Challenges of implementing convergence in Kenyan newsrooms: a case of The Standard Group PLC

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CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING CONVERGENCE IN KENYAN NEWSROOMS: A CASE OF THE STANDARD GROUP PLC

By

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535184

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

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020
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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 Julian Wanjiru Kamau-535184, found it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.

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30/01/2020
I, JULIAN WANJIRU KAMAU-535184, 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 own research endeavors.

Signature

30/01/2020

Date
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband Eric for his encouragement and support and to my son Shawn Kebaso who is the inspiration behind this thesis.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I am grateful to my supervisors Dr. Sam Kamau and Dr. Wambui Wamunyu whose scholarly advice, help and constant encouragement have contributed significantly to the completion of this study. I would also wish to thank my Thesis Committee members for their critical input for my study. I also wish to thank the management led by Vice Provost East Africa and the Interim Dean, Dr. Alex Awiti, faculty members including Dr. Nancy Booker and Peter Kimani, staff led by Henry Kibira and Asha Abdalla for your invaluable support. I am grateful to my fellow students who were very supportive in school life and beyond which made school fun and worthwhile. It was such a pleasure meeting all of you guys and I wish you all the very best in your next endeavors. I thank Mr. Hesbon Owilla and Kimweli Wambua who assisted in the proofreading and editing of my paper. My gratitude equally goes to the library staff especially Mr. Augustine Gitonga for your immense support. I sincerely acknowledge the support of my employer, Standard Group PLC, for giving me time off to pursue my studies and conduct this research. Finally, I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support and love of my family- My mother Minnie for taking me to school despite the hard times. My mother-in-law Grace and mum for encouraging me and taking care of my newborn when I had to attend classes. My dear husband Eric for his immeasurable support and encouragement during this journey. You are my biggest support system and I could not have done this without you. I dedicate this work to my son Shawn. You have made me stronger, better and more fulfilled than I could have ever imagined. I love you to the moon and back.
This study sought to find out the challenges of implementing convergence in Kenyan newsrooms: A case of the Standard Group PLC. This study was guided by three objectives: (1) Factors driving the need for newsroom convergence, (2) Key actors driving the convergence process at Standard Group PLC and (3) Challenges of implementing convergence at SG. The study was guided by two theories – Media Convergence Theory and Disruptive Innovation Theory. This study used a Qualitative Research Approach, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 13 participants from the institution and one Focus Group Discussion with 9 participants from all editorial departments to collect data. The participants for this study were journalists and editors who have worked at the Standard Group PLC for more than 5 years as well as key actors in the convergence implementation process. All participants were purposively selected. This study identified cost management, competition, technological advances and audience behavior as factors driving the need for newsroom convergence at the group. It also identified that top management, journalists, editors and managing editors as the key actors driving the convergence process. The study also identified five challenges of implementing convergence, they include cost, inadequate communication, organization and newsroom culture, lack of a clear digital/convergence strategy and resistance by some journalists and managers. This study recommends that Standard Group PLC establishes a communication channel that is inclusive of all key actors in the implementation of convergence process. It also recommends training of managers on change management to curb resistance in the newsroom. Standard Group PLC is however at the forefront in coming up with innovative ideas and strategies that will not only change the newsroom operations but the business model as well. Presently, there are ongoing efforts and investments in integrating the content teams and the commercial teams to create viable media products in new a move termed as a business transformation. This is an innovation in response to the digital disruption experienced in the media industry locally and globally.
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