do journalists and news organizations address the element of ‘breaking news’ with regards to social media? What happens when a journalist leaves an organization? Do they take their

social media followers with them? Do they change their social media accounts and to what extent does this affect the organization? When does the personal brand start to rival or even outshine the media brand? Can social media be regulated?

These changes and dilemmas therefore provide a platform for research to further understand how social media influence the way journalists receive, gather and distribute news and in turn how news organizations are coping.

1.4 General Objective of the Study

This study seeks to investigate how journalists and news organizations are responding to the changes and challenges brought about by social media.

1.5 Specific Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify various uses of social media among journalists
- ii. To identify changes and challenges posed by social media to journalists and news organizations
- iii. To verify whether news organizations have enacted a social media policy
- iv. To determine the future of journalism practice in light of social media

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will involve a cross-section of journalists working in Kenyan top news organizations namely; Nation Media Group, Royal Media, Mediamax Network, Standard Group and Capital FM.

1.7 Justification of the Study

This study is of great social and academic significance as it deals with a current phenomenon that is shaping our lives dynamically, more so as citizens of a democratic society. The Westgate Mall attack shows how social media networks played an active role in shaping media coverage in the immediate aftermath.

This project also brings to the fore the need for training institutions to adopt curriculum that prepares communication students to work and live in the social media environment.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Most studies exploring the impact of social media on journalism have been carried out in other countries. This study seeks to build on the limited studies that have been carried out in Kenya around the subject.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines available literature and studies carried out in light of their relevance to this study. It is important to note that at the time of this research, not many books on social media were available. Literature examined was mainly from journals, reviews, theses, conferences, online independent features and features from international news organizations.

The Oxford Dictionary defines social media as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

2.1 The Growth of the internet as the ‘Fifth Estate’

Journalism exists to inform, educate and entertain the society. Journalism is also referred to as the fourth estate meant to provide checks and balances for the three arms of government i.e. executive, legislature and the judiciary.

Research has argued that the Internet provides a platform through which networked individuals can form a “Fifth Estate” (Dutton, 2009). Users can source their own information, independent of any single institution, using the capabilities provided by search and social media. Also, users can create content in many forms – like blogs, email, tweets and comments on websites – that provide even greater independence from other institutions and offer a mechanism whereby public opinion can be directly expressed. This content can bypass or be amplified by the traditional mass media of the Fourth Estate, but in doing so it can fulfil many of the same functions of holding

up the activities of government, business and other institutions to the light of a networked public.

Thus, the Fifth Estate is also a potentially potent political force, but without the centralized institutional foundations of the Fourth Estate. It is composed of the distributed activities of many individuals acting largely on their own in a more decentralized, networked fashion.

Whether the rise of a Fifth Estate reinforces or undermines the Fourth is a subject of further discussion.

2.2 Social Media Have Overtaken Any Other Form of Communication in the History of the World

Facebook was created because a Harvard undergraduate student wanted to connect with his fellow students. Twitter came from a brainstorming session by its founder Evan Williams. Neither of the founders may have had an idea just how revolutionary their inventions would become a couple of years later.

Dr. Anthony Curtis of the Mass Communication Department of University of North Carolina at Pembroke (2013) compiled the following statistics proving that in deed the internet and social media have overtaken any other form of communication in the history of the world:

Facebook users total climbed to 1.11 billion. Twitter had 500 million registered users, with more than 200 million active. Pinterest had 48.7 million users. WordPress hosted 74 million blogs. Yahoo purchased Tumblr blogging-social media network, with 170 million users and 100 million blogs. YouTube topped one billion monthly

users with 4 billion views per day and launched paid channels to provide content creators with a means of earning revenue. Apple's customers have downloaded over 50 billion apps and the company again improved iTunes, even as iPads were revolutionizing social games. Flickr had 87 million users and stored 8 billion photos, while Instagram had 100 million users storing 4 billion photos. LinkedIn had 225 million users, while MySpace had 25 million users. Dropbox had more than 100 million users with 1 billion files uploaded daily. Google+ had 343 million users. Reddit had 69.9 million monthly users, with 4.8 billion monthly page views.

Privacy concerns continued over public sharing of personal information on social networks. An Australian survey found 34 percent of social network users logged on at work, 13 percent at school, and 18 percent in the car, while 44 percent used social networks in bed, 7 percent in the bathroom, and 6 percent in the toilet. Astronauts aboard the International Space Station regularly tweeted live from space to a global audience

2.3 The Rise of Citizen Journalism

The statistics above indicate that the widespread use of the internet and social media in particular has changed the traditional communication paradigm. The idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the Internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others (Mark, 2006).

Another concept behind citizen journalism is that mainstream media reporters and producers are not the exclusive center of knowledge on a subject — the audience know more collectively than the reporter alone.

2.3.1 Interpretations of Citizen Journalism

Professional journalism is defined by Kaufhold et al. (2010) as news content produced by paid, trained and supervised journalists delivered via media outlets, including newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet, who work within established editorial norms.

Citizen journalism is defined by a number of attributes that make it distinct from professional journalism, including unpaid work, absence of professional training, often unedited publication of content and distinct story selection and news judgment (Lasica, 2003).

In the seminal report *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*, citizen journalism is described as “a citizen or citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information.”

There is controversy however over the term citizen journalism because many professional journalists believe that only a trained journalist can understand the rigors and ethics involved in reporting news. Conversely, there are many trained journalists who practice what might be considered citizen journalism by writing their own blogs or commentary online outside of the traditional journalism hierarchy.

2.3.2 Impact of Citizen Journalism

Firstly, one often mentioned advantage of citizen journalism is the diversity of voices and fresh perspectives it engenders in comparison to the mainstream media (Goh, 2007):

Our current media ecosystem is dominated by a monoculture... the monoculture of corporate media organizations with reporting done by people coming out of the journalism schools across the country, belonging to the same professional journalism societies, and covering the news very much *the same way as everyone else*. Citizen journalism is different. (Aldon Hynes, interview by author, March 2007)

Another advantage brought about by citizen journalism is the ability to uncover stories or events that have been intentionally or otherwise ignored by mainstream media. With such a multi-directional flow of information, news organizations have been forced to adapt by among other ways, getting many reporters off the pay roll and instead paying “citizen journalists” who deliver newsworthy stories. Journalists have also been forced to ‘think outside the box’ in terms of reporting styles.

Discussion still abounds on the challenges facing citizen journalism such as professionalism, credibility and accuracy.

2.4 Social Media and Journalism

The prologue of *Journalism and Social Media. Finding a Good Fit* published by Nieman Reports (2009) sets the stage for the discussion on social media and journalism with the following sentiments. There are times when technological change catches up with an idea. Now is such a moment, as social media transform how people receive and share news and information. Just a few years back, the notion of journalism being a conversation, not a lecture, wasn’t embraced widely in

an industry content to transmit what reporters learned to audiences expected to consume it. Comfort with that notion grew as online comments and live chats assumed a role that Letters to the Editor once held on their own, albeit with greater anonymity and often less civility.

Then, from the “audience” spilled forth blogs and photos, videos and tweets. Soon, the words “citizen” and “journalist” were joined in a marriage brokered by technology and nurtured by convenience as news organizations shed staff yet still needed to produce “content.” With talking and sharing so much a part of the Web’s ethos, it’s the job of journalists to adapt. This means using these social media tools in ways that add value to what they do. In some newsrooms, it’s a ‘try-everything-see-what-works’ approach. In others, there’s a more deliberate strategy: Specific tools are employed to reach different goals. With each method, the most effective schooling usually comes from outside the newsroom.

At the opening session on Social Media Best Practices of the 2011 Journalism Interactive Conference, Liz Heron, social media editor of the *New York Times*, described the use of social media as employing “traditional skills with new tools” (Heron, 2011). She explored how social media is changing the news industry: “Part of social media is lifting the curtain on our profession which is not fascinating to everyone, but some people like to see how the sausage is made and it makes us more human and they can see how much work goes into say – getting into Libya, whereas they might have railed the *New York Times* for not covering it early enough. Now, we have a reporter who’s Tweeting the whole time, the whole the process and what it takes to get into Libya and that’s a powerful idea” (Heron, 2011).

Geneva Overholser in her article published in the Nieman Reports Digital Newsbook, argues that if our focus on social media is primarily about how to use them as “tools” for journalism, we risk getting it backward. Social media are not so much mere tools as they are the ocean we’re going to be swimming in—at least until the next chapter of the digital revolution comes along. What needs our attention is how we’re going to play roles that bring journalistic values into this vast social media territory.

The opening remarks from Nieman Reports are echoed by the Social Media Guidebook (2013). Social media doesn’t stop when you go to sleep. Not only is it always on, but it is growing in size and its voice is getting louder. This real-time flow of information, photos and video from all over the world funnelling through social networks cannot be ignored. For journalists, the balance of using social media for newsgathering, reporting, verifying – with the ethical issues that go with it – remains a challenge that continues to be tried and tested as older standards evolve to meet the demands of new technologies. Social media’s immediacy, ease of use, low barrier to entry and global footprint have made information, news, content and sentiment, travel farther and faster than ever before.

2.5 Social Media from an Audience Perspective

According to Picard (2009), social media tools provide an easy, affordable way for members of the public to take part in discussions with larger groups of people and draw attention to issues and topics that traditional news media might have

overlooked. Social media tools offer users the opportunity to express themselves and to connect with persons of like mind or interests.

This section examines the following social media networks: Facebook, Twitter and blogs in relation to this study.

2.5.1 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking service launched in February 2004, owned and operated by Facebook. It was founded by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates and fellow Harvard University students Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. By the end of 2013, Facebook boasted 1.23 billion monthly active users worldwide, adding 170 million in just one year. According to Facebook 757 million users log on to Facebook daily as of 31 December 2013.

The Role of News on Facebook

A number of studies have been conducted on the role of news across social networks. One similarity that cuts across all the research is that there is a dramatic increase of news uptake via social media compared to traditional media. Most studies have unanimously identified Facebook and Twitter as the two leading platforms for production and dissemination of news. The contention however, seems to lie in the percentages (especially between Facebook and Twitter) accorded to various platforms in terms of how audiences interact with news.

A recent study conducted in 2013 by Pew Research Center in collaboration with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation indicates that on Facebook, news is a common but incidental experience.

Although Facebook has grown beyond its beginnings as a way to connect people with friends and family, those connections remain the primary reason people go to Facebook. For 68% of Facebook users, seeing what friends and family are up to is a major reason they go to the site. One respondent summed it up with, “News on Facebook is just something that happens.”

Facebook Seen as a Supplemental News Source

Percent of Facebook News Consumers Who Say...

Facebook is...	%
The most important way I get news	4
An important way I get news, but not the most important	39
Not a very important way I get news	57

Which better describes why you get news on Facebook?	
I think of Facebook as a useful way get news	22
I mostly just get news on Facebook because I see it when I'm there for other reasons	78

The news on Facebook is...	
Mostly news I see only on Facebook	25
Mostly news I also see in other places	75

Based on Facebook News Consumers N=1,429
 Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.
 "Don't know/refused" responses not shown.

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Figure 2: Facebook News Consumers

Nonetheless, there is a small portion of Facebook news consumers for whom the social media site plays a large role in their news diet. One respondent who is among the 4% who say Facebook is their most important source of news writes that the

platform provides “a wider range of news than from any single news source, mostly from links or shares posted by other people.”

Facebook also tends to be of greater value in informing those who do not typically follow news all or most of the time. While 38% of Facebook news consumers who say they follow the news all or most of the time say Facebook is an important way they get news, the figure rises to 46% among those who say they follow news some of the time, and 48% among those who follow news less often.

2.5.2 Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking and micro blogging service that enables users to send and read short 140-character text messages, called "tweets". Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS, or mobile device app. Twitter was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and by July 2006, the site was launched.

Twitter has so far lived its mission which is to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers. In 2014, it records 255 million monthly active users, 500 million Tweets sent per day and 78% of Twitter active users on mobile.

Studies have identified Twitter more as an informational network compared to Facebook. Twitter users/audiences are seen as ‘serious’, politically active citizens most of whom have a keen interest in business, brands, celebrities etc. Twitter has also been identified as the number one platform in terms of ‘breaking news’ and driving revolutionary agenda such as the Iranian election protests of 2009, the

Egyptian revolution and capture of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 and closer home, the 2013 #Westgate Attack.

In February of 2014, Pew Research Center released a study titled *Six Twitter Conversations*. After an analysis of thousands of Twitter maps, the study found six different kinds of network crowds.

Polarized Crowd: Polarized discussions feature two big and dense groups that have little connection between them. The topics being discussed are often highly divisive and heated political subjects. In fact, there is usually little conversation between these groups despite the fact that they are focused on the same topic. Polarized Crowds on Twitter are not arguing. They are ignoring one another while pointing to different web resources and using different hashtags.

Why this matters: It shows that partisan Twitter users rely on different information sources. While liberals link to many mainstream news sources, conservatives link to a different set of websites.

Tight Crowd: These discussions are characterized by highly interconnected people with few isolated participants. Many conferences, professional topics, hobby groups, and other subjects that attract communities take this Tight Crowd form.

Why this matters: These structures show how networked learning communities function and how sharing and mutual support can be facilitated by social media.

Brand Clusters: When well-known products or services or popular subjects like celebrities are discussed in Twitter, there is often commentary from many

disconnected participants: Well-known brands and other popular subjects can attract large fragmented Twitter populations who tweet about it but not to each other. The larger the population talking about a brand, the less likely it is that participants are connected to one another. Brand-mentioning participants focus on a topic, but tend not to connect to each other.

Why this matters: There are still institutions and topics that command mass interest. Often times, the Twitter chatter about these institutions and their messages is not among people connecting with each other. Rather, they are relaying or passing along the message of the institution or person and there is no extra exchange of ideas.

Community Clusters: Some popular topics may develop multiple smaller groups, which often form around a few hubs each with its own audience, influencers, and sources of information. These Community Clusters conversations look like bazaars with multiple centers of activity. Global news stories often attract coverage from many news outlets, each with its own following. That creates a collection of medium-sized groups—and a fair number of isolates.

Why this matters: Some information sources and subjects ignite multiple conversations, each cultivating its own audience and community. These can illustrate diverse angles on a subject based on its relevance to different audiences, revealing a diversity of opinion and perspective on a social media topic.

Broadcast Network: Twitter commentary around breaking news stories and the output of well-known media outlets and pundits has a distinctive hub and spoke structure in which many people repeat what prominent news and media organizations tweet. The members of the Broadcast Network audience are often connected only to

the hub news source, without connecting to one another. In some cases there are smaller subgroups of densely connected people— think of them as subject groupies—who do discuss the news with one another.

Why this matters: There are still powerful agenda setters and conversation starters in the new social media world. Enterprises and personalities with loyal followings can still have a large impact on the conversation.

Support Network: Customer complaints for a major business are often handled by a Twitter service account that attempts to resolve and manage customer issues around their products and services. This produces a hub and spoke structure that is different from the Broadcast Network pattern. In the Support Network structure, the hub account replies to many otherwise disconnected users, creating outward spokes. In contrast, in the Broadcast pattern, the hub gets replied to or retweeted by many disconnected people, creating inward spokes.

Why this matters: As government, businesses, and groups increasingly provide services and support via social media, support network structures become an important benchmark for evaluating the performance of these institutions. Customer support streams of advice and feedback can be measured in terms of efficiency and reach using social media network maps.

The Importance of Mapping the Social Landscape

Social media is increasingly home to civil society, the place where knowledge sharing, public discussions, debates, and disputes are carried out. As the new public square, social media conversations are as important to document as any other large public gathering. Network maps of public social media discussions in services like

Twitter can provide insights into the role social media plays in our society. These maps are like aerial photographs of a crowd, showing the rough size and composition of a population. These maps can be augmented with ground interviews with crowd participants, collecting their words and interests. Insights from network analysis and visualization can complement survey or focus group research methods and can enhance sentiment analysis of the text messages like tweets.

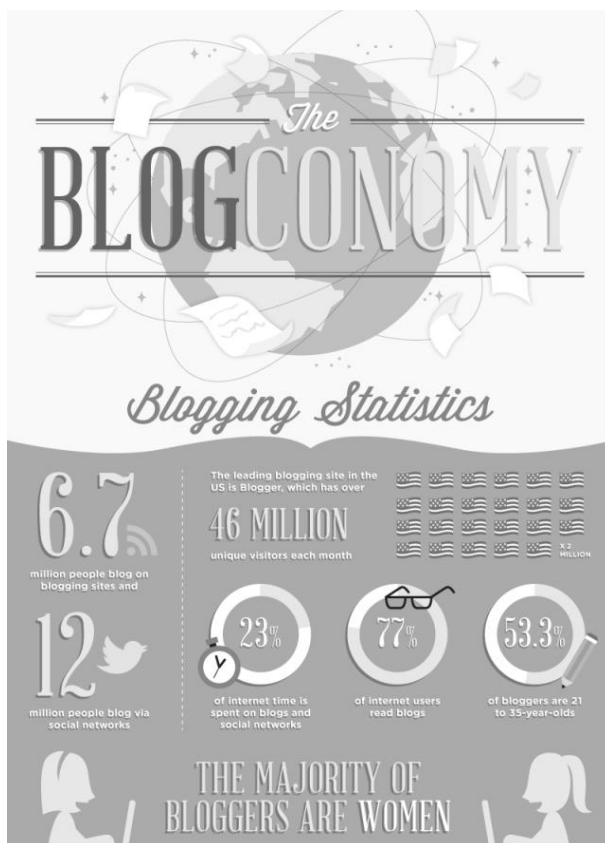
2.6 Blogging

This study did not feature blogs as one of the research objectives. However, the researcher found blogging to be a subject that was quite interlinked with many aspects of social media and therefore took the opportunity to pose to the respondents

a few questions related to blogging.

A blog is a short form for web log. It has been defined as a website containing a writer's or group of writers' own experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other websites. It can also be termed as a single entry or post on such a website.

One of the main features of blogging is that it is a regular activity. Blogging is a phenomenon that has gained popularity worldwide in tandem with



social media as evidenced in this infographic.

Blogging in Kenya

Until recently, blogging in Kenya was an anonymous activity usually associated with exposing clandestine activities or propagating hate speech.

According to its website, The Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) was recently formed as a body that promotes content creation on the web in Kenya and represents a group of content creators who are of Kenyan origin, descent or are based in Kenya and want to, syndicate their content, network among fellow content creators and get legal and communal representation from the Bloggers Association of Kenya.

In 2012, BAKE inaugurated an initiative known as The Kenyan Blog Awards which seeks to reward bloggers that post on a regular basis, have great and useful content, are creative and innovative. These awards represent BAKE's efforts in the promotion of quality content creation.

The 2012 Kenyan Blog Awards featured 14 categories; best technology, photography, creative writing, business, food, agriculture, fashion, politics, sports, general and corporate blogs. There were also awards for the "tweeps" of the year. 300 blogs were submitted and 10,000 people voted. The gala event to award the winners was held on 5th May 2012 at Nairobi Serena. In 2013, 500 blogs were submitted and 50,000 people voted. The gala event to award the winners was on 4th May 2013 at Southern Sun Mayfair Nairobi.

The 3rd edition of the Kenyan Blog Awards was held at the InterContinental Hotel, Nairobi. There were 17 blogs up for nomination. The Best County Blog and Best Health Blog were the new additions. The winners were picked through a process that started with submissions by bloggers, readers and virtually any person who has

access to the internet in 17 categories. The submissions were then taken through a phase of trimming and pruning by independent judges who then gave us a list of 5 blogs per category for which readers would vote for.

As in the case of social media, blogging is faced with the same challenges; professionalism, credibility and accuracy as depicted in an article titled *The Media Council of Kenya Unable to Regulate Bloggers Asks for Qualifications*; written by a blogger known as Kenyan Poet, published on October 14 2013.

The blogger terms the requirement by the Media Council of Kenya CEO, Dr Haron Mwangi that Kenyan bloggers undertake a degree or diploma course in mass communication in order to be accredited as journalists a bad joke.

The blogger further puts across the following sentiments. Maybe the MCK needs to first give us their working definition of a blogger before asking for degree and diploma certificates, that way, everyone else can stop referring to a mere tweep as a blogger. It's an insult to actual bloggers.

It is a well known fact that most media houses still regard bloggers as sources of info that do not need to be credited or if need be, a journalist can simply say 'a source on the internet'. The corporate world in Kenya stopped caring much for blogger accreditation when they realized how much their target market reads blogs and other social media forums. Whether or not a blogger is accredited by the MCK, bloggers will continue giving 'unverified' information whether it's the truth or not and the reader will decide whether to read the posts or not. The article concludes by stating that the power and tools that have defined journalism for so long are no longer in the control of a few. The rise of the citizen journalist will prove to be a huge challenge not just to mainstream media houses but to the MCK, the government and powers

that like control. When the Westgate Mall attack started, news of it was first broken on Twitter. Whether or not the Twitter accounts were verified or were from a credited journalist did not matter and still does not. Since everyone with access to the internet is a potential citizen journalist, do we all then need to enrol for Mass Communication courses in order to be accredited by the MCK?

2.7 Social Media as Reporting Tools

Social networking sites are some of the newest tools for reporters to use in news gathering, networking and promoting their work as evidenced in four reports listed below:

- i. *2013 Social Journalism Study: How Journalists View and Use Social Media And Their Relationship With PR.* Report by Cision & Canterbury Christ Church University (UK)
- ii. *Social Journalism Study 2013. United Kingdom.* Report by Cision & Canterbury Christ Church University (UK)
- iii. *Journalists and Social Media. Aggregate Report, January 2012.* Eurobarometer Qualitative Studies. European Commission
- iv. *The New Normal For News: Have Global Media Changed Forever?* Oriella PR Networks Global Digital Journalism Study 2013

The reports indicated above were analyzed in relation to this study with a view of establishing the variables used and comparing the findings obtained.

The following variables were used across the four studies

Involvement, practice, perceived knowledge, attitudes, social media profiles, preferences, frequency and diversity of social media use, reasons for using social media, influences on social media use, views about the impact of social media on working practices, concerns and perceived barriers and communication with PR practitioners.

Findings classified under various categories

2.7.1 Social Media Use

Social media are now everyday professional tools with 96% of UK journalists using it on a daily basis. 42% of UK journalists say that they would not be able to carry out their work without social media. Twitter is proving to be the quintessential social media tool for UK journalists with 92% of them using it regularly for work. It is the most important social media tool for a variety of professional tasks. The way journalists work has changed dramatically. ‘Digital first’ publishing is changing the rules of the journalism game. A third of respondents believe their title is ‘digital first’ – in other words they break news as it happens online, rather than holding it until the next edition. A quarter say they develop multiple versions of the same story as it develops.

The use of blogs and micro blogs to source and verify news stories is broadly in line with last year – but only when the sources behind those feeds are known to the journalists. Journalists’ personal use of social media is also growing. For the first time, the proportion of journalists active on Twitter in a personal capacity has passed the fifty percent mark, and a third have their own blogs. For journalists, social media means more than blogs and Twitter – in particular, the use of Google Plus, widely

lampooned in many areas of mainstream media, is remarkably popular, both with media brands and journalists themselves.

In spite of all the new technology, traditional values remain. The most prized source of news and validation are conversations with industry insiders. Expert spokespeople such as analysts and academics are now the first place journalists go to in order to get their news. And the most trusted sources are academics and technical experts, rather than executives, marketers and political figures.

The five professional social media user types, identified in last year's study, retained their basic characteristics: These are, from the most to the least active;

Architects are the movers and shakers of the professional social media world.

Promoters are keen social media users focusing mainly on promoting themselves and advocating their work.

Hunters are medium-level users who are keen networkers and use social media for sourcing information as well as finding contacts.

Observers are the largest group and tend to be lighter users who use social media to source and publish, and are particularly keen on networking.

Skeptics are the lowest users, although they still engage with social media. They have low knowledge and generally negative attitudes towards social media

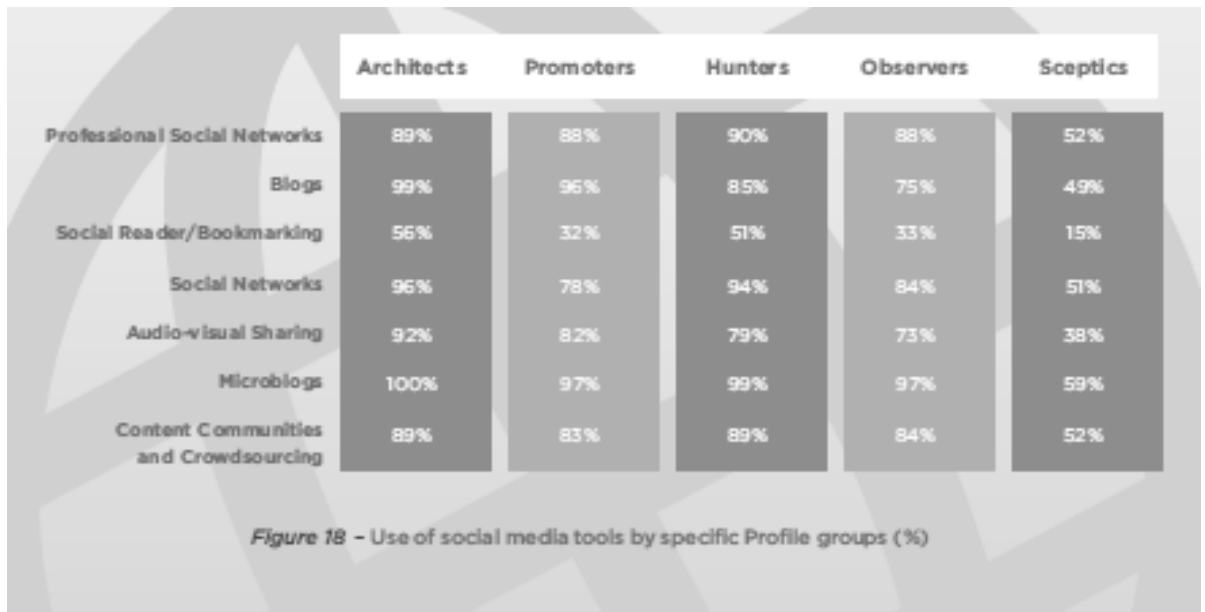


Figure 3: Use of Social Media Tools by Specific Profile Groups

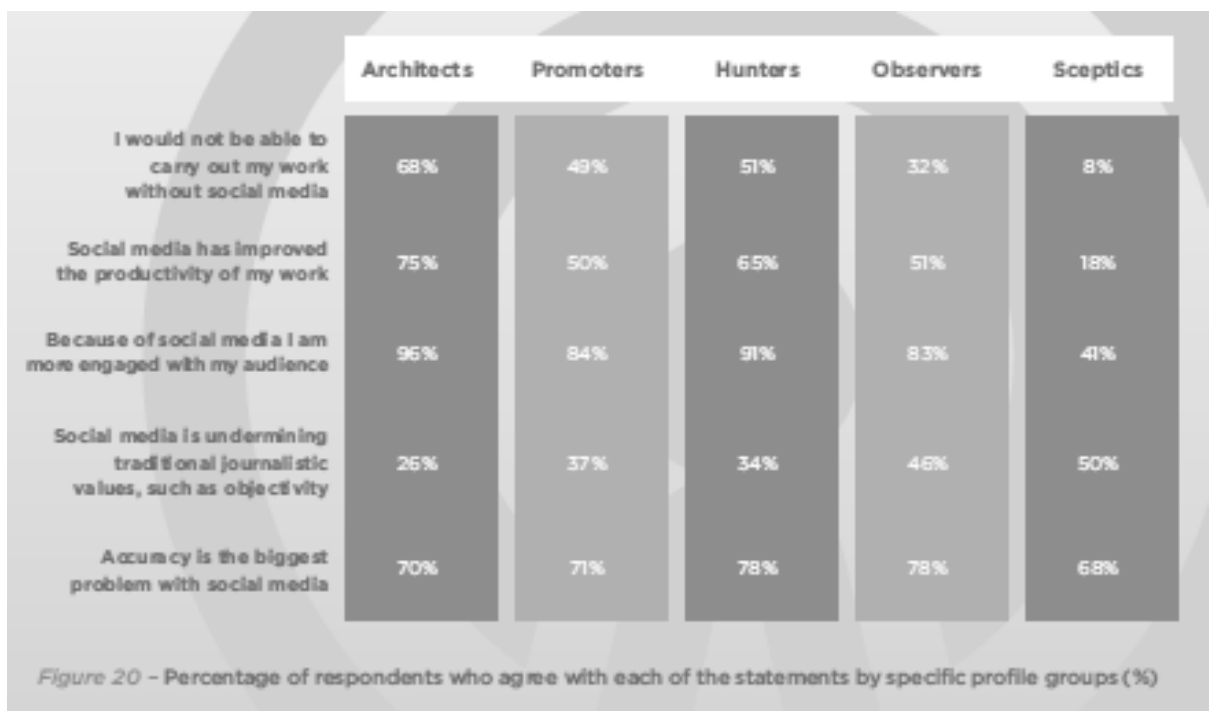


Figure 4: Percentage of Respondents Who Agree With Each of the Statements by Specific Profile Groups

Journalists generally had difficulty describing a typical approach in gathering information for stories. Similarly, nearly all journalists held that the timeframes that they have to produce stories is again story-dependent. However, there was a subset of journalists who also acknowledged the role played by the medium that they work in, for example TV and radio journalists were generally under greater pressure to produce a story quickly and report on changes as the story evolves. Journalists use a wide range of both traditional sources and social media. The most widely used traditional sources involve talking to people, the Internet and national and international press agencies.

The majority of journalists interviewed use social media in their work. It is clear that the most prominent types of social media used by journalists in their work are Facebook and Twitter. A clear distinction is made between the use of Facebook and Twitter - while Facebook is used for work and privately, Twitter is predominantly used for work. There was some variation in the number of years that journalists have been using social media in their work: the younger journalists have used social media since the beginning of their careers; others have reportedly used social media since its start and had followed the development of the different types of social media; the remainder of the journalists seemed to have been using social media for about 3 – 5 years. The majority of journalists also used social media in their personal life. Respondents were divided about whether they keep their work and private use separate. Although a substantial number of journalists did make this distinction, the majority did not for reasons of practicality, authenticity (it is more credible and natural), and convenience.

The tasks that journalists perform for work while using social media centres predominantly around searching for specific information and generally staying up to date on news. An important capability of social media is that it allows the journalists to identify and approach people that would otherwise be difficult to find. The frequency with which journalists access social media for work and the estimated amount of time that they spend on it varied. At one end is a group of journalists who are continuously connected to social media and at the other end those who log on and off several times a day. The majority of journalists interviewed thought that their use of social media would increase in future. Journalists clearly preferred following social media content in their local language, although the majority of journalists are able to use English as a working language and would be able to follow social media content in English

2.7.2 Benefits and Challenges of Using Social Media

Journalists were able to mention a number of benefits of social media over more traditional media. The most important of these included speed/instantaneous access; easier access to information; and access to a greater variety of sources, people and opinions. Although journalists had mixed views about whether they regard websites as part of traditional sources, it was generally felt that this was the case, especially because they lack an interactive component. Journalists were almost equally divided between those who thought that people who contribute to social media are at the forefront of public opinion and can influence the majority to share their views over time, and those who opposed this view.

Respondents identified the reliability and credibility of information as the greatest risk or danger of using social media. The majority of journalists interviewed did not experience significant infrastructure or other barriers to using social media

2.7.3 Approaches to Social Media

Journalists use social media both in a passive and active manner. It is clear that the most important sources are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and blogs. The credibility of information is very important to all journalists. Nearly all journalists were of the opinion that the social media content by government services or EU institutions are regarded as trustworthy, compared with information by individuals or businesses that are regarded as more untrustworthy. The main reason for this is that the source behind the information is known and regarded as credible. However, such information should still be verified and can in some cases be filtered and biased. It is clear that the primary use of social media is around the broader process of compiling stories, promoting them and getting feedback from the public

2.7.4 Journalists' Organisations

Nearly all of the organisations that the interviewed journalists work for use social media, albeit to varying degrees. The organisations use much the same types of social media as the journalists: Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and YouTube. The organisations use social media mainly for the following purposes: to interact with the public; to communicate, for example about programming information; to promote their programmes; and to drive traffic.

Journalists from more than two-thirds of Member States (EU) held that their organisations did not have formal guidelines on how social media should be used. Although formal guidelines might not exist, social media is not seen as separate from the more general reporting ethics that governs the use of both traditional sources and social media

2.8 Key Takeaways about Social Media and News

As news organizations work to understand how consumers interact with digital news, the Pew Research Centre’s Journalism Project, in collaboration with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, delved into how news is functioning in the social media space. Here, Pew Research pulls together eight key takeaways on what we learned in 2013 and early 2014 about social media and news.

News has a place in social media – but on some sites more than others. Half of Facebook and Twitter users get news on those sites as do 62% of Reddit users. But only a minority of those on Instagram or Pinterest finds news there.

Getting “news” on Facebook is an incidental experience. 78% of Facebook news users mostly see news when on Facebook for other reasons.

The range of news topics on Facebook is broad. Entertainment news tops the list of topics Facebook news consumers report seeing. This is followed by ‘people and events in my community’, sports, national government and politics, crime, health and medicine, and local government and politics. Even international news reaches roughly one in four Facebook news consumers.

Engagement with the news plays a key role in the social media news experience. Not only are social network users sharing news stories, but particularly with the growth

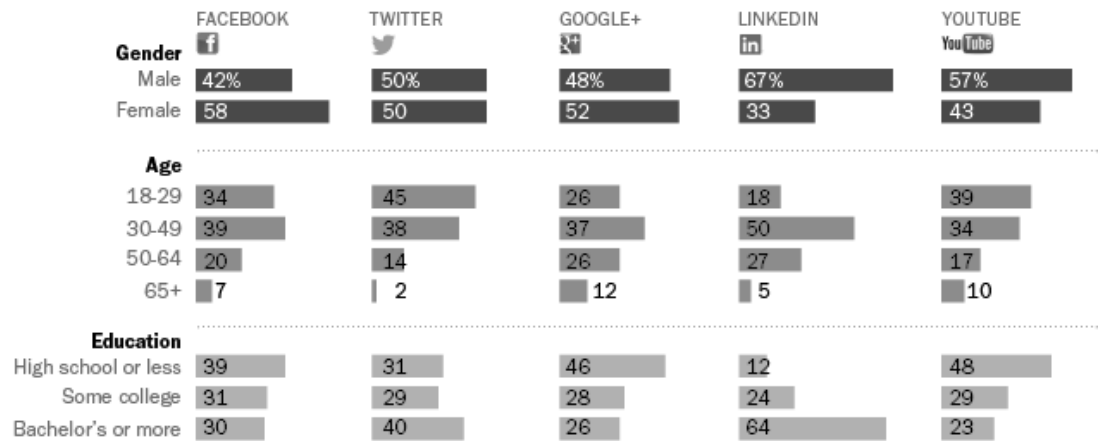
in mobile devices, a certain portion is contributing to the reporting by taking photos or videos.

On Twitter, groups of people come together around news events they feel passionately about but opinions expressed on Twitter often differ from broad public opinion. In the days following the shootings in Newton, Conn., in 2012, nearly two-thirds of the statements on Twitter called for stricter gun control measures while public opinion was far more evenly split.

In the dynamic nature of conversations on Twitter, the sentiment expressed around an issue or event can change over time. From April 1 to April 14, opinion on Twitter shifted dramatically in the direction of opposing same-sex marriage. For those two weeks, 55% of the conversation was opposed, while 32% was in favor. But, from April 15 through the next four weeks, statements in support outnumbered those in opposition, 43% to 26%.

Audiences for news on each social platform differ. LinkedIn news consumers stand out as being high earners and college educated while Twitter news consumers are significantly younger than news consumers on Facebook, Google Plus and LinkedIn. Facebook news consumers are more likely to be female than news consumers on YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Percent of news consumers for each site



Note: Based on Facebook news consumers (N=1,429); Twitter news consumers (N=359); Google Plus news consumers (N=194); LinkedIn news consumers (N=144); YouTube news consumers (N=456). Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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Visitors who come to a news site through Facebook or search display have far lower engagement with that outlet than those who come to that news website directly. Facebook and search are critical for bringing added eyeballs to individual stories, but people who come to a site directly show far higher levels of engagement and loyalty. This remains true for even the most socially oriented news sites.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

2.9.1 Social Exchange Theory

Given that social networking sites stemmed out of the need for individuals in a society to connect, it is necessary to examine one of the few theories that supports this motivation which is the social exchange theory.

Social exchange theory emerged within family sciences in the latter part of the twentieth century, first being considered in a meaningful way in the early 1960s. It

arose out of the philosophical traditions of utilitarianism, behaviorism, and neoclassical economics. At its most basic, social exchange theory may be viewed as providing an economic metaphor to social relationships. The theory's fundamental principle is that humans in social situations choose behaviours that maximize their likelihood of meeting self-interests in those situations. In taking such a view of human social interactions, social exchange theory includes a number of key assumptions. First, social exchange theory operates on the assumption that individuals are generally rational and engage in calculations of costs and benefits in social exchanges. In this respect, they exist as both rational actors and reactors in social exchanges. This assumption reflects the perspective that social exchange theory largely attends to issues of decision making.

Second, social exchange theory builds on the assumption that those engaged in interactions are rationally seeking to maximize the profits or benefits to be gained from those situations, especially in terms of meeting basic individual needs. In this respect, social exchange theory assumes social exchanges between or among two or more individuals are efforts by participants to fulfil basic needs. Third, exchange processes that produce pay-offs or rewards for individuals lead to patterning of social interactions. These patterns of social interaction not only serve individuals' needs but also constrain individuals in how they may ultimately seek to meet those needs. Individuals may seek relationships and interactions that promote their needs but are also the recipients of behaviours from others that are motivated by their desires to meet their own needs.

Social exchange theory further assumes that individuals are goal-oriented in a freely competitive social system. Because of the competitive nature of social systems, exchange processes lead to differentiation of power and privilege in social groups.

As in any competitive situation, power in social exchanges lies with those individuals who possess greater resources that provide an advantage in the social exchange. As a result, exchange processes lead to differentiation of power and privilege in social groups. Those with more resources hold more power and, ultimately, are in a better position to benefit from the exchange.

Social media sites have long recognized that there are far more people consuming information than generating it. On YouTube, for example, though subscribers have uploaded over 2 billion videos and audio tracks to the site since its founding in 2005, it records 4 billion views per day, indicating that there are far more viewers than contributors. The Global Web Index (2009) (Li, 2010), which tracks this phenomenon, suggests that users of social media can be segmented into four main groups. These are:

Watchers: 79.8% of US social media users who consume content only to help with their decision making.

Sharers: 61.2% who upload and forward information to others in order to help others and demonstrate knowledge.

Commenters: 36.2% who both review and rate products and comment on those who do in an effort to participate and contribute.

Producers: 24.2% who create their own content in an effort to express their identity and garner recognition.

2.9.2 Technological Determinism Theory

Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian born in 1911, is considered by many as the first father and leading prophet of the electronic age. McLuhan saw electronic media as a return to collective ways of perceiving the world. His "global village" theory posited

the ability of electronic media to unify and retribalize the human race. What McLuhan did not live to see but perhaps foresaw, was the merging of text and electronic mass media in this new media called the Internet. The author of the famous phrase turned into book title “The Medium Is The Message” argued that the media itself, rather than its actual content, will transform people and society.

The actual messages people are communicating won't be any different on the new media; the interactivity and frequency of new communication patterns will change our behavior forever. Thus, the media's effects on society are much greater than their content. He separates media into “cool” and “hot” media. The former requires a viewer to exert effort and participation in understanding the content, e.g. television, seminars, or cartoons; the latter enhance one sense, so the viewers do not need to exert much effort, e.g. films, radio, and photography (McLuhan 1995).

Going by McLuhan's arguments, social media will transform the users not as a result of its content but because of the mode of communication it entails. For example, Twitter is just a micro-blogging service with a limit of 140 characters. Theoretically, one can perform all the Twitter functions through a blog service. However, it is precisely this limiting factor that made Twitter more nimble and ‘real-time’. Many breaking news stories have been spread via Twitter, such as the capture of Osama Bin Laden. Journalists and news organizations need to realize the changes in behavior caused by the usage of new social media services and adopt an attitude of acceptance toward those technologies and behavior.

2.10 Summary of Literature Review and Study Gap

The general objective of this study was to investigate how journalists and news organizations are responding to the changes and challenges brought about by social media. Literature has revealed that the primary use of social media among journalists is around the broader process of compiling stories, promoting them and getting feedback from the public.

It has been revealed that social media have presented both benefits and risks to the practice of journalism. For citizens, social media are the new public square while for journalists they are everyday reporting tools. Journalists can now enjoy the privilege of speed and instantaneous access of information. Literature has revealed that despite a large number of news organizations not having formal guidelines on how social media should be used, many journalists still uphold traditional journalistic values. Reliability and credibility of information has been cited as the greatest risk of using social media.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design, target population, sampling technique, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach and used the descriptive research design. Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Jeane, 1999). Data was collected through in-depth interviews.

3.2 Area of Study

The area of study was Nairobi. The two reasons for the selection of this location were one, the majority of informants i.e. journalists, news managers and bloggers primarily operated within Nairobi. Secondly, the area was ideal for the researcher in respect to convenience and the time frame available for data collection.

3.3 Target Population

This study targeted a cross-section of journalists working in Kenyan news organizations namely; Nation Media Group, Royal Media, Mediamax Network, Standard Group and Capital FM.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The researcher used purposive sampling to draw a sample of twelve journalists from four news organizations, two social media managers from two news organizations and three freelance journalists. Three bloggers were also picked from a list of the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) award winners for 2014.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The researcher scheduled in depth interviews with journalists and social media managers at their places of work. Bloggers were sent interview questions through email.

3.6 Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments

The validity of a research instrument refers to an extent to which it does measure what it is supposed to measure while reliability is the ability of a research instrument to yield consistent results or data after repeated trials (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In terms of validity, through extensive consultation with the supervisor, the researcher was able to clearly articulate the research objectives and therefore approached the in-depth interviews with great specificity in terms of the feedback being sought. In terms of reliability, the researcher observed a level of consistency in the feedback provided as demonstrated in the data analysis.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Qualitative data was analyzed thematically to elicit meanings as well as identify the themes and patterns of ideas, concepts, behavior and attitudes.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Given the nature of their work, participants in the study were keen to find out the purpose of the research. The researcher assured them that the research was purely for academic purposes and would not in any way be used to their personal detriment or that of the organizations they represented.

3.9 Limitations

The study originally set out to conduct focus group discussions as well as in depth interviews. However, the busy and unpredictable work schedules of journalists rendered it impossible to set up focus group discussions. Availability remained a challenge even for the interviews and in most cases the researcher had to re-schedule interviews.

Most bloggers contacted did not respond to any form of communication. A few of them turned down the request to participate in the study saying that blogging had nothing to do with journalism.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The researcher employed an explanatory framework where data was categorized into themes and analyzed in relation to the research objectives in order to establish patterns of ideas, concepts and attitudes. The study was guided by the following objectives: to identify various uses of social media among journalists, to identify changes and challenges posed by social media to journalists and news organizations, to verify whether news organizations have enacted a social media policy and to determine the future of journalism practice in light of social media

The following were the emergent themes: social media use, changes brought about to the practice of journalism by social media, challenges facing the use of social media among journalists, existence of a social media policy in news organizations, digital media and social media influence on the future of journalism

4.1 Social Media Use

The study found that social media have become everyday tools among journalists, with the two preferred platforms being Facebook and Twitter. This observation concurs with findings of the Social Journalism Study, UK (2013) which found out that social media are now everyday professional tools with 96% of UK journalists using it on a daily basis. The observation further concurs with findings of the Journalists and Social Media Aggregate report (2012) which found out that the majority of journalists interviewed use social media in their work. It is clear that the

most prominent types of social media used by journalists in their work are Facebook and Twitter.

“Twitter is our greatest tool, we update regularly on what is happening, hold discussions with viewers, generate feedback and also promote our news bulletins before they start and as they happen”. (Research data, August, 2014)

Before the advent of social media, a reporter would primarily rely on getting a briefing from the assignment desk about which event to cover and where. Occasionally, reporters would also be tipped off on phone by a fellow reporter or a member of the public about a story to cover. That scope of reporting tools has now expanded in the sense that, even before a reporter checks in at the assignment desk, they probably have already skimmed through social media and already have an idea about the day’s trending stories.

“My colleagues and I have a What’s App group, where we discuss the day’s stories”. (Research data, August, 2014)

Multiplicity of sources that would normally not have been found or contacted in the researcher’s view is the greatest benefit of social media becoming tools for journalists besides the fact that there is now increased speed in the newsgathering cycle.

As noted by Chidozie (cited Asough, 2012) the news cycle has changed; we have moved from a passive news cycle—in which the journalist finds news, reports it and the audience consumes it—to interactive applications of news. It used to be that when the story went live, that was the end. Now, it’s the beginning. The audience can comment, share, add or even change information. The era of I write, you read, you’re welcome is over.

The study found that a majority of the journalists interviewed identified following local and international news organizations as the most prominent use of social media. Other key features identified were, looking out for breaking news, following developing stories, interacting and getting feedback from audiences, getting story ideas for features, sharing links to individual and other stories and expanding one's knowledge on various issues.

“Twitter’s instantaneous and brief nature allows me to quickly skim through and identify top updates on various topics”.
(Research data, August, 2014)

“When I post a topic on my Facebook account, I get close to 1,000 comments compared to posting it on Twitter which may generate as little as 20 comments”. **(Research data, August, 2014)**

As opposed to a few years ago when journalists had to attend press briefings to get information from the government or other institutions, today it is possible to follow social media accounts of organizations for the latest news alerts.

Social media have made it possible for audiences to be part of news. For instance, in areas where there are no reporters, news organizations are able to receive information about various events. Audiences are also able to give feedback to news organizations on stories and programming. These benefits of using social media correspond to those identified in the findings of the Journalists and Social Media Aggregate report (2012) which indicates that journalists surveyed were able to mention a number of benefits of social media over more traditional media. The most important of these included speed/instantaneous access, easier access to information, access to a greater

variety of sources, people and opinions, compiling stories, promoting them and getting feedback from the public.

4.2 Changes Brought About To the Practice of Journalism by Social Media

The concept of breaking news was cited as the biggest change that journalists have had to grapple with. News is no longer broken through traditional platforms such as newspapers, TV and radio; most news is now broken online and not necessarily by journalists. The concept of breaking news also fits into the discussion of the growth of citizen journalism as discussed in the literature review. Examples of such initiatives that have proved a success include the CNN iReport platform that invites content from users which are then vetted and verified by its team of experts before being used.

Social media have indeed re-shaped the newsgathering process. As discussed earlier, today a reporter does not necessarily have to wait for a briefing from the assignment desk. The editor on the other hand does not have to wait until the reporter arrives back with a story. For instance, a reporter attending a press briefing is able to tweet the key outcome of a meeting as soon as the meeting is over. Updates are now posted in real time as events occur. Photos and videos are also posted as events unfold. Live news feeds have further changed the concept of breaking news as witnessed during the 2013 general election and the Westgate Attack.

“It is a good thing that journalists are no longer the monopoly of breaking news”. (**Research data, August, 2014**)

“Social media have put all news organizations at the same level; the competition is no longer who breaks news first, it’s about content”. (**Research data, August, 2014**)

The majority of journalists interviewed were of the opinion that social media have made journalists lazy to a great extent. Now, journalists do not necessarily have to go out looking for stories, they can easily learn of and follow up stories from their phones and computers. The challenge presented by this trend lies in the authenticity and quality of content.

“If a news organization depends on social media, it will most likely not be able to keep up with competition. You cannot compare a story done by a journalist who has been on the ground to one done by a journalist who has purely relied on social media. It is sad that some news organizations do not want to spend a lot of money on reporters so they end up relying heavily on social media”.
(Research data, August, 2014)

“During the Mpeketoni attacks, many news organizations kept giving speculative figures of the death toll. However, our organization only provided the death toll upon getting the exact figure from reliable sources”. **(Research data, August, 2014)**

“When mistakes are made on social media, the damage and consequences are instant. For instance, renowned international celebrities have lost endorsements instantly for sharing tweets or photos that were deemed inappropriate”. **(Research data, August, 2014)**

The study found that social media platforms have provided journalists a certain connection with their audiences, something that was not previously there. Before the advent of social media, the main channels through which news organizations would receive feedback were through ‘letters to the editor, telephone, fax and email; which provide one way communication. Today, journalists have thousands of audiences as friends and followers of their personal and professional social media accounts. This enables journalists to get feedback about their stories and actually monitor the impact of what they communicate. This is more so on live radio and TV shows. News organizations as well have followers in the thousands and this grow their visibility for instance through fan pages.

“If internet connection is lost while doing my show, which means my access to social media is cut off. I feel disconnected and as though am not at my best as a presenter”. (Research data, August, 2014)

While enjoying this sense of connection, the majority of journalists noted that social media have as well heightened their sense of responsibility and caution both in their professional and personal fronts. While using social media as reporting tools, journalists acknowledge that they bear full responsibility of what they post. A journalist cannot simply ignore a comment in which he/she has been mentioned or a story he/she has shared. The fact that anyone can tweet or post a comment, photo or video, opens the possibilities of dealing with malicious or defamatory content.

“Our bosses actually follow us on social media. That poses challenges if for instance; someone posts a malicious story or photo. I could simply be enjoying a drink somewhere then someone

takes a photo of me and posts it on my account for malicious reasons.” (Research data, August, 2014)

“People interacting with social media have a short memory span especially on good things. Positive information tends to die off faster as opposed to ‘bad’ stories that keep trending for weeks even months.” (Research data, August, 2014)

4.3 Challenges Facing the Use of Social Media

Credibility on social media was cited as the biggest challenge. This observation corresponds with findings of the Journalists and Social Media Aggregate report (2012) in which respondents identified reliability and credibility of information as the greatest risk or danger of using social media. This observation further concurs with findings of the Social Journalism Study, UK (2013) which found that journalists were especially concerned about the accuracy of social media information. 73% agreed that accuracy is the biggest problem with social media.

“I have to thoroughly fact-check any information posted by international news organizations about anything concerning Africa and Kenya.” (Research data, August, 2014)

The study also found that besides credibility, the two other key challenges posed by social media were, publication of sensational headlines especially in online publications where the goal is to ensure the highest number of clicks possible on a story which often leads people to click on stories whose content does not match the

expectation promised by the headline. Plagiarism of stories is rampant on social media.

“Social media makes it easy for other users to plagiarise the work I’ve done and because of its wide reach it is hard to keep track of where and how it has been used.” (Research data, August, 2014)

Journalism is built on credibility. We live in a media-saturated era of information overload. We have lots to choose from and most of it is free. This information access, although empowering presents unique challenges, both to journalists and to society. For the journalist, it is a question of which source can I trust; for the audience, it is a question of which journalist or news organization can I trust.

“It remains a journalist’s mandate to go beyond what is ‘trending’ and to verify information; more so because news organizations must be seen to remain authoritative even in the face of social media.” (Research data, August, 2014)

The above sentiment concurs with findings of the Journalists and Social Media Aggregate report (2012) in which respondents indicated that information should still be verified and can in some cases be filtered.

4.4 Existence of a Social Media Policy in News Organizations

Of the five news organizations sampled, two had a social media policy. This observation corresponds with the findings of the Journalists and Social Media Aggregate report (2012) which found out that journalists from more than two-thirds of Member States (EU) held that their organizations did not have formal guidelines on how social media should be used.

Across all the news organizations that did not have a social media policy, individual responsibility was the key principle guiding the use of social media among journalists.

“We have ‘un-spoken’ rules which are discussed on a daily basis between an individual journalist and the editor on duty”.

(Research data, August, 2014)

“A journalist is allowed to tweet a story even before it is tweeted on the official company handle, so long as they cc the company handle”. *(Research data, August, 2014)*

The contents of the two social media policies found in two news organizations could not be disclosed. However, both policies addressed subjects such as content, defamation, appropriate language use, endorsement of personalities and products and hate speech.

“Our social media policy is constantly being reviewed since social media presents new changes and dilemmas every day”. *(Research data, August, 2014)*

4.5 Digital Media

The study found that technology growth has revolutionized the media scene tremendously with the internet and mobile phone being the two main platforms that have influenced this revolution. This observation is supported by the Quarterly Sector Statistics Report (2014) released by the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) which shows that as has been the trend, mobile telephony experienced a marginal increase in the number of mobile subscriptions during the quarter to post 31.8 million subscriptions up from 31.3 million recorded during the last quarter.

Further, with regard to the internet, the report shows that the quarter under review witnessed growth in data/internet subscriptions by 1.3 per cent to reach 13.3 million subscriptions from 13.1 million subscriptions for the previous quarter. The continued growth in data/internet market is largely driven by growth in mobile based internet penetration as a result of increased operators focus on growing revenue from the data market. The number of estimated internet users grew by 1.9 per cent representing 21.6 million users up from 21.2 million recorded in the previous quarter.

News organizations have capitalized on the internet growth statistics by setting up social media pages which have become an alternative news source for a majority of citizens.

“Our official company page has an average page view of about 6,500 viewers per day (people constantly on the site) and an average monthly page view of 80,000 viewers”. (**Research data, August, 2014**)

“Our news page has 339k followers on Facebook, 305k on Twitter and 2,620 on Instagram”. (**Research data, August, 2014**)

“From an advertising perspective, there is more revenue being generated from mobile devices sometimes even more than revenue from advertising in the newspapers”. (**Research data, August, 2014**)

The study found that there is a rapid paradigm shift of social media from being social to commercial. Advertising on social media has grown rapidly and is now a major income avenue for news organizations.

“Social media are going to be more commercial than they are now; they will be massive tools for corporate advertising and top revenue earners for news organizations. Currently, one has to pay for certain privileges in some social media apps. For instance, LinkedIn has already evolved to become a business platform for professionals where one has to pay for instance to access certain job postings”. **(Research data, August, 2014)**

“The benefit of social media is that the numbers don’t lie. For instance, when one places an ad in the newspaper, TV or radio, it usually is hard to determine the reach of that particular ad. However, on social media the numbers of likes, views, visits, and tweets provide real time information”. **(Research data, August, 2014)**

The study found that to run a successful digital media platform, a news organization must learn people’s habits on social media, employ seasoned writers and ensure that they provide news in formats compatible with various mobile devices. As the rapid development of social media apps continues so should news organizations strive to catch up and remain relevant

4.6 Social Media Influence on the Future of Journalism

The study found that social media platforms present an array of both benefits and challenges to journalists and news organizations. This observation concurs with findings of the Social Journalism Study, UK (2013) which found that UK journalists perceive the impacts of social media to be significant, although views vary about specific consequences.

“Journalists should harness the power that lies within social media to better the practice as well as serve audiences better.” (Research data, August, 2014)

Existing and new social media apps will continue to redefine the practice of journalism. Online journalism coupled with social media will be the new mainstream media for news organizations. One journalist however, dispelled the notion that social media will render journalists redundant. He argued that the place of journalism cannot be replaced. This observation corresponds with findings of the Social Journalism Study, UK (2013) which found out that the vast majority (89%) thought that social media would not lead to the death of professional journalism.

“Contrary to popular belief, there are still huge populations who are not on social media at all; meaning these people still rely on traditional sources for their information needs. As the head of radio, I can confirm to you that radio continues to be top of all other channels. For this reason, despite people getting news online, people still trust and will occasionally counter check with traditional sources such as radio and TV.”(Research data, August, 2014)

Journalists were concerned that no university in Kenya had introduced social media related courses or social media majors in the journalism curriculum.

“Many universities are still using the same old curriculums to train journalists. Journalists today have different sets of challenges and changes that they have to deal with compared to a journalist practising five or ten years ago. The profession is rapidly changing. Most often, when a fresh graduate joins our organization, they have to be re-trained afresh since the practice is very different from the training in campus.” (Research data, August, 2014)

It also emerged that journalism training in most institutions did not give weight to multimedia skills.

“Most universities do not give weight to teaching multi-media skills such as video and sound editing, graphic design, etc. yet these are the skills needed in news organizations especially in view of the evolving newsroom.”

The above observation corresponds with an observation made by Skowran (2009), which indicates that journalism schools are already preparing their students for this certainty. In the UK, Birmingham City University began offering a Master of Arts Degree in Social Media in September 2009, exploring the techniques of social media. Over in the US, Western Kentucky University wants students to be journalist-

entrepreneurs and to think more about business. Its new iMedia certificate includes a course in interactive advertising.

4.7 Blogging

The question of whether a blogger is a journalist and whether there is a sharp distinction between the two disciplines is one of interest. This study found that bloggers regard blogging as a profession. The Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) is an organization which aims to provide bloggers a platform for recognition as well as advocate professionalism in blogging. Since its inception, BAKE has held three award ceremonies to distinguish top bloggers in various categories.

Besides both bloggers and journalists communicating to inform, educate and entertain, the study also found that journalists do not regard bloggers as legitimate members of the fourth estate.

“The practice of journalism is governed by laws and ethics which are instilled through formal training. Blogging by nature is personal therefore biased, contrary to one of the basic tenets of journalism.” (Research data, August, 2014)

The study found that there are currently no rules and regulations in Kenya governing the practise of blogging. This in part has contributed to people running anonymous blogs which often are used to propagate gossip and hate speech. To remedy this situation, it has been suggested in the past by the Media Council of Kenya that bloggers acquire degrees/diplomas. This requirement for academic qualifications could have both positive and negative effects. It could lock out many people looking to express themselves through blogging which would lead to a deficiency of diverse

content on the internet. On the flipside, requiring bloggers to undergo formal training could improve the quality of content on the internet. It could also bring about professionalism in the blogging sector.

The study found that journalists regard bloggers as sources of information but only when the sources can be verified. This observation concurs with the findings of the Journalists and Social Media Aggregate report (2012) which found that the use of blogs and micro blogs to source and verify news stories is broadly in line with last year – but only when the sources behind those feeds are known to the journalists.

“Bloggers sometimes have access to information that journalists may not easily get. In addition, bloggers write from experience, passion and interest in a particular subject and for that reason, they tend to know more about specialized topics.” (Research data, August, 2014)

“I do not directly quote blogs. I use them as sources and still verify the information according to my training as a journalist.” (Research data, August, 2014)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights key findings, draws conclusions and suggests recommendations pertaining to the study.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were, to identify various uses of social media among journalists, to identify changes and challenges posed by social media to journalists and news organizations, to verify whether news organizations have enacted a social media policy, to determine the future of journalism practice in light of social media. The study also focused on the subject of blogging.

To address these objectives, descriptive research design was used and data collected from 12 journalists drawn from four top news organizations, one social media manager from two top news organizations, three freelance journalists and three bloggers using in depth interviews.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The study summarizes the findings in light of the objectives.

To Identify Various Uses of Social Media among Journalists

The study revealed that social media have become everyday reporting tools among journalists, with the two main platforms being Facebook and Twitter. Journalists use social media for a variety of tasks such as following local and international news

organizations, looking out for breaking news and following developing stories, interacting and getting feedback from audiences, getting story ideas for features and sharing links to individual and other stories, finding contacts and sources and expanding one's knowledge on various issues.

To Identify Changes and Challenges Posed by Social Media to Journalists and News Organizations

The study discovered that social media have brought about significant changes to the practice of journalism. The concept of breaking news was cited as the biggest change that journalists and news organizations have had to grapple with. The majority of journalists interviewed were of the opinion that social media have made journalists lazy to a great extent. Other notable benefits of social media are the fact that social media platforms have provided journalists a certain connection with their audiences as well as enhancing visibility and branding of both journalists and news organizations. Credibility on social media was cited as the biggest challenge, however, this has heightened journalists' sense of responsibility and caution both in their professional and personal duties and identities.

To Verify Whether News Organizations Have Enacted a Social Media Policy

The study revealed that of the five news organizations sampled; only two had a social media policy. Across all the news organizations that did not have a social media policy, emphasis was laid on individual responsibility of a journalist as well as 'un-spoken' rules. The study was unable to obtain information contained in the social media policies of the two news organizations that had them.

Regarding bloggers, two of the three interviewed said they do not consider themselves journalists, hence do not need to be trained as journalists. Journalists on the other hand agreed that bloggers are not a legitimate part of the fourth estate. The study however revealed that journalists regard bloggers as sources of information but only when the sources can be verified.

To Determine the Future of Journalism in Light of Social Media

The study revealed that technology growth had changed the media scene tremendously. Social media numbers will continue to rise and at the same time there will be a paradigm shift. Social media are going to be very commercial than they are now; they will be massive tools for corporate advertising and top revenue earners for news organizations.

5.3 Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, social media platforms are and will continue to be effective tools for journalists and news organizations. Social media have presented both benefits and dilemmas to the practise of journalism.

For the journalist, the tide of change brings about a shorter newsgathering cycle, multiplicity of sources, ability to produce rapidly, the need for multi-skilling, having less capacity to reflect, having less time to write beautifully and possibly a shorter period to verify facts.

For the news organization, social media has become a top advertising revenue earner, a branding and visibility platform and a powerful tool for connecting with audiences.

It is hoped that the social media phenomenon will give rise to a better media industry and new or hybrid forms of journalism.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

As discussed in the findings, Twitter and Facebook have been resourceful tools in the newsgathering cycle. Therefore, journalists need to harness the many and great possibilities that lie in social media to better their work.

News organizations ought to give due diligence on the matter of formulating a social media policy which provides an operational framework for current and future use of social media. An ideal policy should reinforce journalistic values, troubleshoot social media challenges and provide an enabling environment where journalists can still practice without feeling restricted.

The question of curbing crime, sexual exploitation, fraud, etc on social media ought to be hastily addressed by the Media Council of Kenya, Communications Authority of Kenya and the Kenyan government.

Universities ought to introduce social media related units in the journalism training curriculum. In fact, they should be thinking of introducing a ‘new media’ major along with the traditional print, broadcast and PR majors.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Research can be conducted with the purpose of examining contents of social media policies for various international and local news organizations.

Regulation of traditional media exists; however, whether it is possible to regulate social media and how is a subject of interest.

This study revealed a prediction that social media are going to be more commercial than they are now; becoming top advertising revenue earners for news organizations. This would be an interesting subject to explore.

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Appendices

A. Request for Participation in a Focus Group Discussion

Greetings,

Am Wanjiku Migichi, pursuing an MA in Communication Studies at the University of Nairobi.

Am currently working on my thesis and looking forward to graduating in December. My research is on social media and the general objective of the study is to investigate how journalists and news organizations are responding to the changes and challenges brought about by social media.

I wish to request your participation in a focus group discussion comprising of 6 journalists from various media houses.

The following will be the areas of discussion:

- i. Uses of social media among journalists
- ii. Changes & challenges posed to individual journalists and news organizations
- iii. The existence and enforcement of social media guidelines in news organizations
- iv. The future of journalism in light of social media

It is my view that your experience as a journalist will provide authentic answers, great debate and a deeper understanding of the topic.

The first possible venue is at the University of Nairobi. This is however subject to confirmation soonest possible.

The focus group discussion should be conducted within 1 hour or 1 hr 30 minutes at most. I am open to any day of the week. I appreciate the fact that availability is varied among all participants. I therefore request that you let me know of 2 possible dates and time that are best for you, after which I will compare with those provided by other participants.

The discussion will have a moderator and time will be strictly adhered to. Participation in the discussion will not have any financial incentive; however, your insight, experiences and ideas are of immense value to my study and the research findings will go a long way in informing future studies on the area of social media in Kenya.

“If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.”

George Bernard Shaw

B. In-depth Interview Questions

1. How do you use various social media platforms in your work as a journalist?
2. How have social media changed how you practice journalism compared to a few years back?
3. What challenges if any have social media presented in your work as a journalist?
4. Have social media made journalists lazy?
5. Does the news organization you work for have a social media policy?
6. Did your under/post graduate studies offer you any form of training in light of using social media as a journalist?
7. Is a blogger a journalist? Is there a sharp distinction between the two disciplines or has time blurred that line to an extent?
8. Do journalists regard bloggers/blogs as news sources?