The Impact of Digital Technologies and Internet on Media and Journalism in Kenya
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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADN</td>
<td>Africa Digital Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Agence France Presse</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMWIK</td>
<td>Association of Media Women in Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>Association of Practitioners in Advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAKE</td>
<td>Bloggers Association of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSD</td>
<td>Broadcast Signal Distributor</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Communication Authority [of Kenya]</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
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<td>COFEK</td>
<td>Consumer Federation of Kenya</td>
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<td>DTC</td>
<td>Digital Television Committee</td>
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<td>DTT</td>
<td>Digital Terrestrial Television</td>
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<tr>
<td>DVB-T</td>
<td>Digital Video Broadcasting-Terrestrial</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTA</td>
<td>Free to Air</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEBC</td>
<td>Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunication Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>KBC</td>
<td>Kenya Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>KCA</td>
<td>Kenya Correspondents Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>KTN</td>
<td>Kenya Television Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>KUJ</td>
<td>Kenya Union of Journalists</td>
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<td>MCK</td>
<td>Media Council of Kenya</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Media Owners Association</td>
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<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Communications Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NMG</td>
<td>Nation Media Group</td>
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<td>NTV</td>
<td>Nation Television</td>
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<td>PANG</td>
<td>Pan Africa Network Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPARB</td>
<td>Public Procurement Administrative Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Standard Media Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPBSD</td>
<td>Self-Provisioning Broadcasting Signal Distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STBs</td>
<td>Set Top Boxes</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>User Generated Content</td>
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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

This research was conducted to determine the impact of digital technologies on media and journalism in Kenya. Taking cognisance of the overarching view that the media and journalism have been significantly impacted by digital technologies, including the migration from analogue to digital broadcasting, the study sought to find out whether the media can operate sustainably while staying true to values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and high professional standards. In addition to this overall aim, the research also sought to broadly study the issue of digital migration and media freedom issues in Kenya, and how digital technologies can be used to promote media business and practices in Kenya. In addition, the enquiry sought to determine existing perceptions about journalists and the journalism practice in Kenya following the appropriation and utilisation of digital technologies and establish key benchmarks that could inform the policies and regulations governing digital switchover. Ultimately, it makes recommendations on how global industry best practices that promote and protect media freedom in the digital age can be applied in Kenya.

This study finds out that access to mobile and digital technologies and their increasing application in Kenya have had numerous consequences on media production, dissemination, reception and consumption. In essence, traditional media have had to adapt to changing trends by embracing digital technologies as they struggle to remain profitable and relevant. Declining audiences for traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television means it is imperative for companies operating such platforms to embrace change, and adopt technologies for their own good. They have also adopted digital technologies, particularly mobile phones and wireless Internet as instruments through which they can quickly collect, package, and disseminate information. Granted, the demands of the marketplace, including immediacy and instantaneity, means that sometimes media houses hardly take time to refine information so as to offer audiences better packaged journalism. Nevertheless, it is clear that people now have some ability to resist the commercial culture underpinning the operations of profit-seeking media.

Accordingly, digital technologies have firmed their place in business structures in many media houses, and enhanced the speed of the production of journalism and other media products. Even though there have been arguments that innovations are often messy and risky particularly at the infant stages (this as a consequence of job losses, streamlining operations etc.), it is clearly perilous to ignore digital technologies given the changing trends and effects on both media productions and consumptions.

It should be noted, however, that the benefits of digital technologies in Kenya are not homogenous. Rather, they depend on how people and organisations utilise them. Therefore, quality of use rather than mere access determines the efficacy and effects as well as any benefits accruing from such utilisation. This means that although a judicious study of the consequences of digital technologies on media in Kenya is required, there is no doubt that the increasing use of such technologies has influenced the way media organisations operate. Moreover, although we cannot proclaim the death of traditional media, media organisations’ use of technology has had to change radically due to their desire to re-strategise and restructure their businesses.

From a consumer perspective, it is abundantly clear that their consumption of, and interactions with media is enriched thanks to technology. Ordinary people are able to participate in media productions. The developments mean they are able to consume and produce content (user-generated content, and now they are aptly referred to as prosumers) and sometimes inform
media decisions. This active involvement means they are able to challenge mainstream media dominance. In effect, some of the marginalised communities, or those who feel their issues are hardly given space in mainstream media, can utilise the technologies to articulate their issues. The rise of citizen journalism is built on such premises. Besides, consumers can now become more demanding of media in the sense that they want information or products that are relevant to them.

Notwithstanding the rich prosumer experiences, and new business opportunities for media companies, technological appropriation and use have engendered some challenges. As this research holds, credibility, reliability and quality of information produced by users or audiences is not always guaranteed. Citizen journalists are not subject to the high ethical standards applied to professionals. Accordingly, citizen journalists can publish defamatory material without worrying about the consequences. Also, there are rising concerns that digital technologies have made it easier to infringe on copyright and intellectual property. Granted, and as this study shows, the use and consequences of digital technologies depends on how individual media and journalists use them. And this is what this research attempts to determine.
That digital technologies are impacting media operations, and business dynamics is not in doubt. The operations, structures and performances of traditional, new and converged media formats have been affected by the availability and appropriation of digital technologies. The modes of media production, distribution and consumption have been affected as well as transformed by digital technologies. The appropriation of mobile technologies by media businesses is opportunistic but hugely appropriate as media houses seek to respond to economic, business and market challenges and audience demands. And as the rather prophetic statement above by Bolter and Grusin (1999) shows, traditional media are fighting to survive and reaffirm their place in a hypercompetitive digital media environment.

Digital technologies have had serious effects on the market structures, value chains, business strategies, structures and operations (cf. Kung, Picard and Towse, 2008). Even though technology is sometimes expensive and risky (cf. Pavlik, 2001), and some people may resist change, and attendant new modi operandi, digital and mobile technologies are now part and parcel of many media operations in Kenya.

Economic and business considerations are sometimes major drivers of technological appropriation. This is based on the idea that technologies enhance efficiency, contribute to cost-cutting, and ultimately contribute to profitability. Thus the structure, consolidation and concentration of the media are happening apace. These trends are undoubtedly exacerbated by technologies that have made it easier to start and run or manage media businesses especially in the digital era.

In the media industry, digital and mobile technologies are expected to induce significant growth in addition to intensifying cross-media ownership in line with current trends. For example, the Nation Media Group Limited (NMG), the Standard Group (SG), Royal Media Services (RMS), Radio Africa Group (RAG), and Mediamax Networks all have a number of media platforms in their fold. In fact, except the Royal Media whose main concentration is electronic media, the other organisations run television, radio, and print media as well as websites. Such concentration is expected to produce greater added value than separate activities. As Kung et al. (2008: 132-133) observe, cross-media strategies will benefit the media organisations because ‘systematic effects from coordination and fusion of activities will reduce costs and increase avenues, and that shared resources and knowledge and competence transfer among operations will produce additional benefits’. Similarly, the economic advantages of cross-media ownership are enormous. These include additional use of existing content and reduction of costs due to acquisition of content (Kung et al., 2008). This approach, referred to as ‘value chain’ (Porter, 1980) means that companies are able to create products and services with more value than the combined resources invested in the process.
Digital technologies have enabled the creation of value chains by, for example, reducing the costs of production and distribution. This can be achieved both online and offline. Kung et al. (2008) call this an extension of media. In this case, media products whether print, audio, or television contents are offered both through traditional and new media to reach fragmented audiences. Therefore, by bringing together different media platforms, media organisations are able to benefit from reduced investments. For example, from its converged newsroom, the SG is able to use fewer resources to generate news content from a pool of reporters and correspondents with skills to report for print, radio, and television (cf. Herrick, 2003). Herrick (2003: 25), for example, posits that mobile journalists have become a ‘one-man-band’ or ‘one-woman-band’. This is because they are expected to become jacks of all trade, and operate all gadgets – a wireless laptop, a digital camera and a digital camcorder – necessary to write stories for converged media houses. This is considered more efficient as journalists are ‘able to write a story, take a picture, shoot and edit a video as part of their work. … [J]ournalists are now required to have more than two or three skills to survive in the modern media and journalism environment’ (Herrick, 2003: 25).

To illustrate the above arguments, the SG, in a bid to improve operational efficiency, maximise on resources, and enhance performance introduced in 2009 a converged newsroom. The idea behind the converged newsroom was that changing technologies had made it easier to practice journalism and as such staff were expected and required to multitask, and thus report for different platforms – the newspaper, both daily and weekend editions, a television station, and a website. These strategies were aimed at enhancing efficiency, cost-cutting, and maximisation of its human, capital and other resources.

Besides, media organisations have taken advantage of mobile technologies to address changing audience needs and demands. Media organisations such as the SG and NMG send regular news updates or breaking news, via mobile phone, of local and international events to those who have subscribed to the service. The ‘instant’ and constant delivery of news and other media products via mobile telephony has been the focus of many ‘opportunistic’ media businesses keen on finding new modes of delivering ‘tailor-made’ content to consumers who subscribe and pay a premium for such material. These new revenue streams are inevitable in a (hype) competitive media environment.

However, market and audience demands seem to be forcing the media to provide ‘bitty’ raw information in the form of breaking news. On one hand this benefits the consumer who receives information instantly without having to wait for ‘news time’ or for the next day’s newspapers to learn about events around them or in other parts of the world. This has forced many organisations to quickly adapt as they seek to satisfy the needs of fragmented audiences in their bid for survival. However, as McNair (1998) posits, this tendency threatens depth and the quality of information offered to audiences as well as the credibility and reliability of media as conveyors of ‘truthful’, credible, and reliable information, pictures, and video and audio material. Nonetheless, the new breed of consumers known as producer-consumers (the prosumers) are seeking content that satisfies their particular needs regardless of professional considerations and challenges.

**Convergence**

The growing convergence and availability of various media forms have further contributed to a richer experience between media, the producers and consumers. Convergence is especially critical to existing traditional media companies seeking to diversify their businesses in attempts to explore and capture new markets, and the growing group of
consumers, especially the affluent young digital natives.

Television and radio broadcasting and the availability of mobile Internet have changed the focus of media investments towards the search for new avenues of communication. The various approaches, including cross-media ownership, coopetition (see, for example, Kung et al., 2008), and other forms of inter-organisational strategies combined with declining prices of mobile handsets, subscriptions to mobile services, and innovative methodologies of delivering popular content like music and news via radio, television and the Internet may be aiding the media.

The rising need for convergence – particularly technological and economic (see, for example, Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011) – of media formats by the so-called mainstream media organisations continues to support the notion that traditional media are on a terminal decline. However, media organisations have seen that resistance to change would spell doom and are now seeking ways of not only diversifying but also making themselves relevant in the new digital environment.

Innovative collaboration arrangements between television stations have, for instance, emerged not only as part of restructuring and restrategising, adapting to modern business trends, but also as part of their desire to survive and be profitable in a hyper-competitive media environment. To forestall the consequences of technology on media businesses, and access expatriate Kenyans and others interested in the country, the broadcasting arms of media companies like the Standard and the Nation media groups (KTN and NTV respectively) have taken to streaming live online. They regularly post their news video and audio clips on YouTube and other online platforms. These kinds of technological convergence, defined broadly as the converging of specific media types such as print, audio, and video into digital formats (Pavlik and McIntosh, 2011: 8) makes economic sense because of the need to address or meet the media needs of disparate audiences.

**Participatory productions**

The collection, packaging, analysis and dissemination of media products are becoming increasingly participatory. The active participation of users or consumers is seen not only as a common feature of modern productions but desirable as part of increasing cultivation of symbiotic relationship and discipleship, and loyalty which is important as competition for audiences (and to a large extent revenue) intensifies. Facilities such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube have changed the way journalism is practised in Kenya. ‘Ordinary’ people are now increasingly involved in media business by contributing stories, pictures, and audio visual material for publication by mainstream media, leading to the growing practice of what is commonly referred to as digital or indeed networked journalism. In essence, people now easily interact not only with content, but also with media workers. In addition, they can easily ‘tell’ their own stories by side-stepping information gatekeepers or middlepersons who once controlled information and media products. Digital technologies have offered the user what Bakker and Sadaba (2008) call so many opportunities and power to determine what they want to consume. Although this impacts professional journalistic values and modi operandi, the rise of consumer involvement and to some extent power to prosumers, and in the process circumvent vested interests of media owners, advertisers and others. These prosumers are now more proactive, active and questioning of journalism and media.

Another emerging and rather established trend in the media industry is the desire of producers and users to engage with each other interactively. In fact, interactivity has been one of the most cited characteristics of digital media. According to Steur (1994: 84), interactivity refers to ‘the extent to which the
user can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time. Besides, Jensen (1998: 201) argues that interactivity involves the ability of a medium to ‘let the user exert an influence on the content or form of the mediated communication’.

Despite the growth of consumer participation in media productions, especially journalism, for example, there are numerous concerns that this has eroded professional values. The credibility and reliability of information generated by citizens practicing citizen journalism is often in doubt although sometimes even established mainstream use content generated by audiences. In fact, oftentimes it is such media that encourage users to contribute content, and thus participate more actively in productions. The rise of YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and other similar social media is seen as typical examples of active user-participation. The success of such social media thus persuades other media, most of which actually have Facebook, YouTube and Twitter accounts; there is need for such media-audience relationships. As indicated above, the attendant symbiotic relationship and discipleship developed from such strategies leads to brand loyalty which is important as competition for audiences and revenue intensifies.

**Regulation**

The growth of the media industry notwithstanding, media industry watchers, regulators and moral police have begun to worry about the quality of content vis-à-vis societal mores which they reckon is increasingly corrupted because of lack of strict controls oftentimes applied to traditional media. The democratic nature of mobile and citizen journalism means producers of these new forms of journalism and media products are unencumbered by particular legal or even cultural strictures and considerations. Indeed if mobile phones are not used by scammers and criminals to fleece unsuspecting innocent users and even gullible people, pornographic and other such texts delivered straight to the mobile handsets have moralists worried as these do not ostensibly conform to societal mores. The argument has been that rational adult human beings should not be policed or told what to consume as long as that is within the law. But given the fact that pornography is illegal in Kenya as indeed other African countries, there is the notion that unchecked, unmonitored or unregulated mobile industry is becoming the new site of immoral and unlawful material.

In addition, the media choices available as a result of commercial and market demands and pressures are pushing media towards what Allan (2004: 194) calls ‘sleazoid’ journalism in which content becomes more sensationalist as the news agenda is now increasingly determined by its potential for generating revenue. This undoubtedly affects the way media behave and what they avail to consumers especially those who desire particular custom-made content that might not subscribe to prescribed particular legal, cultural or societal requirements. Besides, it has become easier for prosumers to circumvent regulators or moral police because content is demand driven and might not be on the mass market.

Specifically then, in terms of regulation, unlike traditional media such as TV, radio and print, that would be easier to regulate and police, mobile media offers opportunities to beat regulation and control. For example, it is significantly easier to infringe copyright and intellectual property. The ability and capacity to download material without worrying about sanctions or penalties is increasing despite efforts to strengthen state and international law. Besides, the global nature of mobile media means it is difficult to apply state law to content originating elsewhere. Even if international law was to become an instrument for fighting piracy and copyright infringement, there is hardly capacity to deal with the emerging problems (cf. Kung, Pickard and Towsen, 2008: 
Accordingly, there is without doubt the need for policy and regulatory framework as well as change in consumer behaviour to deal with numerous problems that have arisen from the increasing appropriation and adoption of digital technologies.

This research puts the above issues into perspective, and details both opportunities and challenges obtaining the adoption and use of digital technologies. More importantly, this research seeks to determine how the media and journalism can navigate the storms of digitisation and what it takes to survive in the age of digitisation.

Objectives of the project

Overall objective
To determine whether the media can operate sustainably while upholding principal values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and high professional standards.

Specific objectives

- Examine the impact of the digital migration on journalism and media in Kenya.
- Examine digital migration and media freedom issues in Kenya and elsewhere.
- Provide strategies on how digital migration can be harnessed and promoted for the good of the media sector in Kenya.
- Assess how social media and other forms of internet-driven media have influenced media operations and journalistic practices.
- Establish key benchmarks that may inform policies and regulations governing the digital switchover.
- Recommend global industry best practices that promote and protect media freedom in the age of digitisation.

Using the above objectives, this research used various methods in the collection and analyses of both primary and secondary material.

Research Methodology

Methodology

Sampling
This research used purposive sampling technique. This was informed by the fact that the research aimed at determining the way the media in Kenya operate in the digital era. It was also meant to find out whether the appropriation of digital technologies have affected the practices of journalism particularly with regards to sustainability, and application of and effect on the values of pluralism and diversity, transparency and accountability, editorial independence, freedom of expression and information, public service, and professional standards. These issues determined the selection of secondary material as well as primary sources and methods.

Secondary and primary research

Secondary material
The research conducted both literature review and document analysis. This related specifically to secondary material examining the application of digital technologies in media and journalism operations not only in Kenya but elsewhere. This was meant to determine current application of digital technologies, and what effects or impact they have had on journalism and media practices and operations, as well as evidence to support and validate facts. This also informed the issues to examine, and choice of sources to interrogate.

Primary research
The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods to collect primary data. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data while interviews were conducted with key respondents in the media sector so as to give qualitative data.

Questionnaires
The research drew and sent out a questionnaire (see a copy of the questionnaire in Appendix 1) to journalists all over the country. The questionnaire contained both
open-ended and closed-ended questions to collect both standard information while giving respondents opportunity to offer their views on numerous issues. Accordingly, the questionnaires offered both quantitative and qualitative data.

The questionnaire was distributed mainly to journalists in the database of the Media Council of Kenya (MCK). This is because MCK keeps a list and contacts of all accredited journalists working in Kenya, including those working full time for media houses, correspondents, freelancers and even trainees in various universities and colleges (see the list of accredited journalists at <http://www.mediacouncil.or.ke/en/mck/index.php/programs/mck-accreditation/2015-list-of-accredited-journalists>). Consequently, all journalists in Kenya were given an equal opportunity to participate in the research. Moreover, journalists in Kenya work in a cross range of media houses, including both traditional and new media, and understand both the opportunities and challenges they face in the digital era. One hundred and twenty journalists responded to the questionnaire (See a presentation of the data and discussion of the data and findings below).

Of those who responded to the questionnaire, 58 per cent work as full time journalists, 25 per cent as correspondents and 17 per cent contribute to various social media platforms. 33 per cent work in television, 37 per cent in newspapers, 29 per cent in radio. Thirteen (13) per cent said they work for online platforms, some in addition to of their main media. Fifty three per cent said they use computers (41 per cent desktop computers, and 11 per cent laptops) in their work. 94 per cent of those interviewed said they have a social media account and thus a significant number could be accessing such media from their mobile phones given the percentage of those who use computers at work.

Interviews
Non- standardised (both semi-structured and unstructured, but mostly semi-structured in-depth) interviews were used to extract information from key informants in Kenya.

In-depth interviews were conducted with senior editors in leading mainstream media houses, directors of two of the new digital TV stations; Elimu TV which broadcasts education content and Njata TV (a station that broadcasts in Kikuyu language). Most of the editors interviewed are in charge of digital platforms in their media houses. Two scholars from two local universities were also interviewed. Another interviewee was an official with the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK).

The interviewees were sampled because of the positions they occupy in Kenya's media and journalism as well as their understanding of and research into the practices of journalism in Kenya. In addition, their comprehension of the application and effects of digital technologies in Kenya was also considered.

The interviews were conducted to generate views as well as corroborate data collected using questionnaires and information generated from documents. The interviews were conducted between the months of November 2015 to January 2016.

Data analysis
Data collected from the interviews was transcribed and the responses coded in line with the interview guide. One of the challenges encountered during the data collection process was finding time to schedule interviews with the editors who are extremely busy people. A majority of the respondents agreed to face-to-face interviews while others responded to questions via email.
The global debate on digital migration was started in 2000 by member countries of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (CA, n.d.). The countries later met at a conference in Geneva in 2006 and endorsed an agreement requiring members to begin a transition from analogue broadcasting with a deadline that was set for June 2015. According to the agreement the countries could transmit on both analogue and digital platforms during the transitional period but were expected to have switched to digital broadcasting by June 2015.

In Kenya, a task force to spearhead the digital migration process was set up in March 2007. The taskforce comprised of representatives from the Media Owners Association (MOA), the Communications Commission of Kenya (now Communications Authority of Kenya (CA)), the Ministry of Information and Communication (now the Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)), the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), the of MCK and Association of Practitioners in Advertising (APA). One of the recommendations of the task force was for the formation of a Digital Television Committee (DTC) which was to oversee the migration process. The committee was established in 2008. The committee’s representatives were drawn from the information ministry, the communications commission, KBC, the National Communications Secretariat (NCS), signal distributors, Digital Decoders Dealers Association, Digital Broadcasters Association, Pay TV service providers and consumer groups.

What is digital TV broadcasting?

Digital broadcasting occurs through radio frequencies where multiplex transmitters are used “to allow the reception of multiple channels on a single frequency range” (CA, n.d.). The CA states that the main difference between analogue television and digital television is that analogue transmission “requires a large amount of bandwidth to transmit sound and picture while the digital transmission needs less but can “carry more content and provide better quality pictures and sound”(CA, n.d.).

The move from analogue to digital TV transmission: The Kenyan experience

The Digital Television Committee agreed to carry out the analogue switch off in phases. Nairobi and the surrounding areas were to be switched off from analogue TV in December 2013 while the other parts of the country would be switched off in March 2014. One of the first steps in digital migration was the issue of licensing broadcast signal distributors. A report by the CA describes a signal distributor as one who puts up broadcasting infrastructure and enables a number of broadcasters to share a transmitter (CA, n.d.). The CA report explains that the signal distributor ensures that the broadcaster concentrates on developing content and does not have to invest in expensive infrastructure which was the case in analogue broadcasting.

In 2009, the Digital Video Broadcasting-Terrestrial (DVB-T) was launched with Signet, a company owned by KBC being the first
broadcast distributor. The country however, changed the digital transmission technology to DVB-T2 in 2010 which is more superior technologically. The first generation of DVB-T technology was phased out in 2012.

Due to challenges that the KBC-owned Signet was facing, the DTC urged the government to license more signal distributors. In 2011, the Pan Africa Network Group (Kenya) (PANG) was licensed as the second signal distributor. PANG is linked to Chinese-owned Star Times. Royal Media Services and NMG which had formed a consortium, National Signal Networks lost their bid for the licence and were also unsuccessful in their appeal to the Public Procurement Administrative Review Board (PPARB). The two media houses moved to court arguing that the then Communications Commission of Kenya was not an independent body as envisaged in article 34 of the Kenyan constitution.

Before the eventual move to digital TV on 14 February 2015, the DTC had set various dates for analogue switch-off that were not to be (CA, n.d.). The first switch-off scheduled on 30 June 2012 did not take off because there was a scarcity of set top boxes (STBs) as the government was yet to order a duty waiver. The second migration date slated for 31 December 2012 was stopped after the Consumer Federation of Kenya (COFEK) went to court to challenge the intended switch-off on the argument that 2013 was an election year and that there was the risk of leaving many Kenyans without the means of following political campaigns on TV.

The third switch-off date set for 13 December 2013 failed after the NMG, Royal Media Services and SG moved to court to push for an extension. A new date was later set for 26 December 2013, which was effected by the CA. However, this was later reversed on 27 December 2013 through a court order. The Court of Appeal was to further push the switch-off date to September 2014. While delivering the ruling, the court nullified a Broadcast Signal Distributor (BSD) licence issued to PANG. This ruling was to open another court battle, this time with CA moving to the Supreme Court. In a ruling made on September 2014, the Supreme Court reversed the decision on PANG, ordered the parties to agree on a new date pending the June 2015 switch-off deadline but further ruled that CA revisit the application for a BSD licence made by the three main media houses.

On 25 November 2014, CA issued a Self-Provisioning Broadcasting Signal Distribution (SPBSD) licence to the NMG, Royal Media Services and SG through their consortium, Africa Digital Network (ADN). The licence “enables a licensee to set up a broadcasting infrastructure network to carry their own content” (MCK, 2015: 18). CA was to later withdraw the licence after the stations aired adverts accusing GOtv and Star Times of carrying their content without consent. While revoking the licence, CA’s director general, Francis Wangusi termed the advert as misleading and a move that portrayed an anti-competitive spirit (Wahito, 2015). The licence was reinstated by the Supreme Court in February 2015.

In the 13 February 2015 ruling, the Supreme Court declined to extend the analogue switch-off deadline as requested by the Nation, KTN and Citizen. Following the ruling, the CA ordered all broadcasters to switch off their analogue transmission by midnight of the same day. When the three stations failed to comply, CA switched off their analogue signals on 14 February 2015. The stations then withdrew their content from other STBs leading to a standoff with the CA that would last three weeks. The stations came back on air on 5 March 2015. Other main stations, for example, KBC and K24 remained on air.

The face-off between CA and the three media houses was to later create some economic constrains for some of the media companies. For example, last year, the SG recorded a drop in profits, a decrease which was attributed
to a number of challenges among them the digital migration process. The company’s chief executive officer, Sam Shollei was quoted saying, “the migration from analogue to digital TV broadcasting negatively impacted viewership due to low penetration to set top boxes (STBs) at the time of migration” (Kangethe, 2015).

**Current status of digital migration in the country.**

Kenya currently has 62 television and 139 radio stations.1 This number is partly as a consequence of the digital migration that makes it easier to set up television stations. According to the CA (2016a), there are currently 3,094,893 set top boxes on digital terrestrial television (DTT) platform. Of these, 416,984 are free to air (FTA) STBs and 2,677,909 pay TV STBs. According to the CA report published in April 2016, by 31 December 2015 60 per cent of the Kenyan population had access to digital television. The digital signal was on air in Nairobi, Nakuru, Nyeri, Mombasa, Kisumu, Webuye, Eldoret, Malindi, Meru (Nyambene), Kisii, Kericho, Narok, Nyahururu, Embu, Kisii, Machakos, Muranga, Naivasha, Nyeri, Webuye, Narok, Mbuinza, Kapenguria, Wajir, Kitui, Lamu and Namanga (CA, 2016a).

Although the digital migration issue is now resolved, the new contentious debate arising in the broadcast industry is the Programme Code for free to air radio and TV broadcasting stations published by the CA on 31 December 2015. The Code outlines rules for free to air radio and TV stations. CA defended the publication of the code saying it “outlines the programming standards that radio and TV broadcasters have to observe, and constitutes one of the licence conditions that licensed broadcasters have to adhere to” (CA, 2016b). After the publication of the code, media owners said they were not consulted but CA maintained that it had subjected the guidelines to both the public and relevant stakeholders. CA stated that the code was aimed at ensuring “that children are protected from unsuitable and inappropriate programmes during the family viewing or listening hours otherwise referred to as watershed period (5.00am to 10.00pm)” (CA, 2016b).

The Programming Code also gives guidelines on how news should be covered by broadcast stations. The guidelines say that a station’s news bulletins of the day should not be less than one and a half hours of a station’s daily programming. The code further states that news should have informational value rather than be mere entertainment. According to the code, broadcasting stations should ensure they exhibit fairness, accuracy and objectivity in their news reports. The code further states that stations should ensure that user generated content (UGC) upholds decency requirements, is not libelous, does not promote hate, does not infringe on copyright and is also accurate.

The CA has said that broadcasters are expected under law to comply with the guidelines, six months from the time of publication of the rules. The authority has pointed out that broadcasters through an association can also come up with a programming code which they can be allowed to implement once it has been scrutinised by CA (CA, 2016b).

**Journalism and Social Media**

**Defining social media**

Social Media is a term used to describe a type of interactive media where users create content – including videos, audio materials, photos, images, gossip, news, etc. – and share it among other users. To distinguish social media from traditional media, Knight & Cook (2013) describe it as a form of media whose prime role is interaction rather than just dissemination of information. A similar definition describes social media as “a category of internet-based resources that facilitate user

participation and user-generated content” (Flynn, 2012).

Two key things about social media are participation and community (Hill & Lashmar, 2013). Participation means that users of social media not only consume content but also produce it. Communities are the gatherings on social media of people who share similar interests. Some of the characteristics of social media include “participation, openness, conversation, community and connectivity” (Hermida, 2012:60).

It is from the participatory nature of social media that the term citizen journalism emerges. Citizen journalism is a practice that some have described as “journalism of the people, by the people and for the people” (Banda, 2010: 26). Banda notes that mainstream media have recognised the power of citizen journalism and have embraced it with an intention of benefiting from it. He adds that in the process of integrating citizen journalism into their practices, journalists are finding ways “to inject their own professional instincts, rituals and practices” into the social media space (Banda, 2010: 29).

Another term that is closely linked to social media is social networks. Social networks are “online platforms where users create profiles, post content, share information, and socialise with others” (Flynn, 2012). Popular social media sites include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, wikis, blogs and one of the latest mobile apps, WhatsApp.

**Description of various social media networks**

**Facebook** is a site which allows individuals to create an online profile, share information and also invite others to connect with them by being “friends” (Safko, 2012).

**Twitter** is a “microblogging site that limits messages, or tweets, to 140 characters” (Flynn, 2012). Twitter is a very popular social networking forum.

**YouTube** is a social media network which has been described by some as “the granddaddy of video sharing sites” (Flynn, 2012). Through YouTube one can “upload, tag, describe, share, find, watch, and comment on videos” (Flynn, 2012).

**Wiki** is a site where readers post and edit content. One of the most popular wikis is Wikipedia.

**LinkedIn** is a networking site where professionals create profiles and connect to fellow professionals.

**Blogs** are websites where people post information and experiences. The name is a short form of the term weblog. Blogs started as personal dairies where people posted their personal experiences but have now evolved into a form of journalism which expounds on issues emerging from mainstream media (Harper, 2010).

**The rise of social media globally and locally**

Individuals use social media for a variety of reasons ranging from “messaging and communication, communities and social groups, social booking and tagging, collaboration and cooperation, opinions and reviews among others (Waters & Lester, 2010). Obijiofor (2015) states that youth in Africa have embraced social media for the purposes of connecting and interacting. He notes that social media has transformed the way youths “learn, communicate, collect information, collaborate with their peers and entertain themselves” (Obijiofor, 2015). Besides their affordability and interactive nature, social media are attractive to African youth because of the greater degree of freedom they confer on citizens, particularly freedom from political, social and economic control by political leaders (Obijiofor, 2015:112).

The influence of social media has been on the rise since the Web 2.0 conference held in 2004 (Waters & Lester, 2010). At this period, the web moved from a place for just posting
information to a place where users could share and interact. Waters and Lester credit celebrities as the force that popularised social media. The writers give the example of actor, Ashton Kutcher as one example of a celebrity who popularised Twitter. Waters and Lester say that Kutcher was able to attract a million followers on Twitter in 2009 making CNN acknowledge the power of social media. Other Hollywood celebrities followed suit. United States President, Barack Obama also popularised social media in his 2008 presidential campaign. Obama successfully used social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flick and others to campaign and to get his supporters to rally others behind him (Waters & Lester, 2010). The power of social media was also seen as the force behind the Arab Spring that led to regime change in governments in the Middle East (Hinton & Hjorth, 2013).

Globally, a lot of media organisations have adopted social media. For example, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) began integrating social media in 2006. Among the major events that led to this integration were “the Saffron Revolution in Myanmar of 2006, the Mumbai attacks of 2006, the Mumbai attacks of 2008, the Iranian elections of 2009, and the Haiti earthquake of 2010” (Gagnon-Belair, 2015: 24).

Kenya’s social media growth has been on the rise since the 2007 general election. The 2007-2008 election crisis left many citizens thirsty for information that was not forthcoming from the mainstream media. This gap in the dissemination of news saw a group of Kenyans decide to use social media to share any information they received. The registration of the first Twitter account, @kamuiri had been done a bit earlier in March 2007 (Digital Rand, 2014). Other twitter accounts registered shortly after were @kenyamoto and @Sonnimuriuki.

During the 2013 elections there were more Kenyans using social media. Ndlela (2016) says that citizens used social media to monitor the elections. He points out that through social media; citizens were able to perform the role of watchdog, in the same manner in which the mainstream media does. The citizens came together through online communities with the goal of monitoring how the elections were conducted. Ndlela describes this form of pulling together as online communities so as to accomplish a goal, crowdsourcing.

But while Ndlela illustrates the positive power of social media use in Kenya during the 2013 general election, Lando and Mwangi (2014) paint a different picture. The two scholars posit that while there was no postelection violence on the streets in 2013, the battle was fought via social media. In a study conducted among 106 adults in the country, Lando and Mwangi found that Kenyans used social media to insult and vilify each other on ethnic lines. The study described these insults as a form of verbal violence.

The Commonwealth Observer Group which monitored the 2013 Kenyan elections noted the increased use of social media by both the citizens and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). Mainstream media also used social media to disseminate information to the public and also to interact with their audiences. Some of the social media platforms used include Facebook, Twitter and YouTube among others (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013). The report points out that the IEBC used social media to update the public on the events before the elections, during the elections and after. Politicians were also not left behind in the use of social media. They used media to campaign and also to update the public on their political events. According to the report, a majority of Kenyans who interacted on these social media platforms used their mobile phones.

A research conducted by Pew Global Research showed that 88 per cent of Kenyan Internet users’ access social media sites (Macharia, 2015). According to the CA, most of these
Kenyans use their smartphones to access the Internet.

The growth of social media in Kenya has continued with more politicians embracing the interactive forums. A January 2016 study conducted by the American public relations firm Burson-Marsbeller ranked President Uhuru Kenyatta who has two million likes on Facebook as the most popular sub-Saharan African leader on social media (Agutu, 2016). Likewise, other politicians have also embraced social media. A Jubilee Alliance Party politician, Aaron Cheruiyot who won the party nomination ticket for the Kericho Senate seat and later the election attributed his win to his social media campaigns (Psirmoi, 2016). The politician said that although many people did not know him before the campaign, they got to know him through Facebook. He added that this made it easier for him to campaign as those who had not interacted with him personally had already done so through social media.

In Kenya, young people use their smartphones to interact on social media and get information on the goings on in society. There are currently 37.7 million mobile phone subscribers in Kenya, with the penetration rate standing at 87.7 per cent. There number of Internet users is now 35.5 million, a penetration level of 82.6 (CA, 2016a). A report compiled by Digital Rand and the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) in 2014 says there were four million Kenyans using social media at the time. The report stated that of this four million, Facebook had the largest users at 3.8 million followed by LinkedIn at over one million while Twitter trailed third with 650,000 users.

**Use of social media by journalists**

There are various ways in which journalists use social media. They include, news gathering (this is done by connecting to sources, verifying information, giving information), branding (journalists promote themselves and the organisations they work for) and enlarge market share (journalists not only connect to current audiences but also seek to enlarge the numbers of those loyal to them and their media outlets) (Ayish & Mellor, 2015). Social media have been described as powerful tools in guiding journalists in new ways of telling stories (Haddow & Haddow, 2013). This is because social media have various tools that enable convergence of audio, video and text.

Social media have become a very important tool for a journalist. This can be explained by the fact that a good number of organisations and prominent people sometimes choose to give their news via their social media accounts rather than go the traditional way of calling a press conference (Bull, 2015). What this means is that a journalist must follow his or her sources on their social media platforms. Therefore, the suggestion is not that a journalist should be on social media but that a journalist must be on social media.

Before the emergence of social media, journalists were the custodians of scoops and breaking news. However, social media have changed this scenario, with journalists sometimes receiving a big story “third hand (sometimes even fourth or fifth)” after the same has been posted on social media (Alejandro, 2010: 9). The work of the reporter now becomes to retell the story in a different manner, sometimes having to verify some facts that were not clear in the story posted on social media. Alejandro further argues that the face of competition for mainstream media is changing, with social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter being a strong source of news for a huge segment of the population. This new scenario has made the journalist take on the “role of the curator whose primary role is to navigate, sift, select and contextualize the vast amounts of data on social media streams” (Hermida, 2012: 313).

A study conducted among six top editors of global media organisations found that media organisations use social media for “branding and making a presence in the social media sphere, driving traffic to the company’s news
website and breaking news” (Alejandro, 2010: 24). The six editors were from BBC, Agence France Presse (AFP) (both in USA and Canada, and Singapore), Bernama Radio24 (Malaysia) and Antara News Agency (Indonesia).

The editors were asked questions relating to social media use by the media organisations during the news coverage of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. The editors said that they used Twitter to get news about the earthquake but that they used blogs to disseminate the news. The preference for blogs as a tool to disseminate the news was due to the extra space available to write a longer story. Alejandro reports that five out of the six editors hailed social media as an important tool for receiving news because of its speed and immediacy.

According to the study, the main risks of using social media in journalism were concerns about “accuracy, need for verification and the loss of control over the information” (Alejandro, 2010: 24). The editors felt that although social media make the work of journalists easier and faster, reporters must be careful to verify every piece of information before disseminating it.

**Impact of social media on journalism practice**

Social media has changed the power structure in journalism, with traditional media now having to recognise the importance of the audience “not just as news sources but as news censors” (Hermida, 2012: 313). This explains why social media has been referred to by some as the fifth estate (Cooper, 2006; Jericho, 2012). As the fifth estate, social media monitor mainstream media for inaccuracies and misreporting in a similar way to that in which traditional media are seen as a fourth estate that keeps the various government arms in check. Because of the participatory and open nature of social media, users are bolder in discussing topics that mainstream media which have strict gate keeping processes are likely to shy away from.

But even as social media enthusiasts regard themselves as the fifth estate, there are those who feel that we cannot disregard traditional media either. Their view is that while social media is good at breaking stories that traditional media may initially shy away from, mainstream media is instrumental in digging deeper into issues and ensuring they get the attention of those in authority (Nyabuga & Booker, 2013).

The continued integration of social media into traditional journalism has increased the speed and immediacy with which news is reported (Hermida, 2012). Journalists are today required to disseminate news as fast as they can, even as they are still expected by their professional duties to verify the information they give out. Social media platforms are especially important in breaking news where there may be no reporters on the ground. In this case, the work of the professional journalist is to verify the reports on social media gather more information on the matter and then disseminate the news to the public.

Witschge & Nygren (2009) in a study conducted among journalists in Sweden and England argue that the rise of social media and citizen journalism has led to a de-professionalisation of the media profession. They note that although journalists enjoy easier access to sources, citizen journalists can bypass newsrooms and disseminate information on various platforms online. The study however, adds that although professional standards in journalism are diminishing because of the changes in the profession, there is “a return to professional values by journalists themselves, which they deem sets them apart from other news providers in the current broadened mediascape” (Witschge & Nygen, 2009: 38).

One of the main challenges that social media has had on traditional journalism is the loss of revenue for mainstream media organisations (Lipschultz, 2015). The audiences for offline media seem to be diminishing while the younger generation tends to be more social
media-oriented. The tricky part is that the online audience prefers to get the content free and is yet to embrace the concept of subscription. This means that media organisations are still grappling with ways to generate money from their online platforms besides what they make from advertising (Wellbrock, 2016).
Digital technologies have had significant effects on media and journalism practices in Kenya, whether in the production, distribution or consumption of content. Indeed, as recent trends, strategies and decisions as well as primary data discussed below show, the media and journalists now have a range of technologies including computers, mobile phones, email and different applications which they use in their everyday journalistic practices.

Further, as evidence below shows, the effects are as disparate as the applications of the technologies, and often depend on modalities of use rather than mere presence. What is not in doubt, however, is that the effects are enormous and they could be considered both positive and negative depending on both individual use and organisational decisions and modalities of use. In terms of media productions, the media houses and workers believe technologies have aided the production of content, making it easier and effective to produce material that is relevant to the needs of various publics – audiences, advertisers, government and others – while at the same time helping them develop and strengthen various revenue streams especially in Kenya’s increasingly competitive digital media marketplace.

This chapter offers a discussion of the effects of digitisation on the practice of journalism as well as media businesses. Based on such issues as coopetition and convergence, this chapter argues that digitisation is a natural consequence of technological development. However, the success or failure would be determined not by the available technologies and digitisation but how well journalists and media houses appropriate and use digital technologies.

Coopetition

In efforts to survive and thrive in the digital era, media organisations have had to devise various strategies. One of the most surprising moves in the recent past was the decision by the SG and Radio Africa to work together to advance common interests. Although the three leading media groups in Kenya, namely the NMG, Royal Media Services and SG through their consortium, Africa Digital Network (ADN), were on 25 November 2014 granted a licence by the CA to “set up a broadcasting infrastructure network to carry their own content”, the deal fell through when they sought to challenge the government on the switch off date. The resulting standoff between the group and the CA that lasted three weeks between 14 February and 5 March 2015 ended in failure by the group to actualise or effect their cooperation.

Nonetheless, recent events seem to have revived or embraced ‘coopetition’, a phenomenon described as “business arrangements and strategies in which rival companies that normally compete establish cooperative activities through alliances, partnerships, sharing arrangements and networks” (Kung et al., 2008: 131). The philosophy behind coopetition is that it ‘stabilizes competition by differentiation and niche recognition, by seeking organisational effectiveness through flexibility, adaptation and limiting expenditures, by seeking to
improve the positions of co-operators against a common threat or in exploring a risky opportunity’ (Kung et al., 2008: 131). The motive behind such activities is that synergy, cooperation, and resource maximisation will generate benefits and growth for everyone involved, and that cooperation rather than competition may be the key to future success.

This coopetition was, for example, actualised on 18 February 2016 when the Standard Group signed a Ksh300 million deal with Radio Africa, the publishers of the Star newspaper and owners of radio stations as Classic 105FM, Kiss 100FM, Radio Jambo, XFM and East FM, and television station Kiss TV, for a 50 per cent stake in Lancia Digital Broadcasting, the trademark owner of Bamba TV. The SG publishes two newspapers The Standard (Daily, Saturday, and Sunday editions), and The Nairobian, two TV channels – KTN Home and KTN News – and a radio station – Radio Maisha. The company also runs an outdoor media advertising business – Think Outdoor.

The partnership allows viewers to access the two KTN channels on Bamba TV, a free-to-view multiple international channel service with countrywide distribution. This deal, according to SG CEO Sam Shollei, will enhance consumer experience whilst delivering audiences to advertisers in a bid aimed at benefiting the two companies. “Through Bamba TV we will not only continue to offer the very best of KTN but now also, a multiplicity of competitive international and local channels for our viewers across the entire country. We are offering our advertisers increased variety from a channel perspective while ensuring a higher return on investment with audiences that are targeted and specific. We will also be looking to develop and adapt international formats and shows for the local market so that we can not only meet audience expectations but start to define new content categories,” said Shollei during the launch.²

Mr. Shollei’s arguments above resonate with a majority of those interviewed for this research who contend that digitisation not only offers more but also diverse and quality content. The respondents attribute this to the increased number of TV channels available in Kenya which they feel are now working harder in their efforts to compete and appeal to audiences who can easily migrate elsewhere given available choice. They cited the emergence of news channels such as KTN News, a 24-hour news channel, as evidence that Kenyans now have more access to news, current affairs, documentaries and other programs. In this sense, the respondents celebrate digitisation because consumers have a variety of choice, and now enjoy an increased diversity, including a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints represented on different types of content. The respondents also feel the competition birthed by the multiplicity would result in better or quality content. Mr. Rob Jillo, the Online Editor at Capital FM, argues that competition birthed by digitisation is a blessing to both media companies and audiences. He argues that the migration from analogue to digital transmission has enhanced the quality of programmes because increased “competition has forced media houses to work harder to meet their audiences needs and tastes.” This view is shared by Ms. Christine Mbithi-Magori, the Online Editor at Mediamax, and Mr. Edwin Gitau, the Director of Njata TV who feel the pressure to appeal to disparate audiences can only lead to “better” and “richer” content.

Although it’s still early to judge the overall quality of news and current affairs, Mr. Nathan Masambu, a lecturer at Daystar University, feels digitisation has significantly improved the quality of television programmes. To him, “Kenyans now have access to more channels including international ones with better news and other content. They are thus becoming more exposed and informed. In effect, given that Kenyans can now get news from different sources, the local stations must offer better … they have to work hard to improve the quality of their programmes. The multiplicity

of channels makes the quality of news better." Accordingly, the SG-Radio Africa deal and other than have recently been announced are seen as a promise of better albeit fluid or unpredictable times.

Bamba is accessible through a one-off purchase of a set top box currently retailing at Sh3,599. Thereafter the programming is free of charge for life. Bamba has reportedly rolled out 13 broadcast sites across the country with 70 percent coverage of television households. The service carries over 30 local and international channels, the majority of which were previously only available on Pay TV. Bamba TV now competes with GOtv with and StarTimes. According to a survey conducted by GeoPoll in December 2015, 41 per cent of Kenyans own a GOtv set top box followed by StarTimes with 24%.

The deal is thus seen as a way of catching up with the competitors and allowing the two companies to leverage on their positions in Kenya. "We will be looking to roll out an additional 12 sites while optimising the current 13 sites that we already have in place over the next nine months. This signals the importance of developing partnerships that are underpinned by the resolve to provide solutions for common challenges," said Radio Africa's CEO Mr. Patrick Quarcoo.

In the story published by The Standard, partly to promote and justify the deal, the "new partnership will see KTN offer more and diverse programming via the Bamba TV platform ensuring that it continues to be the preferred home of family entertainment in the country. Bamba TV is positioned as Kenya's premier family entertainment platform airing cartoons for children, movies, entertainment and fashion channels for women, sports and news channels for men as well as documentary channels. The free-to-view package on digital terrestrial television is a first in Africa. Over the next five years, it is expected that the company will invest up to KSh1 billion in the service subject to regulatory approval." Whether such self-promotion meets the public and audience expectation is another matter but it is clear that companies are feeling the pressure of the digitisation process and thus the need to develop new relationships and business models to survive. In fact, a few days after the SG-Radio Africa deal and in anticipation of the increased competition in the industry, the StarTimes Media announced it was cutting its monthly subscription fees for its two premier pay television bouquets by up to 40 per cent. The company dropped its StarTimes satellite (Super) price by Ksh1,000 from KSh2,499 to KSh1,499 a month. Those on terrestrial (Unique) package now pay Sh1,499, a 29 per cent drop from the previous Sh2,099. The company's vice president Mr. Mark Lisboa said the move was informed by the need to drive uptake of the pay TV services through affordable pricing.

Moreover, the arrival of United States's Netflix has further jolted the industry. Being online and the fact that it offers unlimited access to movies, documentaries and series at monthly rates of between Sh815 and Sh1,222, means companies are now again facing competition for the local market from global players based everywhere and nowhere in the virtual and networked world. This is especially because their rates are significantly lower than that which Kenyan, for example, pay TV firms Wananchi Group and MultiChoice (the owner of the DStv brand). The two companies operate Zuku and DStv respectively. Perhaps because of the fluidity and unpredictability of the market, in September 20-15, DStv increased its bouquet costs by up to 15 per cent to charge between KSh1, 050 and KSh9, 400 a month. On the other hand, Zuku charges between KSh1, 199 and KSh9, 799. Netflix

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3 See Wainaina, Eric (2016) 'Gotv is the most popular decoder as set top box ownership at 71% of TV owners.' Techweez [online], 19 January. Available at <http://www.techweez.com/2016/01/19/ gotv-most-popular-decoder-in-kenya/> [Accessed 7 March 2016].

whose high uptake in the US has hit audience ratings and slashed advertising revenues for cable and satellite channels, already has about 74 million subscribers mainly in the US and Europe. However, the fact that people need significant bandwidth may work against Netflix. Granted, the growing access to smartphones means people can watch Netflix on the go from their phones and other mobile devices. What’s more, because it is one of the leading providers of Internet connection alongside Jamii Telecom, Zuku could benefit from Netflix given people will need significant bandwidth to enjoy its content. In fact, such thinking has already piqued the interest of Zuku whose management says they are ready to capitalise on Netflix’s entry. “We have prepared the network for the influx of customers that believe in the reliability of Zuku fiber. Netflix users can count on Zuku’s broadband to complete their experience,” said Santiago Benedit, Wananchi’s group chief executive, in a story published in the Nation.6

Zuku and other Internet service providers might also count on other entrants including Sweden-based software and infrastructure firm Ericsson which is reported to be eyeing the Kenyan TV market with a video-on-demand service that will be broadcast on smartphones and tablets. It is reported that subscribers will either pay a monthly premium fee of about Sh511 to access all content or a weekly fee of about Sh204 which offers select content.7

Back to the SG-Radio Africa deal, it is clear that the SG has had to rethink its initial resistance to the digital switchover. According to Mr. Shollei, the move is part of riding the tide of digitisation. “We totally are supportive of the digital migration initiative and this partnership heralds a new television era for the ordinary Kenyan – the best TV channels free for the rest of their lives. We will also create a diversity of content and give Kenyan producers an opportunity to build and launch their own channels on Bamba TV,” Mr. Shollei says.

The arrangement between two competing companies marks a new one in Kenya’s capitalistic and competitive media environment. For one, the deal makes sense in the digital environment where television companies offering different programmes and targeting different audiences can gang up to deliver a bigger audience especially to the advertisers. And this is what Mr. Shollei alludes to in his assertion that they will offer “advertisers increased variety from a channel perspective while ensuring a higher return on investment with audiences that are targeted and specific”. Such arguments may demonstrate the increasing corporatisation and coopetition in Kenya’s media environment where underlying profit motives inform business decisions and strategies. However, given the growing support for the free market economy (characterised by liberalisation, deregulation and market reform), it makes sense to cooperate and survive. There is also the thinking that such trends would promote efficiency, productivity, competitiveness, increased investment and innovation and attendant by-products like greater employment, lower prices and more consumer choice (cf. Brittan, 1983; Davis, 2007; Littlechild, 2000). In addition, the move could be seen as a remedy to dwindling fortunes at the SG which made losses amounting to Sh289.6 million in the year ended December 2015 compared to a profit of Sh220 million the previous year. The company attributes the loss to increased costs, bad debts, one-off restructuring costs and accelerated depreciation of equipment. The group’s revenue slipped to Sh4.5 billion from Sh4.8 billion in 2014 even as operating costs rose to Sh4.7 billion from Sh4.4 billion in the period under review.8

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Even though it may seem that the SG is doing badly, the fortunes at the NMG are not rosy either. Its earnings announced in March 2016 show that the group’s full-year earnings dropped to Sh2.2 billion from Sh2.5 billion a year earlier. The drop was attributed to the disruption of its TV business during a turbulent migration to digital broadcasting that caused a month-long shutdown of TV stations in a stand-off with the CA.9

Interestingly, the NMG’s chief executive officer Mr. Joe Muganda, identified the digital space as a key area of growth for the media house, which already has a sizeable digital footprint in the region and which it seeks to optimize. “Our digital profits, though small, grew by more than 200 per cent over last year and we expect its revenues to constitute eight to 10 per cent of our total revenues in the near term,” said Mr. Muganda.10

Such predictions are based on the fact the digital space is the new frontier which media companies in Kenya as elsewhere are keen to exploit in attempts to survive in the increasingly competitive yet unpredictable digital era. For instance, the news was followed by statistics showing that the NMG has more than six million followers on Facebook, 2.6 million on Twitter and 106,000 on Instagram. The social media platforms popular among the various media houses include Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Pinterest, YouTube, Instagram and Google+. People interviewed for this study say social media has become an integral part of modern media and journalism practices. For example, Ms. Mbithi-Magori of K24 says: “News cannot exist without online platforms. In 2008, Facebook had been banned in newsrooms, now a journalist cannot work without Facebook.” To Mr. David Ohito, the head of Standard Digital Content: “Social media is a way of taking news to bigger audiences who do not visit websites. It is a platform for editors to meet audiences in a friendly or preferred platform.” These sentiments are shared by others like Mr. Churchill Otieno, the Managing Editor in charge of Digital Convergence at the NMG who says: “Social media has delivered audiences to us. It has taken news to the people. It is giving people an opportunity to be heard.”

Some interviewees for this research, however, hold different views. They feel that social media has been slowly eating into the revenue of traditional media. Mr. Timothy Wanyonyi, the Managing Editor of Saturday Nation attributes the loss of revenue to online consumers who want content free of charge. He, however, says that matters could change in future if people found ways to monetise digital content. Mr. Kinoti Gituma of Royal Media shares these sentiments, arguing that it is important for media organisations to come up with business models for their online platforms.

However, some respondents argue that the digital platform is already making good money for media organisations. Mr. Ohito for example, describes Standard Digital as one of the most profitable online platforms in Kenya. “We sell e-papers, digital ads, Google AdSense, and have companies stream live on our platform,” he says. Ms. Mbithi-Magori of Mediamax and Mr. Jillo of Capital FM also note that digital platforms make money through, for example, adverts posted on websites even though people like Dr. Samuel Kamau, a lecturer at the Aga Khan University Graduate Media School, feel that online adverts are still not a huge source of income given that online news consumers hardly click on adverts or quickly skip when offered an opportunity on sites like YouTube.

While attempts to monetise content on such platforms are not easy given the competition from other media houses, upcoming companies and even startups and individual digerati, the attempts to invest in digital platforms is important even given notions that to ignore such spaces would be perilous and unwise. These views are shared


by respondents for this research who believe digitisation has introduced changes to the modi operandi in television stations. For example, Ms. Jane Muthiga, a Director at Elimu TV, believes that digital migration has changed the concept of news and programming. To her, “digital migration has changed the TV world. The TV world was previously focused on politics and entertainment but we are now seeing TV becoming a development tool. It is a development tool because we are now focusing on development issues such as education. Digital TV has opened up space and journalists need to come to the space and lead positively.”

Ms. Muthiga also points out that digital TV has changed the concept of prime time. “At Elimu all our time is prime time because students are interested in learning and we teach various levels of students in the different hours of the day. If you are an advertiser, you can target a particular group of learners during the time their lesson is airing,” she says.

The change experienced due to digitisation has also spread to the public broadcaster, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). Mr. Kennedy Osir, the Chief News Editor at KBC argues that digital migration has allowed the national broadcaster to run more news on KBC channel 1 because the station has offloaded some of the other content to Heritage TV, a channel also owned by the corporation and dedicated purely to entertainment.

**Convergence**

In February 2016, the NMG announced that it was merging its business reporting teams as a way of restructuring editorial practices and streamlining business and related news reporting, analyses and presentation on its various platforms. Whilst this news was welcomed with both celebration and resistance, it was long in coming given many media organisations’ efforts to streamline work processes. In what Pavlik (2000) refers to as the changing nature of the structure and organisation of the newsroom, such business decisions are meant to ensure that journalists and media workers are more efficient particularly in organisations with multiplatform operations. In fact, what the NMG was implementing is what the SG did a few years ago as part of its convergence strategy which entailed bringing together various teams to work towards common goals aimed at the maximisation (and even exploitation) of human, monetary and other resources in an era where companies are cutting costs amid stiff competition and declining audience and revenue share. Such thinking gave rise to a converged newsroom that allowed journalists to work together, share ideas and the diary, stories and work for various products and platforms.

While the NMG announcement was apparently received with consternation by workers who feel they are expected to multitask without corresponding compensation (especially monetary), David Aduda, the NMG’s head of Business Development, says this is part of streamlining work processes aimed at making news collection more efficient and cost-effective. The merging of teams is also expected to serve the newsroom that is now operating on a 24-hour shift as part of attempts to meet the news and information demands of its audience. However, this increasing synergy within major media organisations is not lost to people who feel that the practices are subsuming journalistic practices within the overall corporate goals of the media firms and the profit motive that is driving media decisions and strategies. What’s more, the merging of desks as well – part of the convergence strategy – is changing newsroom organisation and structure, and patterns of news and content production. These changes could be seen as both disruptive and effective in an era where immediacy or instantaneity and simultaneity are also desirable. Whilst these moves are both desirable and inevitable, they are undoubtedly creating internal pressures for journalists that some contend conflict with traditional principles of journalism, including specialisation (cf. Campbell, 2004: 246).

The above arguments are borne out by

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11 Based on a telephone interview with Aduda, 1 March 2016.
primary data. More than half of those interviewed, 54 per cent (See Figure 3.1), indicate that it is now normal to write for more than one platform. This is especially true for those working in media houses with multiple, for example, television, newspapers, radio and online platforms.

Figure 3.1: Are you expected to write for more than one medium?

![Figure 3.1: Are you expected to write for more than one medium?](image)

In fact, the top four media houses have all the aforementioned platforms. The NMG, SG, Mediamax, and Radio Africa, have television, newspaper, radio, and online platforms and journalists – including staff members, and correspondents – are expected to produce content that fit into the platforms. Royal Media Services and KBC with their television, radio and online platforms also expect their media workers to produce content suitable for all of them. The expectations and the fact that many journalists are now expected to, and indeed are, multi-skilled is a boon to not only the workers themselves but the media houses which are increasingly demanding that their workers possess skills to be able to survive in the new digital media environment. This issue is reflected in Figure 3.2 below which shows that three quarters of those interviewed are expected to be multi-skilled, and often multitask as part of their normal daily routines and practices. Multitasking often gives journalists an opportunity to demonstrate skills outside their comfort zone or preferred particular mode of journalism whether it is print, audio, television or online. This trend and the increasing demand for journalists able to work in a multimedia digital environment, means there is no clear demarcation between, say, a print and a broadcast journalist.

Figure 3.2: Are you expected to be multi-skilled to survive in the media?

![Figure 3.2: Are you expected to be multi-skilled to survive in the media?](image)

A large majority of the journalists interviewed – 82 per cent – said their work had been significantly impacted by the digitisation, and available technologies which have made it easier to access information and write stories and other content. Figure 3.3 below shows the huge figures of respondents who have no doubt about the effects of digitisation on their work. Seen as both beneficial and disruptive, many of those interviewed are hugely optimistic that digitisation makes work not only easier but also interesting. All the respondents agree that digital media has had a profound effect on the journalism profession. Narrating how digital media has changed journalism, the respondents say news gathering had been made easier, less costly and more interactive. They argue that news is now reported in real time. To Ohito, for example, “digitisation is the greatest thing to have happened in my 20-year-old journalism career. It has revolutionised the way news is covered, reported and rendered on different platforms.” These hugely optimistic sentiments are shared by others, most notably Mr. Wanyonyi who says the digital era has had profound effects on his thinking as a journalist. “I have had to change my mindset and operations in view of the fact that my audience/readers have changed the way in which they consume news. Many now get their news online and so I have to think of them first before those who consume in print,” he says.
Mr. Jillo of Capital FM argues that digital media has made everyone a reporter and in turn forced journalists to find creative or innovative ways of gathering and breaking news. According to Mr. Bernard Ogoi, a Programmes Officer at Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), digital media has made it easier for a journalist to go to the field without necessarily being accompanied by a camera person and get the report, the pictures, and also edit the story and send it to the newsroom for transmission. Mr. Otieno of NMG agrees and notes that journalists with multimedia skills are now more marketable. He points out that digital media has democratised the news space and demystified the notion of who a news source is. He says that while in the past, prominent people tended to be the main news makers, anyone with a smart phone can now be a news source. Dr. Kamau expresses similar views. He says journalists no longer have the monopoly of disseminating news. “With the advent of digital media, what constitutes news has changed because the readers online are a bit different. Some sources trust bloggers more than they trust mainstream journalists. There is more scrutiny on journalists now,” Dr. Kamau argues.

Mr. Osir emphasises the importance of social media as a platform which has expanded the scope of news, making it more diversified and engaging. He views user-generated content (UGC) as crucial given that it enables journalists to examine trending topics on social media to generate story ideas. “Everyone in the newsroom is now expected to sniff stories from social media,” he says.

Despite these developments, most journalists say their work is still important. With available technologies, particularly computers, the Internet and mobile telephony, they are able to perform their work quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively. They are also able to multitask, sourcing, writing, taking pictures, editing and performing tasks that were previously done by other colleagues or people.

In fact, as Figure 3.4 indicates, many journalists can hardly operate without the Internet which is increasingly seen as a key resource in modern journalism. The Internet’s importance is growing mainly as a source of information and other content that has largely – despite existing challenges like plagiarism, large amounts of trivia, etc. – improved the quality of journalism around the world. What’s more, the Internet is seen as the driver behind the data journalism which is considered the new frontier in journalism. This is especially true given that data journalism combines traditional news, with new possibilities engendered by available data. The fact that most of these data is available online means the Internet is a must companion in the age of digitisation.
The above arguments are reflective in responses on whether the Internet has affected the work of journalists. As seen in Figure 3.5 below, 82 per cent believe the Internet has significantly impacted journalism mainly because it is seen as the driver behind digitisation. Moreover, those interviewed believe it is the main catalyst for convergence.

**Figure 3.5: Do you think the Internet has affected your work as a journalist?**

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<td>Yes</td>
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Some of those who acknowledge that their work had been affected by digitisation say they have benefited hugely from recent developments and adapted to remain both relevant and useful in the changing nature of news collection and dissemination business. As Figure 3.6 below shows, 90 per cent of those interviewed say digitisation has enhanced work processes and news collection practices. Some are particularly happy with the idea that they can file stories quickly irrespective of where they are at any particular moment. In addition, they can learn from what is happening from other sources, or from whatever is ‘trending’ particularly in a Twitter crazy Kenya. Trending material can give them ideas or contribute material to whatever stories they file. One respondent had this to say: “[It has] made it easier to learn about new things that are trending particularly when things happen far from where I am … . Correspondents sometimes cover large areas. So we have to rely on numerous sources including Twitter … . Tweets can tell us what is happening, and it is then our job to try and confirm whether the information is true or not.

They may lead us down the wrong alley, but often they are great sources of information. We can then begin doing our investigations, calling sources and trying to confirm stories that may be trending.” Editors interviewed for this study indicate that social media platforms are major sources of investigative stories. They argue that journalists should keep an eye on Facebook, Twitter and blogs of some of the daring citizen journalists as a source of possible stories. What’s more, they contend that digital media has made recording and editing of sensitive stories easier. There was the view that new mobile gadgets such as smartphones make it easier to gather information. The digital gadgets have also made editing of sensitive information easier. For example, Mr. Ohito points out that the gadgets are useful when one is seeking to conceal the identity of a source. “It is now easier to record and alter a source’s voice through the available digital technologies,” he says. In addition, the gadgets can be used to improve the security of journalists covering particular stories.

What’s more, the different viewpoints offered by different people or sources via various digital media, including social media, may help strengthen stories. “It broadens my knowledge in terms of understanding many issues within a very short time. I can use the same information to write and transmit confirmed reports quickly,” a respondent says.

**Figure 3.6: Has the digitisation of media enhanced the news collection process?**

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<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
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The publication of news on different platforms has also forced journalists to look for different angles particularly when they work for newspapers which are often printed much later after the news has been published elsewhere. Those in the newspaper industry say they have had to adapt in order to remain relevant due to what a respondent says is the “fast changing news environment where you constantly have to scan the environment for new angles, new information, new sources to make stories relevant and interesting. You have to package news stories in a way that will make readers buy a newspaper. When a news story breaks, online media are the first to report it. If you have to report it the following day, you have to make it interesting and appealing to your readers. Some of them may already have read the story elsewhere.”

Another respondent said: “News breaks on the Internet, is told on social media, and discussed extensively on numerous sites and platforms. I am forced to look for a new angle. Being a weekly, that would drive the conversation to a different level. Also, I engage readers a lot on social media, who give their feedback on stories before publication. This improves our engagement with readers which is relatively new in the media environment in Kenya.”

The above sentiment was shared by other respondents who note that they have also had to change tact in the news collection process and publication of the same on multimedia platforms. “Breaking news alerts are constantly being sent out via mobile ones. Then social media pick the same stories, then websites and blogs. This means that I have to be on top of things at all times so as to get the news fast, get facts fast, send alerts first then get the story published on the website with accompanying photographs and videos or audio clips.”

The fact that audiences have access to different platforms from whence they can retrieve news and other content means it is vital for journalists to change tact or perish. Consider the views of this respondent: “I have had to change my mindset and practices in view of the fact that some of my audiences and readers have changed the way they consume news. They first go online and hence we have had to implement the digital-first approach in our news coverage and publication.”

But while there is much praise for digitisation, some journalists feel there are negative consequences, including the respect for journalistic values or principles, as well as their own security. For example, as Figure 3.7 below indicates, 86 per cent of the respondents believe digitisation has impacted journalistic values and ethics.

Many respondents mention the privacy, accuracy, and fairness as some of fundamental principles that have taken a hit in recent days. This is also reflected in the responses on whether digitisation has affected ethical considerations. As indicated in Figure 3.8, it is clear that a large majority believe digitisation has affected privacy protection, accuracy and the need to verify information, data fidelity. It has also increased data theft and plagiarism. In fact, some respondents believe digitisation has resulted in lazy journalism where people merely use available resources, especially the Internet, as the source and verifier of information.
Respondents say that the rising cases of plagiarism are a consequence of laziness exhibited by “untrained” and “unprofessional” charlatans masquerading as journalists. This is also exacerbated by the scoop mentality, the idea that, as one respondent puts it, “the push to be the first one to publish information … the competition for scoops has made journalists post things they haven't verified, unconfirmed information that is sometimes also plagiarised”. Consequently, one respondent says journalism values are the “same whether in the traditional or digital environment. They must be respected and upheld at all times.”

Some of these practices, including lack of respect for privacy, publication of invective material may have contributed to the security challenges journalists say they face. In addition, there is the issue of data theft that threatens the fidelity of journalistic principles or values. Ms. Mbithi-Magori of Mediamax says some often people steal others’ work via the Internet and post it on their platforms as their own. She states that journalists and newsrooms have to invest in enhanced security to safeguard their work.

Related to data theft is the issue of hacking. Some editors interviewed for this study fear that investigative work is becoming dangerous in the digital era because hackers can easily access media houses’ editorial database and reveal sources and information and destroy records. They can also easily access stories before publication. In fact, the editors are concerned intelligence agencies like the National Intelligence Service (NIS) often snoop on them. This is considered a breach of journalistic security which is the backbone of investigative journalism. This is especially dangerous in an era when investigations into corruption, land grabbing, abuse of power and human rights etc. have become important as the country seeks to consolidate democracy and accountable leadership. “Intrusion of privacy is a serious problem in the digital era,” says Mr. Orito. This problem is worsened by the existence of databases and information management systems in many modern media houses. The ability to access such databases makes it dangerous for investigative journalists. The editors are also concerned that digitisation may make it easier for disgruntled employees and others to pass stories or secrets to rival media houses.

In addition, the editors are worried about the place of social media in modern journalism. They reckon that social media is continuously blurring the lines between public and private lives, making it extremely important for journalists to uphold professional standards on both online and offline spaces. “Through citizen journalism, one is able to record information and distribute in its raw form without processing and removing unwanted aspects thus sometimes even infringing on people’s privacy, exposing subjects to ridicule,” says Mr. Ogoi. Even with the many positive effects that social media has had on mainstream journalism, there are a number of challenges that the platform brings to journalistic work. Most of the challenges identified by the respondents have to do with journalistic ethics. These challenges include the propagation of inaccurate and unverified information, the spread of hate messages, the increase in plagiarism, the lack of balance and objectivity in stories on these platforms among others.

The respondents feel that because of the
pressure to publish stories quickly and in raw forms, immediacy and instantaneity, journalists may publish unverified or unconfirmed stories. This trend, they argue, is detrimental to the mainstream media’s credibility as conveyors of truthful and reliable information. The editors say that while it is extremely important to tell the story quickly so as to remain current, there must be verification of information or content of the story before dissemination. Both Mr. Aduda and Mr. Otieno of NMG say the ability to publish accurate and reliable information supersedes the need to publish stories quickly because of the scoop mentality. They argue that accuracy is a cardinal rule that must be upheld by all even when working under the pressure of digital journalism.

Hate speech, abusive language, defamatory statements and other negative comments have also been transferred by readers to media online platforms through user generated content. Despite the fact that media houses have social media policies on their websites, some readers often break or do not respect rules. This is exacerbated by the fact that some stories attract significant user commentary. “We receive over 3,000 comments on our digital platforms daily … to moderate these effectively, one needs at least six experienced editors working 24 hours,” Mr. Ohito of the Standard says. Even though moderation is important, excessive editing of reader comments may interfere with the people’s right to respond to issues and the spirit of interactivity in online fora. Interactivity is one of the most notable positive effects of social media on traditional media. Through social media, mainstream media can connect to a huge audience base wherever they are in the world. Through the feedback at the social platforms, the media can deduce what their audience feels about their content and hence improve on it. Social media have also become a source of news for journalists who can sift through user-generated content to look for newsworthy content. This has made the news gathering process easier and faster. Through social media, journalists can quickly send updates on their newsrooms, for example, through tweets. This enables media houses to break stories quickly even as they await more details.

However, the use some technologies, and increasing snooping by intelligence and security agencies has made it difficult to investigate some stories. Hacking and snooping has increased the fear levels among some recalcitrant and investigative journalists. Even though only 42 per cent indicate that they are fearful of personal security and safety in the digital era (see Figure 3.9 below), the figure is high enough to warrant concern especially in an era where investigative journalism has unearthed information on sensitive issues such as corruption, poor leadership and abuse of office, and abuse of human rights and extrajudicial killings.

Figure 3.9: Has your work as a journalist ever caused you any security concern in the digital era?

And as Figure 3.10 shows, person safety as well as that of family and informants rank highly in issues that now worry journalists. Nonetheless, despite such concerns, many journalists have not had any security incidents in the last 12 months as seen in Figure 3.11. However, this is limited to security issues emanating from the use of the Internet and social media. Granted, those who reported having had negative consequences as a result of using the Internet and social media indicate that they received personal threats (24 per cent) mostly via short messaging services (29 per cent) as shown in Figure 3.12:
Despite the existence of serious security concerns, a small number of journalists in Kenya feel there are sufficient security measures to protect them against threats emanating from their use of new technologies and applications. As Figure 3.13 below show, most of those interviewed either have no security from employers or do not know whether such arrangements exist. Worryingly, almost all of the journalists interviewed – 99 per cent as Figure 3.14 below shows – do not believe the government is capable of protecting them. These respondents believe the government is the source of security concerns and thus lacks both the capacity and willingness to protect them.
The Impact of Digital Technologies and Internet on Media and Journalism in Kenya

Figure 3.14: Do you think the government offers sufficient protection to journalists in Kenya?

| Yes | 1% |
| No  | 99% |

Pay

While journalists are expected to write for multiple platforms, possess different skills, work long hours in environments that are sometimes dangerous and thus non-conducive, they claim their pay is not commensurate with the amount of effort they invest in their work. As Figure 3.15 below shows, 96 per cent of journalists are dissatisfied with their pay. This finding may resonate with findings by the MCK (2003) that most journalists in Kenya are poorly paid.¹² Although the report is three years old, there is still an overarching view among many journalists interviewed for this research, and as reflected in Figure 3.15 below, that current salary scales are not commensurate with the efforts they invest in their work as well as the cost of living.

Figure 3.15: Is your pay reflective of the amount of work done?

| Yes | 4% |
| No  | 96% |

Freelancers and correspondents are particularly disadvantaged given that many hardly have contracts and thus assured income. As one respondent says: “I work in a difficult environment … there is no hardship allowance or reimbursement for money spent pursuing stories despite the fact that we are paid only for stories published.” These sentiments may contribute to the view that the working conditions for most journalists are difficult despite the notion that journalism is now much easier because of available technologies that make it easier to source and file stories, pictures and other material.

In contrast, 82 per cent of those interviewed say the working conditions are conducive (as seen in Figure 3.16) although some felt employers need to improve. This is particularly true for those journalists working outside urban areas where the quality of facilities and working environments have improved significantly in recent days. Such challenges are sometimes the source of conflict between journalists’ associations and media houses. For example, the Kenya Union of Journalist (KUJ) and Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA) are often at loggerheads with employers for what they believe is the exploitation of media workers. What’s more, the realignment of work processes has seen many media houses lay off journalists in the recent past as they move to contain expenditure. For example, the SG, NMG, Royal Media and Radio Africa have recently laid off tens of journalists because of what the companies say are efforts aimed at curbing the wage bill as well as ensuring efficiency and productivity. KBC on the other hand has had to deal with a serious dip in revenue and is reportedly on the verge of collapse.¹³ Granted, the problems at KBC go back many years and is not necessarily the consequence of digitisation. However, the emergence of new media companies in addition to its legacy problems means KBC is unable to meet some of its financial needs.


obligations including paying workers as well as the Communication Workers’ Union claims, for example.14 Such challenges will undoubtedly be exacerbated by the increasing competition engendered by digitisation and challenges such as heightened competition and reduced revenue share. 

**Figure 3.16: Are the working conditions conducive?**

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In addition to the arguments above, some respondents feel that although digital migration has increased the number of television channels available, the multiplicity of stations alone cannot be taken as a sign of ‘genuine or better quality’ of news and other programmes. For example, Mr. Otieno doubts quality can be engendered by more stations. He believes quality can only be achieved by more investment in both human and other resources including equipment and training. Moreover, he believes some stations merely regurgitate what others broadcast. This is especially seen in many stations that link to global channels like BBC, CNN, Deutsche Welle, and Al Jazeera.

Another respondent, Mr. Ohito is critical of the vernacular TV stations borne out of the digital process. He claims the television stations do not offer quality programmes. He chides the stations for focusing more on local language programmes that are, unfortunately, devoid of serious content. “Besides language, is there any value added by these vernacular TV stations?” he poses rather rhetorically and refers to their offerings of ‘cheap’ tribal and ‘partisan’ political discourses rather than meaningful discussions. Alluding to the coverage of ‘tribal’ politics, Mr. Ohito points out that these stations may be unable to give balanced and fair coverage to politicians who do not hail from regions where the languages they broadcast in are spoken. Ohito cites Ramogi TV’s Luo slogan for: Ma en marwa (this is ours). “This means the TV station belongs to the Luo community. Will someone like opposition politician Musalia Mudavadi get fair coverage?” Mr. Ohito poses.

These arguments could be manifestation of other problems, particularly training that is seen as catalyst for quality and diversity of content. For example, Mr. Ogoi believes poor quality is indicative of little investment in people, training and professionalism. To him, the kind of content offered by some stations is reflective of “incompetent staff, inadequate capital investment in production as well as lack of required broadcasting equipment.” Mr. Ogoi’s sentiments are shared by Dr. Kamau who feels the quality of digital content is still wanting due to low levels of human capital.

**Training in media schools**

All the interviewees held the view that journalism schools are yet to take social media as a serious field of study. They call for the review of existing curricula to include digital journalism. The respondents say that while those graduating from journalism schools may be active on social media sites, they do yet possess the skills to operate effectively in new digital environments. For example, Ms. Mbithi-Magori of Mediamax argues that the development of a digital journalism specialism is key to the success of modern journalism in Kenya. “The digital journalist is the modern day journalist and he or she must thrive in traditional journalism and online journalism,” she says.

Dr. Kamau on the other hand believes journalism schools need to embrace social media and recognize the power of mobile devices in the new dispensation. “The
number of people watching television, reading newspapers and listening to radio has reduced while those accessing news via mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets and mobile devices is increasing,” he says.

Mr. Gituma argues that journalism schools and media houses should work together in developing curricula that integrates digitisation. Mr. Masambu of Daystar University concurs, adding that media trainers need to get rid of their conservative attitudes towards social media, for example, and embrace it as part of the journalism of today. He points out that journalism training institutions should invest in multimedia labs where students can gain modern skills. This is perhaps the thinking around NMG new training strategy. In recent days, the Nation has now shifted its training to convergence in what the company calls attempts to keep up with the changing nature of journalism and media operations. Addressing trainees and others for its seventh edition of the Nation Media Lab, the NMG CEO Mr. Muganda said: “If we are going to compete with everyone across the world, convergence must be a minimum requirement.” The NMG Editor-in-Chief Mr. Tom Mshindi echoed Mr. Muganda’s sentiments, noting that convergence is key to the success of journalism in a digital world. The trainees are expected to undergo an intensive four-month training aimed at producing all-round journalists comfortable reporting for any of NMG’s platforms.15

Summary

That digitisation has had a significant impact on journalism and media businesses is not in doubt. Whereas there are varying degrees of effects on both media and journalism, there is evidence to show that media organisations in Kenya have embraced digitisation as they seek to survive and thrive in what has become a hypercompetitive environment.

Besides, digitisation has increased consumer choice. New television stations have emerged since the digital switchover in 2015. These offer increased diversity in terms of content and allow for a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints particularly in news and current affairs programmes. As evidence above shows, media organisations have embraced both convergence and coopetition. The effects of convergence, particularly on individual journalists and newsrooms, have become clearer in the past few years given the fact that media houses are appropriating and using modern technologies that have made journalism easier, interesting and cost-effective. However, while there are celebratory sentiments, others warn that digitisation has exerted significant pressures on journalists and media houses, and that media houses are pandering to corporatist ideals. This is seen in, for example, modern newsroom cultures where journalists are required to be multi-skilled and ready to report for multiple platforms. The demand to multitask means journalists have to operate outside their comfort zone or preferred mode of journalism – print, audio or television (cf. Campbell, 2004). Consequently, the rise of digital journalism is blurring the lines between different modes of journalism which is welcome especially by the young digerati. Unfortunately, many journalists working in major media houses have lost their jobs as a result of digitisation. This is especially if they cannot fit the new environment given the obscurity of their skills, or their inability to adapt or acquire new ones. The loss of jobs is also a consequence of the proliferation of media houses that has put pressure on the revenue base of the organisations as a consequence of fragmentation and reduction of audiences.

What’s more, even though media synergies are inevitable, some consider new practices as incongruent with normative or traditional principles, practices and roles of journalism. Moreover, the pressures birthed by digitisation have seen a change in the modi operandi of media organisation. Newspapers have perhaps been the biggest victims of new changes as they seek to remain relevant in an age where immediacy, instantaneity and

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simultaneity have become key ideals in an information and networked society. Granted, such changes are inevitable in a modern world where information consumption patterns are changing. In essence, media organisations and journalists have had to change tact and adapt to the disruptive possibilities of digitisation. The full impact of this will be seen in the coming years although the signs are both promising and ominous.
While the effects vary from one media organisation to another, and one journalist to another, digital technologies have become part and parcel of media operations not only in Kenya but also across the world. These changes notwithstanding, it is imperative to determine the extent of adoption and application and effects. Thus the essence of this study.

Some of the most profound changes engendered by the adoption of digital technologies are seen in changing work processes as well as relationships between the media and its various publics including audiences/consumers, advertisers and news/information sources. These developments have raised both opportunities and challenges, including, for example, that the media have opportunities to expand and develop new revenue streams, and that work processes have changed for the better. Thus digital technologies are celebrated. However, there is no doubt that digital technologies have impacted the way journalists do their job; the nature of news content; the structure and organisation of the newsroom; and the nature of the relationship between and among news organisations (Pavlik, 2000: 230).

As seen above, the collection, packaging, analysis and dissemination of media products are becoming increasingly participatory. The active participation of users or consumers is seen not only as a common feature of modern productions but desirable as part of the increasing cultivation of symbiotic relationship and discipleship, and loyalty which is important as competition for audiences (and to a large extent revenue) intensifies. The use of such facilities as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube has changed the practice of journalism. By actively engaging in news and journalistic productions, journalism seems to have migrated from ‘conventional’ or mainstream media organisations to the audience. This means that ‘ordinary’ people are now increasingly practising ‘journalism’ by contributing stories, pictures, and audiovisual material for publication by mainstream media, and especially those with an online presence. In essence, people now easily interact not only with content but also with various media platforms where they can tell their own stories by side-stepping information gatekeepers or middlepersons who once controlled information and media products. Facilities such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr have also made it possible for people to engage in real-time social networking that was impossible before the introduction of digital technologies. Such use also means that people can resist corporate media dominance and any ideologies they may advance.

As demonstrated above, market and audience demands seem to be forcing the media to provide ‘bitty’ raw information in the form of breaking news. As we have argued, this may benefit the consumer who receives information instantly without having to wait for ‘news time’ or for the next day’s newspapers to learn about events around them or in other parts of the world. This has forced many organisations to quickly adapt as they seek to satisfy the needs of fragmented audiences in their bid for survival. However, as we posit, this tendency threatens depth and the quality
of information offered to audiences as well as the credibility and reliability of media as conveyors of ‘truthful’, credible, and reliable information, pictures, and video and audio material. This also contributes to the erosion of professionalism and well as non-adherence to the golden values of journalism especially truth and accuracy, objectivity, balance, fairness, and respect for privacy.

There is also the increasing proliferation of media houses. In fact, the biggest effect that digital migration, for example, has had on the Kenyan media scene is the increase of TV channels. This increase means that audiences now have a variety of content to choose from besides the usual politics and entertainment. The entrance of digital TV has seen the emergence of stations that deal with various issues such as education, farming, health, women and children issues among others. The result is that a segment of the TV industry has embraced the educative role of mass communication. Mainstream media houses have embraced digital TV with some like KTN creating sister stations to provide 24-hour news. Others like KBC now have extra time for news, having offloaded some of their entertainment programmes to their sister station.

Another positive aspect that can be attributed to digital migration is the creation of job opportunities for content producers. Unlike the past where producers had very few places where they could sell their programmes, new comers in the market can now make a name for themselves through the new stations that are still trying to create a niche in the market. This means that those who graduate from media schools do not have to seek employment in a media house but can instead start a production company with the aim of producing content for the digital stations.

However, the study demonstrates that quantity of stations has not translated to quality of programming. New entrants into the TV industry are yet to make inroads in the advertising market and so do not yet have the capacity to hire experienced staff in their stations. This lack of competent staff is demonstrated in the low quality of content transmitted by these stations.

Turning to social media, it is evident that Internet-driven journalism is the face of the profession today. Media houses are competing with each other to see who has more followers on the different social media platforms. A number of media organisations have mobile apps through which audiences can download news. Every media house today has a digital team that deals with social media and content on the online segment. It is evident that although most media organisations are still grappling with how to make the online platform highly profitable, it is a space they must continue investing in and growing. As one respondent posits, media houses must keep revising their digital strategy to survive in the ever-changing industry.

It is also evident that social media platforms have radically changed the way journalists gather and disseminate news. Today’s journalist will hardly depend on the newsroom diary or phone tip offs from sources but will also have their eye on social media platforms to see what has been posted or what “gossip” has been put up which they could probe further to see whether it could lead to a story. Social media platforms of prominent people, like CEOs and even some government officers are important because some of these sources will put up important information on these platforms rather than call the media for press conferences.

Social media can also be seen as de-professionalising the journalism practice as indicated earlier (cf. Witschge & Nygren, 2009). Professional journalists no longer enjoy the status of being the sole news gathers and disseminators. Citizen journalists, through social media can bypass the rigorous gate keeping processes of the newsroom and post breaking news on their online platforms. This competition with social media has seen some journalists slowly discard some of their professional ethics of ensuring verification
before giving reports, ensuring balance and even good taste.

Some mainstream media houses have in their bid to compete with citizen journalists and to ensure hits on their online platforms resulted to sensational reporting that one would normally not find on their offline platforms. It appears that everyone is angling to have massive presence on the digital platforms, even at the expense of ethics.

**Recommendations**

A number of recommendations can be drawn in attempts to advance journalism in Kenya in the age of digitisation.

- Media organisations, the MCK and training institutions should collaborate in developing curricula that encompasses the social media/digital media journalism as a way of preparing future journalists for both the job market and emerging issues and challenges.

- There is need to reexamine media ethics and professionalism as technological changes generate challenges requiring continuous examination and application of existing standards. This will promote professionalism as well as trust in the media as an important actor in Kenya. This is especially due to the fact that the media plays an important role in safeguarding and promoting such issues as good and accountable leadership, and democracy.

- Media organisations need to find ways of wholly embracing social media while at the same time ensuring they do not compromise on journalism ethics.

- Digital television stations should continue improving on the quality of their productions. The stations could do this by investing in equipment and hiring upcoming talented content producers. The attitude of anything goes as long as it is content that can be put on air should be discarded. Improvement in the quality of content would be a clear indication of the value that the stations place on customer satisfaction.

- Further research on digitisation could target media consumers of the various digital stations to find out how they perceive the stations and the content disseminated. This would be helpful in helping the stations gauge their performance and understand their audiences better. The research would also be helpful in understanding how the Kenyan audience has received digital migration from the time it was fully implemented.
References


The Impact of Digital Technologies and Internet on Media and Journalism in Kenya


Appendix 1: Questionnaire

The impact of MIGRATION from analog to digital broadcasting and internet driven media on journalism and media performance

The Media Council of Kenya is researching the effects of digital migration and use of the Internet and popular social media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube in journalism Kenya. Accordingly, this questionnaire is meant to help generate primary data/information to inform the research. To help inform this research, you have been identified as a key respondent and thus request you to take a few moments to respond to the questions below. You are hereby assured that any information that you provide shall remain confidential, and usage of the same shall be for research purposes only. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact the Media Council of Kenya on 0727 735252 or 020 2716265. Thanks in advance for your assistance.

How would you describe your current occupation?
- Staff Journalist
- Correspondent
- Freelancer
- Professional Blogger
- Citizen Journalist / Blogger
- Other ______________________

For what medium do you work? Please tick as appropriate and indicate which organisation(s)
- Radio
- Newspaper
- Online publication
- Television

Has the digitisation process affected your practice as a journalist? Please explain your answer.
- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Are you expected to write for more than one medium?
- Yes
- No

Are you expected to be multi-skilled to survive in the media?
- Yes
- No
Is your pay reflective of the amount of work done?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are the working conditions conducive? Please explain your answer
☐ Yes  ☐ No
Explain
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________________________

Which technologies and tools do you use in your work?
☐ Desktop PC  ☐ Laptops/Tablets  ☐ Mobile Phones
☐ Email and collaborative tools (e.g. Google Docs)  ☐ Internet
☐ Social media and networking websites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram etc.)
☐ Video/Audio recording devices
☐ Others (please specify)
___________________________________________________________________________
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Do you have a social media account? If yes, which one(s)?
☐ Yes  ☐ No
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___________________________________________________________________________
Has the digitisation of media enhanced the news collection process? Please explain your answer.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Explain
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How often do you use the Internet in your work?

☐ Hourly ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly

☐ Never

Do you think the Internet has affected your work as a journalist? Please explain your answer

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know

Explain
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What is the impact of digitisation to professional ethical considerations, particularly those relating to the collection of information?

Explain
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Do you think digitisation has had an impact on journalistic values? (particularly accuracy and verification, balance, fairness). Please explain your answer

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don't know

Explain
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Do you think digitisation has affected media ethics (privacy protection, data theft, broadcast of unchecked information, plagiarism)? Please explain your answer

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don't know

Explain
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Has your work as a journalist ever caused you any security concern in the digital era?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don't know

If yes, what types of issues are of concern to you?

☐ Personal safety  ☐ Security of information

☐ Security of people I work with  ☐ Security of informants

☐ Security of family  ☐ Others  ☐ Don't know
In the past 12 months, have you experienced any negative consequences due to your journalism as a result of using the Internet and social media?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Don't know

If yes, please select what is relevant from below:

☐ I was personally threatened
☐ I was threatened by email
☐ I was threatened by SMS
☐ I was physically attacked
☐ My friends or family were threatened
☐ I was arrested or detained
☐ My computer got a computer virus and my data was affected
☐ My identity was exposed against my wishes
☐ I was sacked, demoted or reprimanded at work
☐ My publication, website or blog was attacked or hacked
☐ I had my emails intercepted or data stolen
☐ Any other

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If you are a female journalist, have you ever faced any threats because you of your gender? What is the source of that threat?

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What is the biggest source of threats (please list, e.g. police or any other security agents, government officials, including provincial administration like chiefs, county officials, etc.)? Explain
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___________________________________________________________________________

Does your employer offer any safety and security measures to protect you against online threats?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don’t know

If yes, what security measures are put in place to protect you?
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Do you think the government offers sufficient protection to journalists in Kenya? Please explain your answer
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don’t know

Explain
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