



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

eCommons@AKU

---

Theses & Dissertations

---

1-30-2020

## Opportunities digital technologies present for women in media: multi-case study of newsrooms in Kenya

Faith P. Oneya  
*Aga Khan University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.aku.edu/theses\\_dissertations](https://ecommons.aku.edu/theses_dissertations)



Part of the [Journalism Studies Commons](#), and the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Oneya, F. P. (2020). *Opportunities digital technologies present for women in media: multi-case study of newsrooms in Kenya* (Unpublished master's dissertation). Aga Khan University, East Africa.

**THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY**

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**OPPORTUNITIES DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES PRESENT FOR WOMEN IN  
MEDIA: MULTI-CASE STUDY OF NEWSROOMS IN KENYA**

By

**FAITH P. ONEYA**  
**535143**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in Digital Journalism

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020

© Copyright

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2020 Faith P. Oneya

APPROVAL PAGE

The Aga Khan University  
Graduate School of Media and Communications

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Digital Journalism

Members of the Thesis Evaluation Committee appointed to examine the thesis of  
**FAITH ONEYA-535143**, found it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.



---

Alex Awiti, PhD.,  
Chair, Thesis Evaluation Committee



---

Nancy Booker, PhD.,  
Director, Academic Affairs



---

Nancy Booker, PhD.,  
1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor



---

Joseph Nyanoti, PhD.,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor



---

Peter Kimahi, PhD.,  
Member, Thesis Evaluation Committee

30/01/2020

## DECLARATION

I, **FAITH ONEYA-535143**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my research endeavours.



---

Signature

30/01/2020

---

Date

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, the late Florence Agutu Owuor.  
What you said would be has become. *Amenitendea.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications (AKU-GSMC) abounds with wonderful and considerate people and this thesis would not have been possible without them. I am indebted to my supervisors Dr. Nancy Booker and Dr. Joseph Nyanoti whose rigor, dedication and passion challenged me to do and be more during this academic journey. Dr. Sam Kamau provided critical advice at the proposal stage of this project and helped shaped my thoughts; for that, I am grateful. I am also thankful to AKU-GSMC staff members Hesbon Owila, Kimweli Wambua and Henry Kibira who went beyond the call of duty to support me in my academic endeavours. The Vice Provost and Interim Dean Dr. Alex Awiti provided immeasurable advice and support throughout this journey. My sincere gratitude as well to the librarians Augustine Gitonga and George Mwangi. A special thank you to my treasured friends Fridah Miriti, Vincent Ng'ethe, Rachel Ombaka, Carlos Mureithi, Cicily Chomba who provided editing and moral support. To my colleagues David Aduda and Caroline Njung'e, thank you for your encouragement and support. To my sister Cynthia Owuor, thank you for constantly cheering me on. I thank my lovely daughter, Imora Omolo, who endured long absences by her mother. To my friends The Raiders, this is for us. Finally, all this would not have been possible without the cooperation of the research participants who sacrificed their time to share invaluable insights.

## ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of the opportunities digital technologies present for women in media. Digital technologies have been praised for providing opportunities to journalism as a whole but little is known regarding those offered to women in newsrooms. The objectives of this study were to: (a) determine new ways women are participating in journalism because of digitisation, (b) establish the new forms of journalism where women have thrived and (c) explore the structures that support women working with digital technologies in the newsroom. The theory that guided the study was Technological Determinism. It employed the phenomenological research tradition. The researcher conducted 12 in-depth interviews with purposefully sampled research participants from five media houses in Kenya: Nation Media Group, Standard Group, Mediamax, Royal Media Services, and Radio Africa Group. Data were analysed thematically and presented in a narrative format. The study did not find an association between digital technologies and women's rise in the media. The results suggest that digital technologies have created substantial opportunities for women in the newsroom as sources, gatherers and decision-makers but the bulk of these lie outside the newsroom where women have used these digital technologies to reinvent and rebrand themselves as content creators, content aggregators and influencers and this is where they have thrived. The results also showed that the research participants found the current structures in digital departments inadequate and in some cases, non-existent. The study concluded that digital technologies offer great potential and opportunities for women in newsrooms but there are barriers, including structures in the newsroom, that need to be addressed for these women to fully benefit. Such structures include gender-sensitive workplace policies, flexi-time, mentorship and flexi-assignments. The study recommends for appropriate gender-sensitive policies, training and mentorship should be implemented by media houses to help them tap fully into the benefits of digital technologies for women.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
DECLARATION .....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Background to the Study .....	1
1.2.1 Global Overview .....	5
1.2.2 Regional Overview: Africa .....	6
1.2.3 National Overview: Kenya.....	7
1.3 Statement of the Problem .....	8
1.4 Purpose of the Study .....	9
1.5 Objectives of the Study .....	9
1.5.1 Broad Objective .....	9
1.5.2 Specific Objectives .....	9
1.6 Research Questions .....	9
1.7 Rationale of the Study .....	10
1.8 Significance of the Study .....	10
1.9 Scope of the Study.....	11
1.10 Limitations of the Study.....	11
1.11 Operational Definitions of Terms .....	11
1.12 Summary .....	12
CHAPTER TWO .....	13
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	13
2.1 Introduction .....	13
2.2 Theoretical Framework .....	13
2.2.1 Principles of Technological Determinism Theory .....	13
2.2.2 The Relevance of Technological Determinism Theory.....	14
2.2.3 Application of Technological Determinism Theory .....	15
2.2.4 Criticism of Technological Determinism Theory .....	16

2.3 General Literature Review .....	17
2.3.1 Historical Perspectives of Challenges Faced by Women in Kenyan Media .....	17
2.3.2 Profiles of Media Houses in the Study.....	19
2.4 Empirical Literature Review .....	20
2.5 Summary .....	28
CHAPTER THREE .....	29
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	29
3.1 Introduction .....	29
3.2 Research Design.....	29
3.3 Research Approach .....	29
3.4 Population.....	30
3.4.1 Target Population.....	30
3.4.2 Sample Size.....	31
3.4.3 Sampling Techniques and Procedures .....	31
3.5 Data Collection Instruments.....	32
3.5.1 Data Collection Procedures.....	33
3.5.2 Pretesting.....	35
3.6 Data Analysis .....	35
3.6.1 Data Processing Procedures .....	36
3.6.2 Data Analysis Techniques.....	36
3.6.3 Framework for Analysis .....	37
3.7 Ethical Considerations.....	38
3.8 Summary .....	40
CHAPTER FOUR.....	41
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION .....	41
4.1 Introduction .....	41
4.2 Overview of Research Participants .....	41
4.3 Data Analysis .....	41
4.3.1 Profile of the Research Participants.....	43
4.3.2 New Ways Women Are Participating in Journalism .....	44
4.3.3 New Forms of Journalism Where Women Have Thrived .....	51
4.3.4 Existing Structures in Digital Departments to Support Women in the Newsroom.....	54
4.4 Summary of Key Findings .....	56
4.5 Summary .....	58

CHAPTER FIVE .....	59
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	59
5.1 Introduction .....	59
5.2 Discussion of Key Findings .....	59
5.2.1 To Determine New Ways Women Are Participating in Journalism because of Digitisation .....	59
5.2.2 To Establish the New Forms of Journalism Where Women Have Thrived .....	64
5.2.3 To Explore the Structures that Support Women Working with Digital Technologies in the Newsroom .....	67
5.3 Conclusions .....	69
5.4 Recommendations and Implications for Research and Practice .....	70
5.5 Suggestions for Further Research .....	73
REFERENCES .....	74
APPENDICES .....	81
Appendix A In-depth Interview Guide .....	81
Appendix B Screening Questionnaire .....	82
Appendix C AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter.....	84
Appendix D Introductory Letter from AKU .....	85
Appendix E Nacosti Research Licence .....	86

## LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Target Population</i> .....	31
<i>Table 2: Example of Codes Generated</i> .....	42

LIST OF FIGURES

*Figure 1: A codes-to-theory model* ..... 38

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>AFP:</b>	Agence France-Presse
<b>AKU-GSMC:</b>	Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications
<b>ASNE:</b>	American Society of News Editors
<b>AU:</b>	African Union
<b>AWCS:</b>	African Woman and Child Services
<b>AWMC:</b>	American Women’s Media Center
<b>BBC:</b>	British Broadcasting Corporation
<b>ICFJ:</b>	International Center for Journalists
<b>KEG:</b>	Kenya Editors’ Guild
<b>MCK:</b>	Media Council of Kenya
<b>PwC:</b>	PricewaterhouseCoopers