

**A STUDY ON HOW SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE CHANGED NEWSROOM OPERATIONS
IN KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF THE STANDARD GROUP AND NATION MEDIA
GROUP**

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ABSTRACT

The growth of the Internet has changed the way newsrooms across the world operate. At the heart of the new developments is the growing presence of traditional media of newspaper, magazines, radio and television online. Media houses have formed digital divisions solely tasked with operating their websites and social media handles. This study sought to find out how this changing technology is changing newsrooms operations in Kenya. This study picked the Standard Group and the Nation Media Group since they are the two leading mainstream media firms in Kenya. The two media houses have developed both their presence and social media policies. Respondents from these media firms were selected from among journalists in different editorial departments – the print and broadcast sections – cutting across different job strata of editors, subeditors, reporters/correspondents and photojournalists. This study sought to answer the following questions: How have social media changed operations in Kenyan newsrooms? What are the effects of social media use on traditional journalism pillars of objectivity, accuracy and verification? The study found that journalists have embraced the use of social media in the news gathering and dissemination process. This is, however, tempered by a cautious approach to the use of social media in news gathering and uncertainty over the effectiveness of gate keeping checks in place to ensure that social media use in the newsroom remains true to key journalistic tenets of fairness, objectivity and accuracy.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted for academic credit in any other university.

Ferdinand Mwongela Kamenchu

Signed:

Date:

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor.

Dr. Julius Bosire

Lecturer,

School of Journalism

Signed:

Date:

DEDICATION

To my wife Alice, our beautiful children Alma and Ryan, and my parents, James and Purity Kamenchu, for their support and encouragement.

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I wish to acknowledge and appreciate my project supervisor, Dr. Julius Bosire, for his patient guidance throughout the writing of this project. Under his direction the raw ideas and objectives were shaped into a coherent narrative. My acknowledgement and appreciation also goes to members of faculty at the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism and classmates who served as a sounding board.

I also wish to acknowledge my employer The Standard Group for accommodating my desire to study while working. It is the exposure and experience I got in The Standard Group newsroom that gave rise to this topic, driven by the fascination of being in the newsroom at a time when media companies are struggling to adapt to a changing environment and adopt new technologies and processes.

To all these and more I might have not mentioned, thank you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCK: Communications Commission of Kenya (now Communications Authority)

NMG: Nation Media Group

SG: Standard Group

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The widespread adoption of social media and increased online activity by media organisations has led to the adoption of new ways of collecting, processing and dissemination news worldwide. In some cases, newsrooms rely on social media users for real time updates of events. In areas where journalists have no access or cannot adequately cover what is happening, social media have been used as sources of information. On the global scene, this was witnessed prominently in the Iranian Elections protests of 2009 and the Arab Spring uprising. In the face of traditional platforms inability of difficulty in covering these conflicts, social media and video sharing sites became a central platform of communication to the outside world. Dramatic footage from all over the country was uploaded to video-sharing and social media sites, as well as to mainstream media organisations like CNN and the BBC, which at one stage was receiving up to five videos a minute with #Iraelection49 becoming a key aggregation point (Newman, 2009).

Newman (2009) argues for the complementary and collaborative nature of social media and mainstream media platforms. They (the mainstream media) felt outflanked in terms of speed, previously an area many had built their brands around.... The New York Times, The Guardian, CNN and the Huffington Post made the information emerging from social networks a central part of their coverage, allocating specific resources to provide a filtered take of the activity on Twitter, Facebook and blogs (Newman, 2009).

The media landscape is dynamic; changing over time, but even more rapidly since the beginning of the 21st Century. Today we have newspapers being forced to perfect the act of Day Two Journalism. This is because after a story has broken, it would have been covered expansively in the proceeding hours on social media. This forces newspapers to be more analytical and go in-depth to retain their readership.

Today, social media are an integral part of the Kenyan newsroom such that media houses have found it fit to come up with social media guidelines. The Nation Media Group and The Standard Group designed social media policies to guide how employees interact and work with the company's social media profiles and with the outside world on their own social media handles.

The growth of social media in the local context has been reinforced by a robust telecommunications industry and the prevalence of Internet enabled mobile phones.

In the Communications Commission of Kenya Quarterly Sector Statistics Report Second Quarter of the financial year 2012/13, released in April 2013, the number of subscriptions in the Internet/data market segment rose by 11.5 per cent during the period to reach 9.4 million from 8.5 million recorded during the previous quarter. CCK (2013) reported that mobile data/internet continued to dominate the internet market contributing 99 per cent of the total Internet/data subscriptions with Internet penetration going up by 4.3 percentage points to reach 41.1 percent up from 36.8 per cent during the previous period.

This increase was attributed to growing demand for Internet and data services, including use of social media especially among the youth. It is this demand and affinity for social media that mainstream media operations hope to capitalize on to drive traffic back to their platforms. It should also not be forgotten that at this point, many new employees, especially fresh college graduates, are already social media savvy.

On the other hand, The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group have launched several newspapers over the last few years. This points to a newspaper market that is still vibrant even in the face of digital media growth.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The incorporation of social media in the collection, processing, dissemination of information and feedback brings with it new ways of newsroom operations and management. Media organisations have developed digital teams charged with managing of their media websites and social media platforms. News sources have also changed from the traditional press releases to websites and short message systems.

With these changes, media organisations and journalists use social media as an information source in the information gathering news processing and dissemination. This development has

occasioned changes in newsrooms set-up and operations. The operations of journalists and their roles are fast changing.

This study sought to find out the role played by social media in the operations of The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group. This evaluation is critical to understanding the way social media has influenced their operations. It is significant that the two media houses are the largest and oldest media houses in the Kenya.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General objective

To investigate the manner in which social media have changed newsroom operations in Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the use of social media as a tool of collection, processing and dissemination of news in Kenyan newsrooms.
2. To find out adjustments made by Kenyan media houses to accommodate the use of social media.
3. To inquire into the structures put in place to ensure social media adhere to journalism tenets.

1.4 Research questions

1. How are social media used as a tool of collection, processing and dissemination of news in Kenyan newsrooms?
2. What adjustments are Kenyan media houses making to accommodate the use of social media?
3. What structures have been put in place to ensure social media use adheres to journalism tenets?

1.5 Justification for the study

The rise of social media over the last five years and their use in newsrooms continues to be the subject of debate and research. Distributed technologies, such as the internet and the proliferation of computer networks, inspired training programs all over the world to develop courses, curricula or even entire institutes devoted particularly to teach and study journalism in a ‘new media’ environment (Deuze, 2005). Today, news organisations have realised they cannot do away with social media and with time come to embrace their use. The question, however, is: How do these new media tools and platforms interact or intersect with traditional mainstream media platforms?

Media organisations have resorted to using new media tools either as a complementary tool for their traditional platforms such as a promotional tool for content on Radio, TV or newspapers; or seeking to grow these platforms, like Internet sites to become near standalone divisions, e.g. The Standard Digital. They aim to direct traffic back to TV, radio and newspapers. This is especially visible in online publications, like The Standard Group and Nation Media Group’s websites, where the reports posted on social media sites come with a link back to the organisations’ online portal with the intention of generating more hits.

This study sought to find out how the question of interactivity with other platforms. It sought to find out if the inclusion of social media in mainstream newsroom operations heralds a change in direction for the media in Kenya or merely a diversification of offering. Why should for instance, media houses invest heavily in new media platforms, including hiring personnel to man these sites, or is it just a passing phase? Which, given the fast evolving nature of new media approaches would not be too far off the mind of media managers.

Social media and the rise of citizen journalism challenges some tenets of traditional media. Deuze (2005) argues that a core aspect of professional knowledge is sourcing: Who are included or excluded as news actors in the media. But does this remain the same in the age of social media? This study sought to fill gaps in the understanding of the changes that the Kenyan media is undergoing in the face of the social media wave. The findings of the study could form a basis for media managers to better integrate or clearly define the role of social media in their newsroom to enhance efficiency and where possible monetize social media platforms.

1.6 Scope of the study

The research was limited to two major Kenyan media houses that is The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group. Within these organisations, the focus was on journalists in both online and traditional media. Of specific interest were those journalists charged with social media operations, and select others from other sections. The latter group provided invaluable insight into the effect of social media in the newsroom since some had been in the newsroom over a period that covers the two eras. That is the period before social media made an entry into media operations and today where social media is fast becoming an integral part of the newsroom.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Journalism is and has been theorised, researched, studied and criticised worldwide by people coming from a variety of disciplines. Indeed, research about journalism and among journalists has been established as a widely acknowledged field, particularly in the second half of the 20th Century (Deuze, 2005: 412)

With the continued revolution in the communications sector and specifically the media industry, sector players are embracing new ways of information dissemination and reaching out to their audience. This is seen in the growing use of social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and YouTube by the media as a platform for reaching their audience. Such social media platforms, however, despite breaking away from traditional mass communication platforms with the interaction with the audience becoming more pronounced and easy, do not operate in isolation but in interaction with these traditional platforms.

This interaction, however, is seen from different perspectives. Some quarters have argued that new media is quietly replacing traditional media or at best shrinking the space in which traditional mainstream media operates. When assessing journalists' views, new media was seen more as a threat than an opportunity. That it got in the way of traditional reporting (Usher N, 2010).

It points to uncertainty in the newsroom about what this new approach portends. Journalists do not know what the new business model will look like. All that journalists know is that they must go online. (Usher, 2010)

From a complementary angle, social media provides quick feedback for stories on other platforms. On Twitter and Facebook for instance, the audience with access to the media house's social pages, either as a fan on Facebook or followers on Twitter can engage with the story posted on such sites or on the company's website and linked back to social media pages. The increased audience participation is seen as a change, not just in the way media platforms

disseminate their content but also a developing field of media research. Audiences are no longer seen as undifferentiated mass of passive recipients of messages but a multitude of different groups.... (Williams, 1993: 190)

With time, media houses have embraced these platforms as a method for breaking news using the digital first approach where stories are first filed for the online platforms. But at the same time, there exists a split between social media practices and what journalists insist are the practices of established journalism (Usher, 2010: 916).

Technological developments have always had an effect on newsroom operations, and every time they did they generated a different dynamic.

Technological developments	Generate →→→→	Editorial effects
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(Boczkowski, 2004:198)

Looking at journalists' sentiments to the changing media landscape, Usher (2010) posits that local journalists, then, see themselves as crucial to sustaining local community.

This may also mean that the newspaper helps to indirectly maintain local power structures through its reliance on routines for coverage.but community has new ways of being revitalized and sustained – online and offline- and the newspaper need not be at the centre. (Usher, 2010: 918)

Changes in the media landscape have been the focus of research with these studies sharing a 'focus on the effects of technological innovation in editorial dynamics and products (Boczkowski, 2004: 198).

2.2 The Kenyan situation

The Kenyan Constitution and its approach to media is a good place to start when looking at the growth of social media. It is considered a major positive development in ensuring the free flow of information. It provides for freedom of media as a right and fundamental freedom. Section 34 guarantees the independence of electronic, print, and all other types of media (Nyabuga and Booker (2013)). At the same time, different factors have combined to enable Kenyans access online services with ease.

Market forces are playing their part in allowing ordinary Kenyans to benefit from the new possibilities offered by digitisation. Campaigns by mobile service providers Safaricom, Airtel, Orange, and Yu—offering cheap access to news and entertainment sites—have accelerated the uptake of such facilities. The development of news websites, in particular by media organizations like the Nation, the Standard, Capital FM, and KBC means that Kenyans are increasingly able to access digital news. (Nyabuga and Booker, 2013: 6)

The struggle with the liberal nature of new and emerging media has not escaped the local scene with Nyabuga and Booker (2013) arguing that the virtues associated with ethics—accuracy, honesty, truth, impartiality, fairness, balance, respect for autonomy of ordinary people—are barely respected, largely because there is no effective way of policing this, and there are no legal penalties. They point out that whereas the mainstream media were the main sources of news a few years ago, other sources of information have emerged.

The top social media sites in Kenya are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter which come at positions 2, 4 and 7 on www.alexa.com. LinkedIn comes in at position 14 and Instagram at position 23 (www.alexa.com, accessed 18/03/2015). Interestingly, on the same ranking, the top media websites are the Daily Nation website at position 10 and The Standard website at 11. Google and yahoo lead the rankings.

The most popular social network site in Kenya is Facebook with more than 2 million members. This has gained significant numbers due to mobile phone usage and the cheap rates offered by mobile phone service providers to access it (Nyabuga and Booker, 2013: 38).

To take advantage of the growing social media momentum, news organizations have established their own social media handles. News media, celebrities, and other organizations have Facebook

pages. Moreover, the media often advertise their Facebook accounts and ask people to comment on issues they may be handling. They also post audio-visual clips on YouTube. The Nation and Standard sites often post their video clips on YouTube. They also have Twitter and Facebook accounts (Nyabuga and Booker, 2013). Pitfalls, however, abound. Nyabuga and Booker (2013) give an example where in 2010, The Nation Media Group paid KSh6 million (US\$ 67,000) as a fine for comments posted by a reader on their site following a story that it carried.

This as a huge chunk of the literate population migrates online. The Guardian in a 2013 report to a changing dynamic in the social fabric during the 2013 elections with ‘the 18 million-strong internet population congregating in Facebook groups, behind Twitter avatars, and online at blogs and forums.’ The report shows the growth of social media with an anecdote on social media users taking The Daily Nation to task over a report it carried.

This year also saw tragedy in the form of the Westgate Mall attack. The Al-Qaeda linked group, Al Shabaab, used Twitter in a way that in today's digital age, the terrorists are as connected – and prepared to use that connectivity – as their victims. Kenyans retweeting and responding to the militant group didn't realise they were playing into their hands by amplifying their message when traditional media wouldn't. Kenya's traditional media came under fire, again on social media, for its ethics when portraying the crisis. A front cover of the Daily Nation sparked uproar and the newspaper's managing editor lost his job as a result. (Kaigwa, 2013)

Social media use in Kenya is growing fast and as a result, news organisations are going online to these social media sites to tap into this growth and in the process necessitating their (social media) inclusion in the newsroom operations.

2.3 Changing media landscape

The development of new media brought with it new challenges for the media industry, such as the redefining of the relationship with the reader. Seeing itself as part of a larger current of media revolutions, flows, and genealogies, new media theory has begun to look at new (digital) technologies in a comparative light (Hertz, 2006).

Despite the view of digital technologies as a possible replacement for traditional platforms, buoyed by the dropping readership of newspapers and competition for audiences, digital media

continues to be an interesting point of focus for media organisations trying to see how it fits into their model and the debate of complementarity or substitution. Severin and Tankard (2001) argue that older approaches to news are being replaced, but this is not going to be easy. ‘One possibility is that the new media, whatever they are, will take their place beside the old media, which may not go away’ (Severin and Tankard, 2001).

Social media would fall under Internet, also a fairly new platform of news dissemination coming in 1998, according to Severin and Tankard (2001), and with this a certain level of interactivity (William, 1993). The Internet brought with it new novel approaches, and in the short span of time, it has become central to communication, growing from web pages and e-mails to a growing family of bloggers and now growing to a multi-approach platform with the multiplicity of medium within a medium.

With social media holding a central place in today’s discourse about communication, there is the need to be able to understand how it works and what value it adds to already existing media. One of the factors touted as a positive development is the Internet, and the social media, is speed. Bentivegna (2002) argues that the speed of the Internet has no parallel in some of the traditional media, this, however, raises challenges in gate keeping.

Both synchronous and asynchronous communications permit the diffusion of texts and messages at a speed never before possible in the traditional media. Absence of boundaries not only contributes to the diffusion of arguments of potential interest to everyone but, contemporaneously, also permits the circulation of the experiences, opinions and proposals by all interested parties (Bentivegna as cited in Livingstone and Lievrouw, 2002).

Media organisations are trying to keep up with an ever-changing field, always evolving and moving on to the next thing before the industry has had time to figure out one medium well and how it marries with existing structures. Case in point the rapid revolution of social media and the coming in of more interactive and user friendly platforms, from MySpace to Twitter and Google+. New media offers a tremendous challenge to legacy news media and its practitioners (Usher, 2010).

Social networks have been a great boon for the practice of journalism, on stories large and small (Reuters Handbook of Journalism). Renowned news outlet, Reuters take on this is not much different from other organisations. Social networks also raise important questions for us, especially when we are using them to transmit rather than receive. The issues around what we can and cannot say there are a subject of constant conversation among us, so as this is not our first word on the subject, it will not be the last (Reuters). Reuters admit that they are also trying to figure out its working and how to use it to the benefit of the organisation.

Scholars have tried to look at the concept of developing technology in the field of communications with a focus on the flow of information and developing factors like convergence as an aspect of new media. One that many feel is the path the media industry is taking even as many contest that this does not mean the end of traditional journalism as we see it. Journalists often lack the vocabulary to talk about implications of new media for their work, and to understand how new media is radically transforming journalism (Usher, 2010: 913).

But does this have an effect on the practice and definition of journalism?

In decades of journalism studies, scholars refer to the journalists' professionalization process as a distinctly ideological development, as the emerging ideology served to continuously refine and reproduce a consensus about who was a 'real' journalist, and what (parts of) news media at any time would be considered examples of 'real' journalism. These evaluations shift subtly over time; yet always serve to maintain the dominant sense of what is (and should be) journalism. (Deuze, 2005: 444)

Jenkins (2006) in an introductory chapter aptly titled 'Worship at the Altar of Convergence' says by convergence he means the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the co-operation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want.

Convergence is generally seen in terms of (increasing) cooperation and collaboration between formerly distinct media newsrooms and other parts of the modern media company. (Deuze, 2004: 140). With convergence come different approaches to this cooperation including 'cross-promotion of projects, cross media advertisement sales, news sharing and partial integration of newsrooms' (Deuze 2004).

Klinenberg (2005) examines the point of journalistic production in one major news organisation and shows how reporters and editors manage constraints of time, space, and market pressure under regimes of convergence news making. From 1975 until today, major media companies have evolved through four key development strategies: First, taking companies out of private hands (usually ending the control of wealthy families who held long ties to the news profession), raising capital with public stock offerings and reforming the corporate mission to meet the bottom-line demands of stockholders, (Klinenberg, 2005). But convergence has not been without its challenges with scholars noting a general lack of consensus or even vision regarding the nature of changes brought about by convergence in an overview on new media innovation efforts in five European countries (Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands Switzerland and Austria) (Deuze, 2004).

At the same time, there is the characteristic of new media as creating a global village. William (1993) posits that they give the audience a platform where different worlds are collapsible and the emergence of a global consciousness. This comes with it the ability to exchange information across physical boundaries obliterated by the cyber world. Central to these new technologies and changing landscape is the question of audience participation. Jenkins (2006) contests that the circulation of media content — across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders — depends heavily on consumers' active participation.

William (1993) also points to the growing audience participation arguing that media theory now concentrates on how audiences generate meaning. With this then came the looking at the audience, or their role, by examining their creativity in the process of communication. Thus, despite the fast evolving technology the role of the audience still remains a centre of focus. 'Convergence does not occur through media appliances, however sophisticated they may become. Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others' (Jenkins, 2006).

Such scholars contend that consumption then becomes a collective process where everyone plays a part in the generation of meaning or interpretation of content. 'None of us know everything; each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and

combine our skills' (Jenkins, 2006). This paradigm shift in the communication sector is among the things that concern scholars in the New Media Theory. What does it mean for the media industry? Is it merely a new branch in communication, playing a complementary role? Or an entirely new approach spelling doom for traditional platforms?

In the 1990s, rhetoric about a coming digital revolution contained an implicit and often explicit assumption that new media was going to push aside old media, that Internet was going to displace broadcasting, and that all of this would enable consumers to more easily access media content that was personally meaningful to them (Jenkins, 2006). Usher (2010) writes that the news becomes conversational, open to questioning and with an empowered audience that can also create content.

With this paradigm shift then, the place of new media and the opportunities it offers for research come into focus. Indeed, a consensus is emerging within the maturing field of new media studies is imperative to put new media into context, to locate them within the social landscape, and to map the changing media environment in relation to the human activities which, in turn, structure that environment (Livingstone, 2002).

This understanding of the interplay between social media and the human activity and the media on the other hand is a complex process. With questions as to what role each of these elements plays in the communication process. Through the complex interplay between the social landscape and the human activity that it shapes and is shaped by, we are witnessing a process and consequences, the new media play a still hotly contested part (Livingstone, 2002).

Jankowski (2002) argues that talks about mediated forms of communication as one of the most compelling promises and prognoses made about old and new media. Disintermediation...as activated by the Internet refers to the emergence of a new communication model based on the disappearance of, or at least a significant reduction in the role of the story teller (Jankowski, 2002).

The agreement seems to be on the role of new media as a deconstruction of the traditional form of media. As an approach that deconstructs the relationship and nature of the flow of information, single to many to many to much structure (Brugger, 2003). Not to be overlooked is of course the growth of the information society (William, 1993) and the emerging technological opportunities driving this society. With this is the use of digital media as bringing new ways of transmitting and storing this information and their embrace by media organizations. With this also comes the aspect of the receiver of the message (content) not as a passive participant but also as an active player who constructively reacts to the report faster than traditional media platforms allow.

Then comes the aspect of the nature of new media as a constantly evolving field and the question whether new media (social media in this instance) is a challenge to traditional media in its effect of creating a global sphere that changes the way we connect (Hertz, 2006). At the same time, there is the characteristic of new media as creating a global village. Giving the audience a platform where different worlds are collapsible and the emergence of a global consciousness (William, 1993). This comes with it the ability to exchange information across physical boundaries obliterated by the cyber world.

The changing media landscape is, however, not a new thing. With previous works arguing that the events and situation of the day has a major role to play. Renwick (1957) argues the case of the changing face of mass communication and its study, claiming that in attempting to fulfill these goals, communication courses have treated mass media only as peculiar to our own day. 'There are several reasons why this was inevitable. In comparatively recent times the ratio of communicator to audience has been drastically reduced; on radio or television one speaker can talk to millions at one time.'

Fast-forward in time and the 21st Century presents another landscape altogether with a situation as diverse as it is contentious. Today, the feedback is near instant and the linkages move in nearly every direction.

2.4 Gate Keeping

The concept of new media and in this case social media brings with it the question of gate keeping. The fact that these social media posts and comments are usually real time with little filter, if any, is one that media scholars are bound to pay close attention to. Even reputable organisation manning their own social media sites are open to mistakes, sometimes with devastating consequences. Boczkowski (2004) writes that concerning work practices, scholars have suggested that a distributed and networked information infrastructure such as the Web challenges the need for traditional gate keeping roles because every node can be a sender and a receiver of news.

The move towards taking this role from the hands of gatekeepers has been in the making for a long time. As far back as 1957, Renwick pointed out changing ownership structures as a factor. He cites the tendency for ownership to be in the hands not of professional journalists but of men from other walks of life seeking to influence public opinion. Today in the Kenyan situation, the real money behind the media houses is hardly professional journalists.

Maisel (1973) presents a different version of events, putting forward what he calls the three-stage theory of social change and media growth. According to this theory, the third stage is characterised by a declining growth rate for mass media and an increasing growth rate for specialised communication directed to smaller, more homogeneous audiences.

But when looking at the social media as complementing, collaborating and competing with traditional/conventional platforms it is important to look at the concept of media synchronicity. Media synchronicity theory (MST) focuses on the ability of media to support synchronicity, a shared pattern of coordinated behavior among individuals as they work together. ...we do not argue that any one medium is inherently better than another. We argue that most tasks are composed of a series of communication processes that need different media capabilities (Dennis et al, 2008).

However, they argue that media richness is partly determined by ability to transmit certain clues and information, thus making face-to face communication, the richest while computer mediated

communication trails, but what does this say about the social media capability of fast communicator-audience relationship /feedback?

2.5 Theoretical framework

2.5.1 New Media Theory

In this study, the key theory was the new media theory. This theory concerns itself with how the advent of new media has affected the media landscape. Manovich (2001) points to new media in the 21st Century as the biggest revolution in the history of media. He argues that while the printing press in the fourteenth century and photography in the nineteenth century had a revolutionary impact on the development of modern society and culture, today we are in the middle of a new media revolution – the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication.

Manovich (2001) argues that this new revolution is arguably more profound than the previous ones, and we are just beginning to register its initial effects. Indeed, the introduction of the printing press affected only one stage of cultural communication – the distribution of media. Similarly, the introduction of photography affected only one type of cultural communication — still images. In contrast, the computer media revolution affects all stages of communication, including acquisition, manipulation, storage, and distribution; it also affects all types of media — texts, still images, moving images, sound, and spatial constructions.

The study looked at how the use of social media platforms in today's newsroom is bringing about a change in the way journalists do their work.

2.5.1.1 Changing coverage

Newman (2009) shows how social media is changing the way events are covered by giving examples of the Iranian election protests of 2009 and the G20 protests, also of 2009. He gives an example of asocial media that evades official government controls as well as the way social media gives the citizen journalist a wide reaching platform. Newman (2009) writes that the aftermath of the Iranian elections in June 2009 provided further compelling evidence of the power of user-generated footage.... Twitter, unlike Facebook, is more like a multi-headed hydra,

which does not operate through one set of Internet addresses but from hundreds of different applications and interfaces. Close one down and another can open up within minutes. Many of the most dramatic user generated clips were in fact sent outside Iran by email and then uploaded to social networks outside the country. (Newman 2009)

This example presents an insight into the operations of social media, which goes around controls subjected to other media. A lot on media houses, unable to get their own reporters on to the ground used user-generated material on news bulletins and updates. While this has been hailed as revolutionary when it comes to stifling government control in nations with limited media freedom, it is also a challenge to traditional journalistic practices of accuracy and objectivity. As Newman (2009) admits, mainstream, organisations faced dilemma in assessing how to integrate user-generated content into their coverage. There was a huge amount of noise and false information generated by these networks, some of which was deliberately placed to influence the debate (and) there was very little balance on Twitter and other social networks: conversation was overwhelmingly in favour of opposition candidate Mr. Hossein Mousavi, who tended to attract the support of younger, more computer-literate Iranians, as well as activists in the, (Newman, 2009).

This study sought to find out how much the Nation Media Group and the Standard Group utilise social media as a means of collecting information and how much of this information is integrated into news bulletins and reports.

It is important to note that social media is partly driven by immediacy, which could lead to embarrassing mistakes. In the traditional newspaper setup for instance, the chain of production from the reporter to the chief-subeditor, editor and revise editors provides an elaborate checks and balances system for quality and accuracy. In social media, however, this is circumvented, or in many cases missing altogether.

In the case of Kenyan media houses, employees (usually sub-editors or editors) are entrusted with such media platforms and trusted to make the right call before tweeting on posting Facebook status update on company platforms. Along this line, the study will seek to find out

what controls these two media organisations have put in place to ensure fairness and accuracy and whether this affects speed, which is a key factor of social media.

Newman (2009) captures the dilemma of mainstream media operations in the face of social media in what can be seen as a fight of speed against accuracy. On the coverage of the Iranian election protests, he writes that they (mainstream media organisations) felt outflanked in terms of speed, previously an area many had built their brands around, but all felt uncomfortable running unverified reports and made every attempt to find corroboration before publication or broadcast. Nyabuga and Booker (2013) point out that major news media's online presence enables them to disseminate their material to wider audiences. 'This is especially true of, for instance, the Nation and Standard media groups that publish video clips of their investigative reports on their websites. The same can also be viewed on their YouTube and Facebook accounts' (Nyabuga and Booker, 2013).

The concept of immediacy is, however, not foreign to traditional news media as well. This is, however, a debate that scholarly literature is rekindling in the face of emerging practices driven by the Internet (Deuze, 2005)

According to journalists, their work is reporting the news. This lends the work of journalists an aura of instantaneity and immediatism, as 'news' stresses the novelty of information as its defining principle. The work of journalists therefore involves notions of speed, fast decision-making, hastiness, and working in accelerated real-time. (Deuze, 2005: 449)

2.5.1.2 New media effects

Klineneberg (2005) puts forward as one of the key changes brought about by the changing media landscape as the new newsroom where the time cycle is unending and journalists are juggling additional responsibilities. Among the effect this comes with is frustration among journalists as the age of the converged reporter takes root.

The time cycle for news making in the age of digital production is radically different: the regular news cycle has spun into an erratic and unending pattern that I characterize as a news cyclone. The advent of twenty-four-hour television news and the rapid emergence of instant Internet news sites have eliminated the temporal borders in the news day, creating an informational environment in which there is always breaking news to

produce, consume, and — for reporters and their subjects? — react against. (Klinenberg, 2005)

Klinenberg (2005) adds that perhaps the deepest source of the journalists' frustration is their perception that the new environment has forced them to take on additional responsibilities in the same work period, which has particularly severe consequences for cultural production that requires serious, independent thinking. The same time argues that the most exciting innovations in journalistic forms, particularly those involving multimedia packages disseminated through the Internet, have received little support from news organisations because they are not profitable (Klinenberg, 2005).

2.5.1.3 Quality of reports

A key concept in journalism is that of objectivity, yet new technological changes are not making it easier for journalists to achieve this objectivity. An active awareness of (the potential added value of) new media technologies and cultural plurality makes the core value of objectivity more complex (Deuze, 2005).

Nyabuga and Booker (2013) weigh in on the question of gate keeping as it relates to traditional journalism practices of fairness and accuracy arguing that in online journalism, the virtues associated with ethics—accuracy, honesty, truth, impartiality, fairness, balance, respect for autonomy of ordinary people—are barely respected.

Although new technologies have affected changes the amount of information and the rate of reception, it is not clear whether these have had any significant effect on the quality of information and news. In fact, there are claims that rising competition and the obsession to provide exclusive news may have negatively affected the quality, reliability, and validity of information. Although immediacy is important particularly among audiences which want to know what is going on around the country, sometimes the media houses do not have the time, capacity, or other resources to authenticate the information sent out as breaking news. This means the new technologies may in fact contribute to unreliable and raw information that may affect the credibility of established or conventional news media organizations to provide reliable news. (Nyabuga and Booker, 2013: 27)

The question of credibility and ethics, especially, when it comes to social media is one that major media organisations are still grappling with. So much that there has been a push to consolidate

such corporations social media platforms and image under one department with all social media communication going through certain specific people hired for that job.

As Nyabuga and Booker (2003) point out that while media houses are wary of the penalties for defamation, and avoid material if published or broadcast offline, comments allowed on newspapers' online sites are sometimes inaccurate and full of invective and the Facebook pages of the newspapers and broadcast media either intentionally, or because of a lack of moderation, allow the publication of material that could be considered unethical.

However, the desire to attract a population that is increasingly going online, and especially in the case of the Kenyan population with a growing use of smart phones and Internet connectivity, the social media is an open playing field.

This study sought to find out whether proper checks and balances have been developed for online departments and how journalists perceive their efficiency and application. It also sought to understand how the two media firms treat news dissemination on social media and what rules there are on how individual journalists use of private social media accounts in the course of their duties.

2.6 Summary

During the process of reviewing literature, it became clear that little has been done to study the effects of new media, and by extension, social media, in the Kenyan newsroom. This is despite, it being clear the digital revolution is a central aspect of the changing face of the media industry, and with come social media. Their place within the spectrum of the traditional media operations is one that is yet to be fully quantified. What is not in question however is that media organisations are increasingly adopting the use of social media in their operations. This is either as a standalone product or in many cases to support their traditional platforms.

This adoption of social media and its use within the newsroom thus is both an interesting area of study to scholars and one that practitioners are still trying to get a handle on. Today, no one has a proper answer on the future of the newsroom in the face of growing social media usage, or

whether at the end of the day it will prove beneficial or harmful. However, certain changes both support and contradict this.

On one hand, newsgathering capabilities and interaction with audiences has seen a massive transformation, on the other hand is the question of traditional journalism values being compromised on the altar of immediacy. Deuze (2005) writes that multimedia's careful embrace of interactivity as well as a merging of different cultures (print, broadcast, online; 'hard' and 'soft' news, marketing and editorial) within the news organization – a perceived necessary by-product of convergence – confronts the individual professional with multiple interpretations of objectivity. Although these developments are welcome in a fast-changing media environment, the quality and even credibility and reliability of news and information are sometimes questionable (Nyabuga and Booker, 2013). Scholars like Klinenberg (2005) argue that more attention needs to be paid to examining how organisations responsible for producing the news and information work.

This study sought to shed some light into the growing use of social media in Kenyan newsrooms by journalists and while at the same time establishing their (journalists') attitude and perception towards the use of social media in the news gathering process. It also sought to find out what measures NMG and SG have put in place to ensure that the use of such media adheres to key journalistic tenets like accuracy and objectivity and what changes they have instituted to make the adoption of social media efficient without compromising news quality.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research took a qualitative approach. It used questionnaires, utilising both open and close-ended questions to find out the effect that social media have had on newsroom operations in Kenya. Respondents were required to give their views on how the use of social media by their media house changed the way they operated. The respondents were sampled from The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group.

The choice of the two media firms was informed mainly by the popularity of the selected media houses in the Kenyan market and their embracing the use of social media platforms in their business models. The Standard Group and Nation Media Group have vibrant digital departments committed to their online platforms including their social media handles and fan pages. The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group are leading media houses and have been in the midst of transforming structures built over time to adapt to a changing operating environment. The Standard Group was started in 1901 (www.standardmedia.co.ke) and the Nation Media Group came into being in 1959 (www.nationmedia.com).

This research was limited to respondents selected purposefully because of their role in the newsroom or the level of interaction with social media. The study included journalists who were in the newsroom before the advent of social media as well as those that joined these newsrooms over the last five years as the social media wave started being felt. The latter included those employees in these companies who are officially tasked with the responsibility of coordinating new media platforms, which include the company's official social media pages.

The study sought to identify specific ways in which operations in these newsrooms have changed and also seek to find out from respondents what they think about such changes. This will give respondents the freedom to evaluate these changes and give their views on the changes.

3.2 Area of study

The area of study is Nairobi City. This was chosen because it is within the city that the two major

media houses in Kenya – The Nation Media Group and The Standard Group – are based. The respondents were journalists working within the two media houses in Nairobi. The research sought out both male and female respondents at different levels in their respective companies' hierarchy. This was so as to capture the views of different respondents charged with different responsibilities in the companies' day to day operations. They ranged from reporters and correspondents to sub-editors and editors. The choice of Nairobi was based on the structure of these companies where journalists based in Nairobi are at the heart of these companies' new media operations.

At the same time, all line editors and senior editors are based in Nairobi. The choice of these two media houses was based on their new media footprint. www.alexacom.com, a web ranking service puts the Standard Digital website, www.standardmedia.co.ke, as the second most visited media site in the country, topped only by the Nation Media Group's, www.nation.co.ke. (www.alexacom.com, 16/04/2015).

3.3 Population and sampling

The population in this research was journalists (correspondents, reporters, sub-editors and editors) in the two newsrooms purposefully sampled. Social media in this study included Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Twitter. The sample population comprised journalists charged with the management and development of social media platforms in these organisations as well as those who had served in the newsroom before the advent of social media. Also included were journalists who use social media in their daily work. The respondents were able to look at the changing landscape and give a comprehensive account of the influence of social media in the day-to-day operations at their respective newsrooms.

A sample of 50 journalists was selected; 25 from the Nation Media Group and 25 from the Standard Group. These journalists comprised editors, sub-editors, reporters and photo-journalists.

	Editors	Sub-Editors	Reporters	Photo-journalists	Total
SG	6	6	10	3	25
NMG	4	7	9	5	25
Total	10	13	19	8	50

Table 1 Questionnaires distributed

Questionnaires were distributed to respondents by the researcher or through key contact people in these media houses. Although the respondents were required to give clear and concise answers to some questions through the use of closed ended questions, they were given the liberty to explain their choices through the use of open ended questions coming after some closed ended questions so they can elaborate and also so that the research can benefit from an insight into their answers and views.

	Editors	Sub-Editors	Reporters	Photo-journalists	Total
SG	6	6	8	3	23
NMG	2	6	7	4	19
Total	8	12	15	7	42

Table 2 Questionnaires returned

	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Total
SG	12	11	23
NMG	14	5	19
	26	16	42

Table 3 Respondents (by gender)

This research took a purposive approach to sampling. This was guided by the nature and structure of these organisations. The purposive approach was taken because the nature of the topic requires the identifying of key people in the targeted organisation with the required information, thus necessitating the use of a specific manageable sample. The characteristics this

study sought requires deliberate pinpointing of key people in these company's digital divisions.

According to Coyne (1997), in qualitative research sample selection has a profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research. Categories such as age, gender, status, role or function in organization, stated philosophy or ideology may serve as starting points. Therefore, a purposeful sample, Coyne argues involves the researcher actively selecting the most productive sample to answer the research question.

In this case purposive sampling was adopted because of the nature of the research, the organisations in question and target population. As is the case with purposive sampling, the respondents needed to be a very specific group of people with clearly defined characteristics that would otherwise not be guaranteed by other methods. The respondents were required to have interacted with social media in the course of their work, either as part of requirements by their employer or in an individual capacity. The Standard Group and the Nation Media group are aggressively fighting for growing online presence. In this case both of which have a significant presence online and are still pushing to grow this presence.

Within these organisations, there are specific departments and people tasked with the oversight of social media operations and their day to day running. At the same time there are individuals who, by nature of their work, regularly juggle between the traditional media platforms like the newspaper and the online sections. These online sections are the departments under which the companies' social media platforms fall.

Thus, individuals tasked with handling social media operations were singled out. However, in keeping with the objective of the research of looking at the effect of social media in the newsroom, journalists from other departments were also be sampled.

	Digital	Print	Broadcast	Total
SG	5	12	6	23
NMG	4	10	5	19
Total	9	22	11	42

Table 4 Respondents (by department)

3.3.1 Validity, reliability and generalisation

Participant validation was sought by presenting the findings of this study to sections of respondents.

On generalization and reliability, purposive sampling's key limitation is the influence of the researcher's subjectivity and the question of generalisation to the larger population. Horgsburgh (2003) argues that in qualitative work, participants for their ability to provide information about the area under investigation. In which case situational, rather than demographic, representativeness is what is sought.

Golafshani (2003) argues on the place of reliability in qualitative research, writing: The difference in purposes of evaluating the quality of studies in quantitative and quantitative research is one of the reasons that the concept of reliability is irrelevant in qualitative research. This since reliability issue concerns measurements. Golafshani argues for terms like dependability and generalisation.

Generalisation would apply to the extent to which the conclusion from this study may be exported to provide explanatory theory for the experiences of other individuals in comparable situations. (Horgsburgh, 2003). With this in mind, this study's findings can be used to logically explain theoretical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomena rather than probabilistic generalizations to a population, as Popay et al (1998) quoted in Horgsburgh (2003) argues.

3.4 Data collection

For the purpose of this study, the data was collected through questionnaires administered to target population from these two media houses. The questionnaires were administered directly by the researcher. Tan (1985) points out that validity of self-reports can be increased by using standardized questionnaires. For this study, however, a composite of structured and unstructured questions were used to get the best response from the respondents and give them latitude to elaborate on their answers.

The study sought to establish to which extent and how the respondents use social media in the course of their work. It also sought to find out what influence the respondents think social media has on their everyday activities in the workplace and what they think is the future of the usage of social media in the newsroom.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis in this case used a qualitative approach. This was informed by the nature and aim of the study, where it was interested in finding out the nature of effects social media has had in newsroom operations. As such, the questions asked in the questionnaires used included open-ended questions requiring the respondents to explain their position.

The data collected from the respondents was more likely to be the respondents' own observation, backed by their daily works and how they think this has changed — or remained the same, something that was best suited by adopting a qualitative approach.

4.0 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study carried out on the manner in which social media has impacted mainstream newsroom operations in Kenya, a case study of the Nation Media Group and The Standard Group.

The overall objective was to find out how journalists use social media in their daily activities of gathering and disseminating information and what they perceive is the impact of social media on their jobs. The findings are based on questionnaires administered in April 2015 to journalists from the two media houses.

A total of 50 journalists were selected from the Nation and Standard media groups and issued with questionnaires made up of both open ended and closed questions. The selected journalists came from different editorial departments. The first focus was on the companies' online / digital departments where I singled out those charged with running these departments and those who specifically handle the companies' social media accounts under these departments.

The rest of the population was picked from other editorial departments, taking care to select individuals from across the job cadres (correspondents, reporters, photo-journalists, sub-editors and editors). The sample population also sought to include journalists with different years of experience in the industry.

The respondents were given an explanation of the study and its purpose before being issued with questionnaires. They were then left with the questionnaires for a period of between two days and one week. Out of the 50 questionnaires distributed, 42 were filled and returned.

Media House	Number of respondents	Distributed Questionnaires
Standard Group	23	25
Nation Media Group	19	25
Total	42	50

Table 5 Respondents

	Male	Female	Total
SG	14	11	25
NMG	17	8	25
Total	31	19	50

Table 6 Sample by gender

4.2.1 Presence on social media

Of the three social media sampled, response showed that Facebook was the most popular with most of the respondents on it, followed by twitter and then Instagram. 95% of respondent were on Facebook while 90% are on twitter and 38% on Instagram. Also 38% were on all three social media while 42% were on both Facebook and Twitter but not Instagram. 14% were on Facebook only and 5% on Twitter only.

SOCIAL MEDIA	RESPONDENTS
Facebook	95%
Twitter	90%
Instagram	38%

Table 7 Presence on selected social media

SOCIAL MEDIA	RESPONDENTS
Facebook, Twitter and Instagram	38%
Facebook and Twitter only	42%

Table 8 Distribution in selected social media

4.2 Social media as a tool for collecting and/or disseminating news

Nearly all respondents, 90%, admitted to using social media to get in touch with sources and disseminating their stories. A running theme through this was the ease and speed that social media affords journalists in their quest to get in touch with newsmakers or their readers. Respondents pointed out that it was a lot easier to gain access to important sources with social media handles more quickly by approaching them directly, than they would by using other channels.

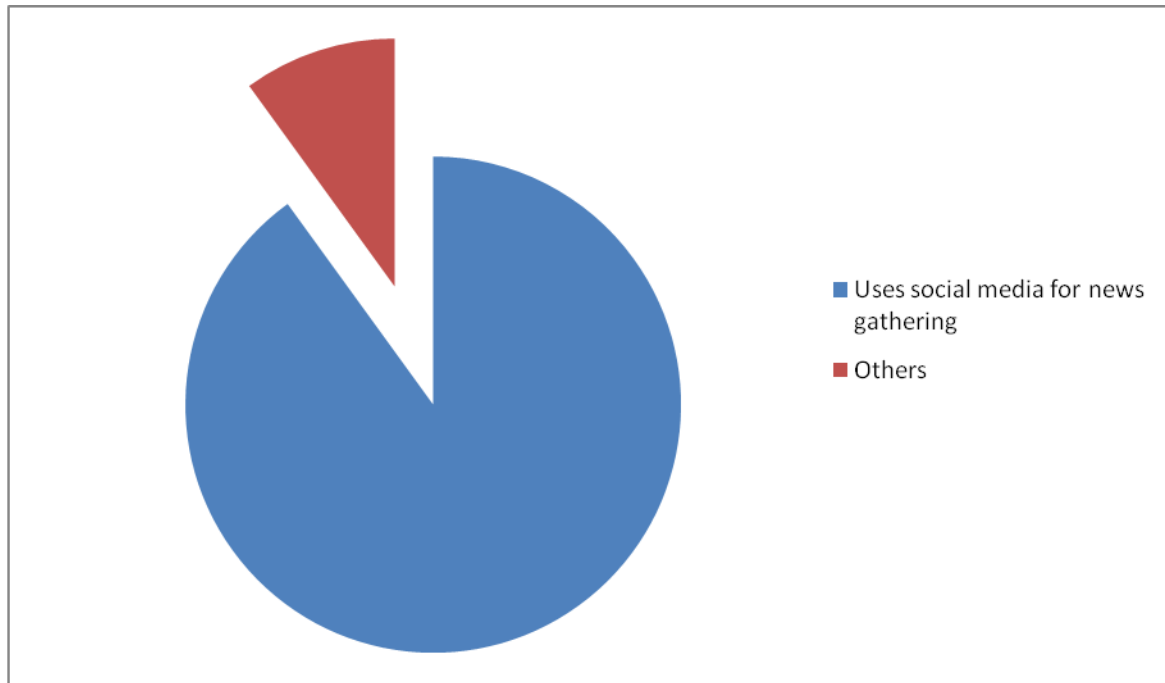


Table 9 Using social media to get in touch with sources

Respondents also felt that it was efficient to stay on top of breaking news through the crowd sourcing approach by looking at what people posting or tweeting about the same event. At the same time, journalists felt that using social media opens up their pool of sources to include individuals who would not necessarily be newsmakers in the traditional sense. The question of interaction is another angle with journalists responding that they can post links to their own stories on their individual social media handles to their followers and get feedback on the same channels.

However, while nearly all respondents indicated that their company encourages the use of social media in the line of duty, only 68% have at one time or other been required to post stories to social media. For those who work in the online departments, this is part of their job description and they are required to post stories and links to stories on the companies, social media handles continuously. It is, however, important to note that even journalists in other editorial departments have at times been required to post stories or links to stories on social media. Even where no such directive exists from the editorial managers, respondents indicated that they posted or tweeted stories or links social media handles directing the audience back to their stories on all the same.

4.3 Adjustments made to accommodate the use of social media

Respondents were in agreement that the establishment of semi-autonomous online and digital departments with their own reporting structure is the single biggest adjustment that the two media firms have made to accommodate the use of social media. Both the Nation Media Group and the Standard Media Group have vibrant online departments staffed with journalists whose key duty is to handle the companies' online presence, including official social media handles.

In addition, these online departments have created different social media pages and accounts to cater to different audience segments. In the case of the Nation Media Group, respondents indicated that reporters are equipped with smart phones so they can submit breaking news and story updates from the field back to the office as may be necessary. Data collected indicates that the provision of free Wi-Fi in the office environment also makes it easier for journalists to log onto and use social media from their mobile phones. Respondents felt this was important with a few pointing out that some offices in other sectors have actively curtailed access to social media during working hours. Their having access to free Wi-Fi then makes it easier for journalists to post to social media.

4.4 Structures in place to handle breaking news on social media

From the data collected, journalists thought credibility was a source for concern when using social media due to the ease with which users pass on unverified information. Respondents felt that social media are often prone to manipulation and sensationalism, often seeing cases where

non-stories have become a talking point. They also felt that a lot of times there is not adequate time to verify information received from social media leading to the risk of passing on incorrect information to readers.

In the case of gate keeping within the media house, 68% of respondents felt that those who handle social media platforms for the two media houses are held to the same standards as journalists from other departments. 21% thought they were allowed too much independence and were not held to the same accountability as other journalists while 11% were not sure.

Most respondents felt that official company social media handles and pages are much more careful and are subjected to checks that reduce the risk of passing on incorrect information. For instance, only the people in-charge of these social media accounts and post on them and in the case of breaking news, this is only after it has been approved by the editor in charge. Other routine tasks merely involve the posting and updating stories that have already been published by other editorial arms of the company and would have thus passed through careful processes of editing and verification.

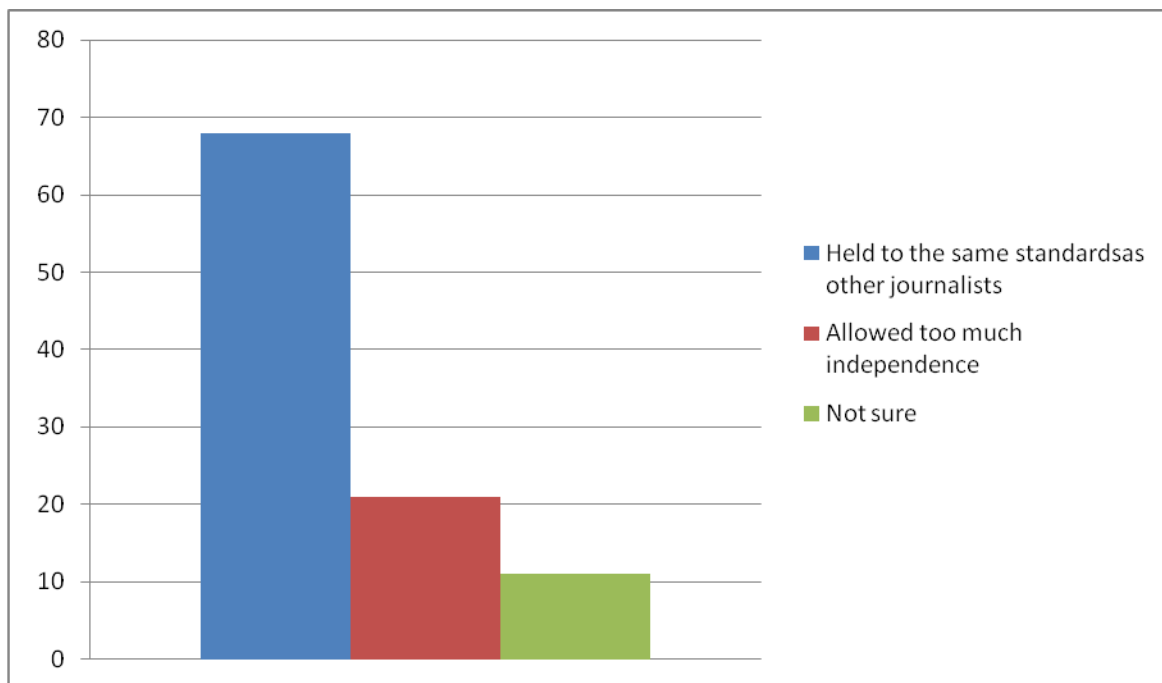


Table 10 Gate keeping

Data collected showed that those employed to be in charge of official social media handles are trained journalists, with similar qualifications to journalists in other departments, and thus understand what was required of them and the tenets that guide the practice of journalism. Respondents argued that these (journalist who handle official social media handles) do the same work as other journalists in other editorial sections, albeit on a different platform, so at the end of the day the same standards apply it would not do post unverified information. One respondent elaborated: "...at the end of the day the content posted is from a media house and has to be at par with (requirements for) editors and reporters." Another responds: "We all have to abide by the Social Media Policy drafted by the company. They are also trained journalists who have to abide by the code of conduct of the Media Council of Kenya."

Those with opposing views, however, thought that social media journalists within the companies were allowed to operate without proper checks in place, leading to poor quality work where errors abound. One respondent argued that part of the problem was a lack of synergy between the employees handling company social media accounts and journalists in the field who would be able to quickly give them up to date information and verify facts.

4.5 Social media as a threat or opportunity to mainstream platforms and newsrooms

Findings on this question indicated the journalists are split on what the growing use of social media portends for the mainstream newsroom, but the majority think it was an opportunity. This is supported by 71% of the respondents. One respondent thought it was both a threat and opportunity dependent on how media firms harnessed its potential, writing: "It is a threat to those who do not adjust to the reality that the new media is now part and parcel of news gathering and dissemination. It is an opportunity on the other hand to those media houses that embrace it because the current and future age groups will determine the future of the media. Given that they are in to social media, it is important for media houses to understand how to capture this market."

Respondents who view social media as a threat to other media argued that the younger market segment is more focused on the digital spectrum and would identify more with social media that

other more traditional media. They couple this with the speed of social media arguing that breaking news reach the audience faster and other media, like newspapers, are left playing catch-up. However, these were in the minority.

Most supported this view with respondents pointing out that social media plays more of a complementary role to other media, helping reach more people and ultimately drive more traffic back to these media platforms. One wrote: “They (social media) are more of a support mechanism that take content faster and directly to the people (audience.” Supporters of this view said that social media serve to aid even these traditional media in the collection of news not to forget helping media houses take advantage of the changing dynamics in the market where younger readers are going for online news sources and hence harnessing social media properly gives a media house a foothold in the new direction.

4.6 The future of social media in a newsroom set-up

Data collected proposed that newsrooms have no option but to find ways of working with social media in an effort to embrace the changing operating environment. The growing use of social media means that different platforms have little option but to work together. Respondents said media companies were putting more and more resources into the digital platforms, an indication that media managers are taking it them seriously.

Respondents argued that the focus now should not be on whether or not social media has a place in the newsroom but rather how media firms can harness these platforms and make money out of them to boost their bottom lines.

4.7 Discussion of findings

This section presents a discussion of the key points that came out of the findings of the study of impact of social media on Kenyan mainstream newsroom operations. They are presented guided by the framework set by the research aims, objectives and questions.

The findings of this study were based on how journalists perceive the growing use of social media aid or impede them in their work and what they feel is the place and future of the use of social media in the newsroom.

4.7.1 Social media as a tool for collecting and disseminating news

The research question sought to investigate how much journalists use social media in their primary duty of news collecting and dissemination. Data collected indicate that a majority of the respondents have used social media in news collection. Some indicated that they saw social media as an easier and faster way to reach sources who would otherwise have taken long to reach. Data collected proposes that approach to news collection and dissemination is changing with journalists using what would otherwise be considered informal approaches to news sources. At the same time, these media have made it easier for journalists to monitor developing stories from their mobile phones as well as giving journalists a wider pool of sources including those that would otherwise not fall under the umbrella of traditional news sources.

They have essentially opened up the news process to include practically everyone with access to a smart phone and is social media savvy to contribute to news stories and debates. This gives a rise to the growing concept of citizen journalism where everyone with an internet connection can report on what is happening in their locality, and quite often this is picked up by mainstream channels as valid commentary on news stories.

It is also important to look at the concept of dissemination of news as receiving new angle. While companies have their official social media handles; the main ones for the Standard Group are The Standard Media Group (<https://www.facebook.com/standardkenya>) and KTN Kenya (www.twitter.com/KTNKenya) on Facebook, @KTNKenya and @StandardKenya on twitter. The main social media handles for Nation Media Group are @dailynation and @ntvkenya on Twitter and Daily Nation (www.facebook.com/DailyNation) and NTV Kenya (www.facebook.com/NTVKenya) on Facebook. These handles represent these two companies biggest social media presence riding on the companies' flagship products; The Standard and KTN for The Standard Media Group and Daily Nation and NTV for the Nation Media Group.

The two media firms also command a host of other social media handles tailor-made for other products within their stables.

While these are used as the companies' official platforms, individual journalists have no qualms about using their individual social media accounts to post updates of news stories or using links to lead their fans or followers back to stories they have written and are carried on the other platforms.

In this way then, the media house gains audience traffic, not just through official channels but through social media endorsement and linking by journalists. Which would then raise the question; should media houses be doing more to harness the social media capabilities beyond those which they control directly but also indirectly through their employees? However, that is beyond the scope of this study.

The other angle that came out of the data collected was that of audience feedback, with respondents feeling that using social media makes it easier for them to interact with their audience. This is a characteristic of new media where audience feedback is much faster today. Tied to this is the changing concept of news transmission. While traditional media operated on a unidirectional format from source to audience, the emerging format is much more cyclical where the audience can be also the source.

4.7.2 Adjustments made to accommodate the use of social media

Here, the study sought to understand and look at what the Nation Media Group and the Standard Media Group are doing towards aiding their journalists embrace the use of social media. The biggest investment, according to the data collected is the creation of entire departments / divisions to handle the companies' online presence, including social media. Both NMG and SG have fully fledged online departments that are in charge of their companies' websites and social media presence. These are essentially new media departments focusing on the digital spectrum.

This piece of information points to a situation where these companies are taking new media presence seriously. In addition, the journalists being employed to run these departments come in with the same qualifications as those in other editorial departments.

Within these departments are people employed to handle the companies' social media accounts. One take from the data collected is that these handles are many, all tailor made to cater to different audience segments. In this case, social media presents a quicker and cheaper way to cater for different audiences without going into costly investments of creating a whole new media products for these audiences.

A trend in new media is a situation where as media grow, they grow with them the need to cater to specific audiences and address themselves to these audiences, this study shows that social media is making this much more possible.

Respondents from the Nation Media Group indicated that the company went further to provide reporters with smart phones so they can relay multi-media messages back to the newsroom as and when it happens. They do not have to go back to the newsroom to give updates to developing stories or submit breaking news. Again this meshes with the characteristic of new media where their growth and adoption and driven by technology that make it easier to use such media.

That NMG enabled journalists get smart phones would be an indicator that the media house understands the value of such technology and what they stand to gain by adapting its use and, essentially, staying ahead of the curve.

4.7.3 Structures put in place to ensure social media adhere to journalism tenets

This question was influenced out of a recurring theme identified at the literature review stage. The issue of gate keeping or lack of it is prominent in any discussion about the use of new media. This is even more so when it comes to social media where speed is the name of the game. There is also the characteristic of social media where everyone with an Internet connection is a

publisher who can put out information for public consumption without the same information going through another party for verification or second opinion.

This question sought to find out how NMG and SG are handling the question of editorial checks on media that are fraught with incidences of sensationalism, inaccurate information or sometimes the peddling of outright lies.

Data collected showed that the two media companies had put in place editorial checks to reduce errors and ensure that information put out through their social media handles meet the basic journalistic threshold of fairness, accuracy and objectivity. Respondents indicated that even though there are social media account managers, they (social media managers) were only allowed to post breaking news updates after they have been approved by the editor in charge. This in an effort to make sure that there are controlled news processing channels that ensure accountability. At the same time, the fact that these social media managers are qualified journalists and are specifically mandated to manage these accounts that makes it easier for the media houses to ensure that information disseminated meets a certain threshold.

However, a few respondents were not entirely convinced that social media updates were subjected to the same scrutiny as other stories emanating from other editorial sections within the newsroom. A few felt that social media account handlers acted more independently and were prone to post updates that have been found to have been inaccurate or fraught with grammatical errors.

This study therefore proposed that while the two media companies are working towards implementing proper editorial checks and balances, they still needed to tighten such checks and also ensure that the rest of the newsroom understands what the digital departments are up to.

4.7.4 Social media policies

Data collected indicated that both NMG and SMG have set out social media policies to guide their journalists' operations. Theoretically, editorial and social media policies give direction and guidance to journalists in the course of their work. Both the Standard Media Group and the

Nation Media Group have social media policies to guide what their employees do, whether on official company social media accounts and their own personal accounts and handles.

NMG's social media policy, set out in February 2012 sets out NMG's focus in the use of social media networks and says it provides key guidelines to help NMG journalists in the use of such platforms without undermining their professionalism and compromising the company's credibility as a purveyor of authoritative, truthful and non-biased news and information.

The SG social media policy follows the same tone, requiring that all social media posts and messaging must be objective, balanced, issue-driven, accurate, timely, credible, in public interest, capturing main issue/s, factual, relevant and dependable. It also requires employees to identify themselves as being from Standard Group if they are using their accounts for work in any way, and that they must also have a disclaimer stating that the views expressed on that platform are their own and not necessarily those of the employer. The NMG social media policy points out that social media platform have become important sources of news gathering for journalists.

They (social media) are also major channels for publishing news and information to the general public. NMG journalists are encouraged to use them. While the use of social media in journalists' working and personal lives has a greater impact, it is always difficult to draw a distinct line between professional and personal conduct. As an NMG journalist, it makes little difference whether you identify yourself on social media as such or not since your actions will almost always be linked back to your profession and ultimately to NMG as your employer. (NMG Social Media Policy, February 2012).

The policy further spells out that journalists using social networking sites as a source of news should apply the same journalistic principles as they would to any other method of newsgathering. It points out that while exercising caution, journalists are not barred from using their accounts to engage audiences about news subjects.

Journalists are also cautioned against indicating their political allegiance or inclinations on social networking sites as such a disclosure can damage the Group's reputation as an unbiased source of news. Journalists are at the same time advise against breaking news (on personal sites and

handles) that the company NMG has not published or sanctioned, with exclusive content or photos required to be submitted through existing news processes for vetting and publishing.

The SG social media policy goes further to caution its journalists on the unreliability of information from social media.

It can be difficult to verify the identity of sources found on social networks. Sources discovered there should be vetted in the same way as those found by any other means. If a source you encounter on a social network claims to be an official from a company, organization or government agency, call the place of business to confirm the identity, just as you would if a source called on the phone. (Standard Group Social Media Policy, January 2013)

These requirements spelt out in social media policies corroborate respondents feedback that once journalists have been associated with one media company are viewed through this prism, making it difficult to, sometimes, differentiate them in their personal capacities. In this case then, individual journalists are viewed as representatives of their respective companies and anything they say or do even on their own social media accounts would be linked with the company they work for. Respondents pointed out that it is sometimes the case for journalists to declare that their posts on individual social media accounts are not representative of the views of their employer in a bid to differentiate and disassociate the same from what the company stands for.

4.7.5 Social media as a threat or opportunity

This question sought to find out what journalists think about the use of social media in the newsroom. As the findings indicated, a majority saw it as an opportunity while others were a little more wary, viewing the adoption and use of social media as part of change wave that would ultimately see the new media pushing out traditional media. While those who saw these media as a threat were bent towards the school of thought that new media were replacing traditional media, those who saw it as an opportunity leaned towards the view that newsrooms and media managers ought to harness social media and make it work for them.

One key strand of thought is that social media played a supporting role to other media, essentially a ‘medium’s medium’, where they relayed information already on these other platforms and led the eyeballs back to the original source. While this may be true, these

overlooked the use of social media to independently run breaking news updates without referring to a second media.

Another thought was that social media is here to stay and that those who adapted fast and harnessed them would be ahead of the curve. Here, the question of making money out of the companies' social media presence came up with respondents arguing that the question should be how these companies can use social media to boost their revenues. This points to an acceptance of social media and challenge to media managers and the business units within these media companies as to how they can turn their social media presence into an income generating product.

This poses an interesting approach to social media in the newsroom debate. The rule of the thumb in media economics is that you attract eyeballs and use this to make money. The challenge for managers in these media houses now being how to turn their commanding presence on social media into more money in company coffers. NTV has 1.6 million likes on Facebook and 876,000 followers on Twitter; KTN has 1.7million likes on Facebook and 817,000 followers on twitter; Daily Nation has 1.7 million likes on Facebook and 700,000 followers on Twitter; Standard Kenya has 913,000 likes on Facebook and 466,000 followers on twitter. This as of August 5, 2015.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was clear that journalists have embraced the use of social media in news gathering and dissemination with 90 per cent having used social media to get in touch with news sources at one time or other. It is also significant that even the few who responded that they had not used social media to reach out or get information from news sources operate social media accounts, with most of the respondents posting news stories to social media platforms.

Social media plays a complementary role to other media platforms, in the case of The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group these platforms are TV, newspapers and radio. This complementary role happens with social media helping drive traffic to these other platforms and generate debate around topical issues with the audience and traditional news sources. The study also found out that social media has increased the pool of news sources with people who would otherwise not feature as traditional newsmakers riving debate of topical issues.

Another element that comes across is the ease of audience feedback coupled with what could be looked at as enhancing the news gathering and dissemination cycle. Those who could be considered as only the audience in tradition platforms like newspapers are today serving the role of news sources and opinion leaders by reacting to news stories on social media.

What comes out, however, is that despite the adoption of social media by journalists in the course of their daily work, there are still misgivings about the reliability of information gleaned from such media. Others expressed reservations that even when it comes to official social media handle belonging to the media companies, the level of checks and balances in place are inadequate or not well executed.

The take home when you look at the bigger picture is that social media is not a passing phase with both Standard Group and the Nation Media Group putting substantial investments to stay abreast with new media developments. These approaches range from investment in human

resources to spending finances making the newsrooms social media friendly by investing in up to date technology and gadgets.

It is also clear from the findings that journalists think the only approach for media firms to adapt with the time and will have to involve figuring out a way of harnessing the financial aspect of social media and make money out of the same to contribute to the bottom line of the business.

5.2 Recommendations

Going by the conclusions above, this study draws various recommendations for media owners, managers and journalists. First, social media is here to stay and those who can harness it effectively will be able to stay ahead of their competitors.

1. The media need to invest more in enhancing editorial checks for their social media accounts managers by constantly training them on changes in the field. With technological innovations pushing social media forward fast and often changing how it works or bringing in new social media, there is a need to train staff who handle social media.
2. There is also a need for journalists to understand what the social media or digital divisions are doing in order to be able to work together, especially in an era where media convergence is the buzzword in newsrooms. The study showed that journalists in other divisions have little understanding of the processes in place in their online/digital departments. This can be achieved by holding regular social media training for journalists across the board and making sure they are conversant with social media policies that guide the handling of official and personal social media accounts.
3. Media managers need to innovate ways of making money out of social media platforms. It is clear from the findings that media managers and owners face a challenge of harnessing the power of social media to grow audience numbers and eventually how to make money out of social media. As the study found out, social media departments in the mainstream newsrooms of these two at present play a complementary, and subordinate,

role to other platforms. There is need; therefore, to develop social media capabilities to enable such digital departments, especially social media, to a place where they can hold their own and if need be compete with traditional platforms both in terms of quality and financially. Already, social media forces print and broadcast journalists to work extra hard to give their audiences fresh content in the face of social media that is faster with breaking news and updates.

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