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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

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

By

**JULIAN WANJIRU KAMAU
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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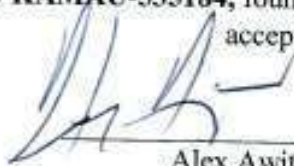
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APPROVAL PAGE

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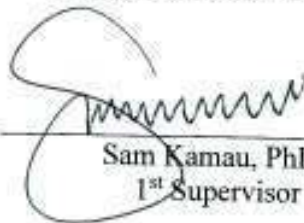
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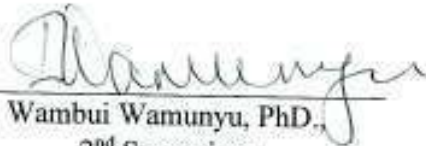
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DECLARATION

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.

ABSTRACT

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 fore front 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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE	iii
DECLARATION	iv
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xiii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.2 Background of the Study.....	1
1.3 Problem Statement	3
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.4.1 General Objective	5
1.4.2 Specific Objectives	5
1.5. Research Questions	5
1.6 Purpose of the Study	6
1.7 Justification of this Study	6
1.8 Significance of the study	7
1.9 Scope of the Study.....	7
1.10 Limitations of the Study	7
1.11 Operational Definition of Terms	8
1.12 Summary	8
CHAPTER TWO.....	9
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Digital Disruption in the Media Industry	9
2.3 Innovation in Response to Disruption.....	10
2.4 Understanding Convergence	11
2.5 Convergence Implementation in El Mundo (Spain) and New York Times (US)	14

2.6 Implementing Convergence in Legacy Media	15
2.7 Factors Driving the Need for Newsroom Convergence	16
2.8 Actors Driving the Convergence Process.....	19
2.9 Challenges of Implementing Convergence	20
2.9.1 Cultural Resistance	20
2.9.2 New Skill Set	21
2.9.3 Experience	22
2.9.4 Strained Relations in the Newsroom, Journalists and Newsroom Management	23
2.9.5 Production Quality.....	24
2.9.6 Compensation for Multi Platforms Productions	25
2.9.7 Competition	25
2.9.8 Work Conditions.....	26
2.10 Kenya’s Media Landscape	26
2.11 Profile of Standard Group PLC	28
2.12 Theoretical Framework	30
2.12.1 Media Convergence Theory	30
2.12.2 Disruptive Innovation Theory.....	33
2.13 Summary	35
CHAPTER THREE	37
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	37
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 Research Approach	37
3.3 Research Design	38
3.4 Site Selection and Description	38
3.5 Target Population	39
3.6 Sampling.....	39
3.7 Sample Size.....	39
3.8 Techniques of Data Collection.....	41
3.8.1 Data Collection Tools.....	41

3.9 Techniques of Data Processing and Analysis	42
3.9.1 Data Processing Procedures.....	42
3.10 Ethical Considerations.....	43
3.11 Summary	45
CHAPTER FOUR.....	46
DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION.....	46
4.1 Introduction	46
4.2 History of Convergence at Standard Group PLC.....	46
4.3 Factors Driving the Need for Newsroom Convergence at Standard Group PLC	48
4.3.1 Cost Management as a Result of Dwindling Revenues.....	49
4.3.2 Changing Audience Habits and Demands	50
4.3.3 Growth and Emergence of New Technologies.....	52
4.3.4 Increased Competition	53
4.4 The Key Actors Driving Newsroom Convergence at Standard Group PLC.....	53
4.5 Challenges in the Implementation of Convergence	55
4.5.1 Communication.....	55
4.5.2 Internal Competition.....	57
4.5.3 Convergence Implementation Strategy.....	59
4.5.4 Cost of Implementing Convergence	60
4.5.5 Experience	62
4.5.6 Managers’ Resistance	63
4.5.7 Top down Approach	64
4.5.8 Newsroom and Organizational Culture	65
4.5.9 Skilling.....	66
4.5.10 Compensation for Additional Roles	68
4.5.11 Workload on the Journalist.....	69
4.5.12 Kenya Media Culture.....	69
4.5.13 Perception and Attitudes of Journalists and Management towards Newsroom Integration.....	70
4.6 Summary of Key Findings	71

4.7 Summary	73
CHAPTER FIVE.....	74
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	74
5.1 Introduction	74
5.1.1 Factors Driving the Need for Newsroom Convergence	74
5.2.2 Key Actors in the Newsroom Convergence Process	77
5.2.3 Challenges of Implementing Convergence at SG.....	78
5.3 Recommendations	83
5.4 Areas of Further Research.....	85
REFERENCES	86
APPENDICES	92
Appendix A: Interview Guide for Managers/Senior Editors	92
Appendix B Focus Group Guide for Journalists.....	94
Appendix C Permission Letter from Institution Under Study	96
Appendix D Ethics Review Committee Approval.....	97
Appendix F Nacosti Research License.....	99

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Participants, their designation and departments</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Table 2: Number of participants in the focus group discussion, their designation and departments</i>	<i>40</i>

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

FGD:	Focus Group Discussions
ITU:	International Telecommunications Union
KMR:	Kenya Media Report
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
NYT:	New York Times
SG:	Standard Group
TIFA:	Trends and Insights Africa
TMG:	Telecommunications Management Group