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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**A CHANGING PROFESSION: EXAMINING NEWSROOM ROLES AND SKILLS IN
THE DIGITAL AGE**

By

**KENFREY MWENDA KIBERENGE
535175**

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

Nairobi, Kenya

30/01/2020
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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
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DECLARATION

I, **KENFREY MWENDA KIBERENGE-535175**, declare 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 endeavours.

Signature

30/01/2020

Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Catherine, my son Leo, my dad John and mum Nicera for their support and encouragement.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how journalists can survive in the newsrooms in Kenya in the digital age. The study was guided by four research questions: (1) What are the emergent newsroom roles in the digital age? (2) What retooling and reskilling do media workers need to survive in the digital age? (3) How do journalists acquire the new skills? (4) What role has digital disruption played in the reorganisation of newsrooms? The study used two theoretical frameworks: The theory of disruptive innovations and de-professionalisation lens. The researcher conducted face to face in-depth interviews with eight journalists from four media houses namely: British Broadcasting Corporation (Nairobi office), Nation Media Group, Standard Group Ltd and Royal Media Services as well as two key informants. All the respondents were purposively selected. The study found out that digital disruption has created new roles in the Kenyan newsrooms which have been taken up by both journalists and non-journalists and that the disruption has necessitated reskilling and retooling of journalists and those who fail to adapt are eventually forced out of the newsrooms. The study also found out that most journalists are learning new skills on their own with media houses and media schools playing a peripheral role. This despite the fact that, as the study found out, the roles of ensuring journalists acquire new skills rest with individual journalists, media houses and Journalism Schools. Finally, the study found out that disruption has happened before in Kenyan media but digital disruption is different. While media houses have adapted well to past disruptions, this time around, digital disruption has not only forced some media houses to close down due to dwindling fortunes but has ended newsroom careers of many journalists. The study concluded that while most journalists are playing their part in responding to digital disruption, media houses and journalism schools are lagging behind. If this trend continues, it will keep hurting journalism more. The study recommends that media houses organise regular formal training for their journalists. Journalism schools should also update their training manuals to ensure their graduate transition seamlessly into the newsrooms. Media executives and administrators of journalism schools should also communicate regularly to ensure each side understands the needs of the other.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AKU-GSMC: Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CMS: Content Management System

ISP: Internet Service Provider

KII: Key Informant Interview

MCK: Media Council of Kenya

MML: Mediamax Limited

NMG: Nation Media Group

NYT: New York Times

RAL: Radio Africa Limited

RMS: Royal Media Services

SG: Standard Group

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the study by providing some background of the study and outlines the problem that this research sought to address. Further, it examines the scope and limitations of this study and how the research hopes to surmount them.

1.2 Background of the Study

The media today is at crossroads. The legacy media is facing difficulties as the ongoing digital evolution causes disruption (Media Council of Kenya [MCK], 2016). These “evolving challenges” of the “digital era” in the industry have brought rapid changes in the newsrooms (Borchardt, Lück, Kieslich, Schultz & Simon, 2019) as media houses test various business models to ensure that they remain relevant now and afloat in the future. Digitisation, which is primarily driven by the internet (MCK, 2016) has also influenced changes in “news values, professional ethics, workflows, working conditions, and newsroom management” (Chan, 2014, p. 107).

For instance, today’s journalists have lost the vaunted claim to be the sole gatekeepers of news (Hayasaki, Roca-Cuberes & Singla Casellas, 2016). The news industry has been democratized where social media has become a major source –and distributor- of news. Individual social media users see themselves –and are seen by others- as trusted disseminators of news. MCK (2016, p. 32) aptly captures this scenario, arguing that “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.”

As a result, many news consumers no longer have to rely on mainstream media for information. Indeed, often times, legacy media plays catch up as news spreads like wildfire on social media. For example, when two Kenyan Members of Parliament were filmed at a weighbridge back in January 2015 harassing and insulting workers for detaining a truck, the story was broken by a popular Twitter user and blogger Robert Alai on his Twitter account. Media houses relied on his video to follow up on the story that led to the duo's arrest and arraignment (Muraya, 2015). This clearly demonstrates that media houses and journalists can no longer function as they did more than 10 years ago and expect to survive.

One of the ways in which news organisations have sought to secure their future is by setting up robust digital operations, thereby creating hybrid newsrooms that have both traditional and digital elements. Technology in Global Newsrooms report by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) established that hybrid newsrooms are growing as traditional newsrooms shrink (ICFJ, 2019). In Kenya, all leading local news organisations have a digital footprint (MCK, 2016). The Nation Media Group (NMG) serves its digital consumers mainly through www.nation.co.ke, which is the digital arm of the *Daily Nation* newspaper. The Standard Media Group (SG) owns www.standardmedia.co.ke as the web version of *The Standard* newspaper; Royal Media Services (RMS) owns www.citizentv.co.ke as the digital arm of Citizen TV, Radio Africa Group Ltd (RAG) operates www.the-star.co.ke as the web version of *The Star* newspaper while Mediamax Ltd (MML) owns www.k24.co.ke to complement K24 TV just as www.capitalfm.co.ke is the digital arm of Capital FM radio. Kenya's media scene has also realised an explosion of disruptive digital native websites such as www.pulselive.co.ke, www.tuko.co.ke, www.kenyans.co.ke, and www.ghafila.com, among others. Save for *Ghafila*, which has been in operation for more than five years,

Kenyans, Tuko and *Pulse Live*, all which rank fairly well on the global website-ranking site, Alexa, started operation in the last four years to accelerate to top 20 on Alexa (Alexa, 2019). Local legacy media have sought to defend their turfs by starting their versions of digital natives among them NMG's www.nairobinews.co.ke, SG's www.sde.co.ke, RAL's www.mpasho.co.ke and RMS' www.edaily.co.ke. This is however driven mainly by the “fear of missing out or lagging behind seems to make media organisations apt to react quickly to each and every technological innovation emerging from outside, mostly by setting up small-sized ad hoc projects whose primary goal is to copy the new things that others are doing” (Paulussen, 2016, p. 195)

Related to this is the emergence of strong citizen journalism (Josephi, 2016) that has seen individuals run personal blogs where they break news and do all manner of news analysis. Journalists can, therefore, no longer “monopolize control over news production” (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr, 2018). Robert Alai, for instance, runs a blog www.kahawatungu.com, which has morphed from a tabloid of sex scandals into employing writers who follow and break news stories every other minute. Social media has also enabled citizen journalists to easily collect, package and disseminate news. Days, when journalists perceived their audiences to be passive, are long gone; the audiences that the mass media serve today are increasingly active participants in the news production (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr, 2018).

Audiences have also become more enlightened and, with the availability of many alternatives, choosier. We now live in an era of attention economy where every minute, some form of information is produced and disseminated through platforms that will best capture the audiences' attention. Consequently, audiences are today constantly bombarded with all manner of information and it is upon them to choose what best suits them. This growing attention economy is seen as a double-edged sword where such a

scenario makes skills and strategies for attracting and keeping public attention “increasingly rare”, which should be “good news” for the profession (Dimitrov, 2014). Put differently, whoever selects the best model of packaging and disseminating information –be it a multinational media house or an individual operating a blog from their smartphone- wins the audiences, who are today at the centre of news production.

This montage of factors has resulted in a continuing drop in newspaper readership as well as a fall in TV viewership and radio listenership (MCK, 2016). Some audiences and advertisers are going to news aggregator sites, which produce no original content but republish news from a number of sites at times linking back the stories to the original source. While many readers prefer such sites because they get more “under one roof”, advertisers favour them because they have access to “more eyeballs for less” (Dimitrov, 2014). As audiences depart, advertisers follow them translating into dropping revenues. Shepard (2012) however, sees another problem for media houses, warning that even though audiences have flocked to news websites, advertisers have not followed suit. This is because tech companies present a cheaper, measurable hence more viable option for company executives to spend their advertising budgets on. More money is, as a result, going to technology companies such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon, who in the United States in 2018, gobbled up nearly 70 percent of all digital ad dollars spent, according to eMarketer (Sterling, 2019). There is no data available locally on how much tech companies make from advertisers compared to the mainstream media.

These frustrations with business models have forced media houses to constantly change the newsroom structures and operations, which then follows that journalists have had to adapt to the new world. The *New York Times* [NYT] (2017), as well as Gannett’s “newsrooms of the future” (Lin, 2014), predicted that all jobs in the future newsrooms would be “digital-centric”. Today, almost all media houses have strategies

to guide them in that space. Often times, with buzzwords such as convergence and multimedia journalism (MCK, 2016), most of the media houses' blueprints are skewed heavily towards digital. Singer (2004) defines convergence as the “combination of technologies, products, staffs and geography among the previously distinct provinces of print, television and online media” (p.2). Hayasaki et al. (2016), says “multimedia skills, consist of mastering different media and modalities such as written text, video or photographs, and being able to easily switch between journalistic genres and media, formats or technologies” (p.24). The blueprints of local media houses point to a digital-first newsroom, where all journalists and editors are required to feed the digital platforms first before the traditional outlets such as TV, radio and newspaper.

As a result, some of the new faces in the newsroom are not hired to perform the traditional roles of reporter, photographer –or editor. This is mainly attributed to the modern business environment coupled with the ongoing rapid technological change, as well as globalisation, which demand a paradigm shift in operations. It follows then that the journalists who have been in the newsroom for longer have also had to acquire new skills in order to survive the digital age. A few years ago, a newspaper reporter would go for an assignment and file one story for the paper in the evening. That model has changed. The same reporter today is expected to file at least two stories; one for the web and a more in-depth one for the newspaper. In some instances, they are also expected to file a story with even more insights for the weekend papers, a broadcast piece –and in some extreme cases, do a live link for the TV unit. Besides, the reporter is, in some instances, expected to take some photographs and videos, which are used as part of the web combo, which is referred to as multimedia packaging.

1.2.1 Changing Professional Identities

Witschge and Nygren (2009, p.49) postulate that “journalistic profession developed with the modern mass media, and when the media system changes, it is also likely that the professional identity will change.” The two authors define a professional role as a “kind of collective identity, something that shows the difference between the profession and other groups within and outside of the company” (p.49). Weber and Kosterich (2018) established that in New York media, data, analytic and platform-based job roles had grown substantially in newspaper and online media companies accounting for at least nine percent of all jobs. Newsrooms are keen to make sense out of the raw data available from page views, unique visitors and bounce rate, among others, in order to help reporters and editors make targeted decisions. The fake news phenomenon has also presented opportunities for the mainstream media to play the role of fact-checking and offering explainers through data journalism.

ICFJ (2019) found out that more than half of journalists regularly use digital tools to fact-check information. The report, which interviewed more than 4,100 journalists and news managers in 149 countries, also established that among the 16 technical skills surveyed, digital fact-checking was the most common and that journalists are also using a multitude of new techniques and platforms to better engage their audiences – and earn their trust. These have created a need for a shift in skill sets as well as created new roles within newsrooms. In fact, the prediction is that these new roles will keep expanding as media houses position themselves for what is now known as the ‘newsroom of the future’ (Lin, 2014; Weber & Kosterich, 2018).

Lin (2014) argues that employers expect journalism graduates to possess multimedia storytelling skills where they can produce slideshows with sound, shoot and

edit videos and photos and write for the web. They also need data and statistical skills for storytelling that can enable them to collect, edit, analyse and interpret data in order to produce compelling interactive maps and graphics. Added to these are what Lin (2014, <http://www.mulinblog.com/gannetts-newsroom-of-the-future-calls-for-changes-in-journalism-education/>) calls “audience development skills (formerly known as marketing and circulation) such as managing online communities, interpreting data on audience behaviour, crowdsourcing for information, interacting with the audience”. Journalists also need to learn the basics of programming and be able to “create compelling pages that attract web audiences” as well as be conversant with the business of media where they “can help a news organisation generate revenues without compromising their ethics” (Lin, 2014, <http://www.mulinblog.com/gannetts-newsroom-of-the-future-calls-for-changes-in-journalism-education/>).

Lin’s analysis stemmed from the 2014 restructuring of the newsroom by Gannett Company, the largest newspaper publisher in the U.S. The media house had collapsed all newsroom roles into 16 digital-centric job descriptions where each newsroom employee was required to be in one of these positions. Various media houses have their own models. For instance, the NYT, which is now cited as a model for legacy media in turning around their fortunes amid digital disruption, says it has many journalists who can code (NYT, 2017). While Kenya lacks such comprehensive studies on the new skills and roles, this study notes that today, people with such are critical in the local newsrooms as media houses strive to better understand their audiences, who can no longer be ignored (Bunce, 2019; Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr, 2018). This is because, more than ever before, media houses need to publish targeted content for their audiences and know what works on which platform and what does not. For example, with insights from web analytics over a period of time, an editor will be guided on whether a certain

type of content is best packaged just like a video or a picture story. News organisations are utilising analytics for various purposes, including attracting advertising, informing structural changes as well as comparing their performance against that of their competitors (Moyo, Mare, & Matsilele, 2019). Moyo, Mare, and Matsilele, (2019) argue: “The development and refinement of audience measurement techniques has been welcomed by many news organisations, given the challenges associated with traditional audience studies conducted by market research companies” (p. 2). It is at this backdrop, therefore, that this study sought to investigate a changing profession by examining newsroom roles and skills in the digital age.

1.3 Problem Statement

The digitisation of news has fundamentally disrupted journalism. Traditional media worldwide have had to embrace digital technologies “for their own good” (MCK, 2016) as they seek operational models that will keep them afloat. Most media houses that own more than one platform –print, broadcast and digital- are no longer operating independent newsrooms. They are rationalizing their operations by collapsing the independent units into one strong entity in what is called convergence (MCK, 2016; Singer, 2004).

As a result, reporters no longer have the liberty to remain straightjacketed journalists who only file for one platform. For instance, a newspaper journalist who was once only required to carry a notebook, a pen, and a recorder to a press conference today needs to bring a smartphone to live-stream the event on the media houses’ social media pages. In addition, editors are also now keener than ever to get the most out of their audiences due to the digital disruption, which has democratized news. This combination of factors has heralded new newsroom roles, which are either taken up by in-house

journalists or filled from outside. For that to happen, journalists have had to retool and reskill (Witschge & Nygren, 2009) since some of the skills that they excelled with in the traditional media formats are either obsolete or incompatible with the digital world. This study, therefore, sought to establish which roles have emerged in Kenyan newsrooms as a result of digital disruption and what skills are needed by those performing these roles and how journalists acquire the new skills. It also sought to establish the other waves of disruption that preceded digital and their impact.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

To examine how newsroom roles have changed in the digital age and the skills that today's journalists require to survive.

1.4.2 Research Questions

This study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the emergent newsroom roles in the digital age?
2. What retooling and reskilling do media workers need to survive in the digital age?
3. How do journalists acquire the new skills?
4. What role has digital disruption played in the reorganisation of newsrooms?

1.5 Rationale of the Study

Scholars agree that there is little research on the new roles and skills in African newsrooms. Because of this lack of localised knowledge, there is a danger that media houses could be shooting blanks by adopting unfeasible models from other continents. Journalism schools could also be producing journalists who are not compatible with the

new realities –or training their students who can only properly work in newsrooms in other continents. To end such conjectures, a localised study is required.

The findings of this study will offer new knowledge to media houses on the kind of training their journalists need. It will also help media managers learn how to reorganise their newsrooms and take advantage of skills that already exist. The findings of this study will also help individual journalists understand the new skills they require to survive in the digital age. This study will also help the academy know what adjustments are needed in the curriculum in order to prepare their students for the modern local newsrooms.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focussed on journalists drawn from four media houses, namely NMG, SG, RMS and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) East Africa. The reason for selecting the four newsrooms was mainly because of their sizes. They all have robust operations and strong digital units. This means that the digital units in the selected newsrooms are structured just like those of traditional media. They have a head of the digital department, an editor, section editors, sub-editors and reporters. As a result, they have been among the first ones to adapt to the changing environment. NMG has been selected because it is the local largest media house in Kenya with a strong print section that averages 800,000 daily reach (Kenya Audience Research Foundation [KARF], 2019); SG has been selected because it is the oldest privately owned media house in the country (BBC, 2019), BBC offers the international scope while RMS owns the leading broadcast unit in Kenya (KARF, 2019). The potential participants were purposively selected because of their unique experiences and the positions that they hold in their companies. A screening questionnaire was used to ensure all the participants have the

requisite information to answer the research questions (See *Appendix A*). Two key informants were also interviewed. The two key informants are individuals who have worked in the newsrooms at managerial levels. They have since exited the newsrooms but are playing an integral role in ensuring media remains afloat.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study appreciated the fact that only views of a few journalists from four media houses in a country with hundreds of media houses of all manner were captured. However, by the nature of the participants, the study provided answers that can be generalised to understand the operations of all journalists in Kenya. In addition, the study did not capture the views of rural journalists who form a critical mass in the Kenyan journalism sphere as it only targeted only journalists who are situated in Nairobi.

1.8 Operational Definition of Key Terms

Chartbeat: a web tool that delivers real-time analytics of a website.

Content Insight: an online inventory that helps in website content planning, auditing, project scoping and estimation as well as content management.

CrowdTangle: a content discovery and social monitoring platform for publishers and brands.

Google Analytics: a web analytics service offered by Google that tracks and reports website traffic.

Page view: an instance of an internet user visiting a particular page on a website.

Web producer: an online sub-editor who uploads content on websites.

New role: a designation that did not exist in the newsroom before 2014.

Digital-native news site: a news publication that was originally founded on the web.

Legacy/mainstream media: news organisations that originated in print or broadcast.

1.9. Summary

This chapter has outlined the problem statement and the objectives of the study. It has also detailed four research questions that the study sought to answer. It has also provided a justification for the study, rationale as well as its scope and limitations. The next chapter presents the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of what other scholars have written on the roles and skills in newsrooms today. It also outlines the theoretical framework of the study.

2.2 Digitisation and Journalism

In attempting to define journalism, Deuze (2005) advances the argument that journalism is an ideology. He outlines five “ideal-typical” values of journalism’s ideology: Public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. He sees public service as the watchdog role that the media plays in society. Journalists keep public officials in check on behalf of the public. Ileri (2017) published findings of a national survey of 504 Kenyan journalists, which established that most of them perceived “acting as watchdog of government” as their most important role after “providing citizens with information”, “advocating for social change”, “supporting official policies” and “motivating people to participate in civic activities”. The study questionnaires were administered between July 2012 and February 2013, which was an electioneering period and, therefore, this study holds the view that this could be the reason why most Kenyan journalists might have perceived, for instance, motivating people to participate in civic activities as more important than acting as a watchdog.

While acting as a watchdog, journalists are required to be impartial and ensure news stories capture all sides before they are published or broadcast. This is what is known as objectivity. Journalists must also be autonomous of external interferences.

Journalism also has a sense of urgency. That journalists always have a deadline to beat. Finally, one must be above reproach. This study agrees that these five qualities are at the heart of journalism.

2.3 Empirical Literature Review

2.3.1 Roles in the Newsroom Today

Wamunyu and Wahutu (2019) on the operations of a Kenyan radio newsroom established that “new actors entered the process of news production” to complement the work of editors and reporters. The new actors, the researchers found out, included “camera people, a webmaster and the specially created role of a digital media administrator, who promoted news and other content on the company’s social media accounts” (p.8).

The change in Kenya has not been as rapid as in the western world. For instance, BBC has new roles such as growth editor, a position that NMG does not have. Also, as of January 2017, the NYT had employed the highest number of journalists with coding expertise (NYT, 2017). The same cannot be said of local newsrooms like NMG where coding is still done by a team of dedicated technical experts who have no journalistic expertise. In fact, most of the local web producers do not have any knowledge on coding as it is not on their job description.

Granted, there are those reporters in the more developed world who are doing some of the work that was a preserve of the technical department. Witschge and Nygren (2009), who studied Swedish newsrooms, noted that modern “journalists deal with technology to a much greater extent than ever before. They have taken over work that was previously done by technical staff, and in Swedish newsrooms of today journalists

and technicians are working side by side” (p. 47). The survey found that Swedish journalists interact with different software packages per day including Content Management Systems (CMS), web browsers, e-mail, software for pictures, layout, editing sound and video, and spreadsheet software.

Weber and Kosterich (2018) found that, in New York City, the new roles were filled from within the industry where journalists could be trained to perform non-traditional roles such as coding and data analytics. While most journalists and editors can get basic insights from the digital footprints that their readers leave on the websites (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr, 2018), some newsrooms still employ specially trained individuals to pore through the available data and digest it further to the newsrooms. With tools such as Google Analytics, Chartbeat and Content Insight, a reporter or an editor is able to automatically curate most of the data like most page views, the number of users and most popular stories, among other insights. A tool like CrowdTangle enables an editor to tell what people are searching for on various platforms in real-time, which then informs an editor of the particular stories they should assign and where to place them on the website. In a survey of how newsrooms in Kenya, Zimbabwe and use analytics, Moyo, Mare and Matsilele (2019) found out that Google Analytics and Chartbeat were the most popular analytics tools. However, newsrooms use more than one tool:

The reason given for using multiple tools was that they each had particular strengths, and as such complemented each other to provide a more complete picture of the audience behaviour online, including the type of news they follow, the amount of time they spend per story, the devices they use, and so forth.

As Hayasaki et al., (2016) found out, that the traditional journalistic profiles are disappearing. Their demand is, however, declining. The only reprieve is the growing need for quality journalism by media houses for them to survive the digital tide

(Dimitrov, 2014; NYT, 2017). Locally, the demand for traditional journalists remains high. This demand was witnessed among Kenyan media houses including NMG, SG and MML between the first half of 2019 and was well captured on the business and media news website, Business Today (www.businesstoday.co.ke). There is, however, no guarantee that this will be the case in the years to come. But even as newsrooms hire individuals already with specialised skills, practising journalists have been forced to acquire new skill sets. Wamunyu and Wahutu (2019) noted that at the radio station they studied, traditional roles had also changed:

Newsreaders were now required to not only write and read scripts for their radio bulletins but to also search the web for international news likely to interest their readers. Reporters and editors engaged not only in the traditional roles of producing content, but now were required to produce content for multiple platforms, namely radio, web and mobile” (Wamunyu & Wahutu, 2019, p. 8).

This technological advancement has been both a plus and a minus for journalism, according to scholars. Some positivist scholars like Witschge and Nygren (2009) note that the various tools available on the internet have made news gathering easier and fun. Some journalists have acquired multimedia skills like taking pictures and videos as well as editing. Other print and broadcast journalists have been forced to transition completely into the digital world. This is what is now known as multi-skilling (Witschge & Nygren, 2009) where you have to be able to work in different formats and to handle many types of technology.

Lee-Wright, Phillips and Witschge (2012), however, warn that this new requirement for journalists to possess multiple skills is simply a “cover story for vicious cutbacks in staffing levels, which tend to result not in multi-skilling of journalists but rather in their de-skilling” (p.80). The flipside is that the so-called multi-skilling in the digital space may have only served to facilitate news gathering and dissemination and

“not necessarily foster better journalism” (Chan, 2014, p. 107). This is because journalists are increasingly turned into desk reporters where “an administrative news culture is dominating newsrooms—with journalists sitting behind their desks recycling or regurgitating PR and wire material (also dubbed ‘churnalism’)—rather than the investigative news culture” (Witschge & Nygren, 2009, p. 38). Josephi (2016, p. 9) noted that most editors are urging their reporters to “keep the clicks coming” to “feed a growing global audience who are easy to reach thanks to the internet.” Chan (2014) warns that the internet has made it more convenient for journalists to plagiarise material and sometimes disseminate unverified news.

Hayasaki et al. (2016), postulate that journalists have been forced to acquire multimedia skills, “which consist of mastering different media and modalities such as written text, video or photographs, and being able to easily switch between journalistic genres and media, formats or technologies”. This kind of versatility, which is required of most modern journalists, is affecting “professional specialization” because they are led into areas in which “they do not possess deep knowledge”. This is, however, only true in instances where journalists have failed to embrace new knowledge or skills. Age and years spent on the job are also key factors in this.

For instance, Nikunen (2014) studied the changes newsrooms in Finland underwent in 2010 where a number of journalists were laid off as media houses downsized. Findings from the study *Losing my profession: Age, experience and expertise in the changing newsrooms* were published in 2014 where it was established that media houses preferred younger journalists who could easily adapt to the new technology that Finnish newsrooms were implementing. The study concludes: “During this time of transition, the older journalists, particularly, struggled to hold on to their professional values and notions of expertise when, in practice, they had difficulties in

bringing their expertise into use in the new technology-centered newsroom structure” (Nikunen, 2014, p. 868). This trend has largely been witnessed here in Kenya in what a mid-career journalist (personal communication, August 2019) refers to as “juniorisation” of newsrooms. This, according to the journalist, is where media houses are increasingly laying off their experienced reporters and editors, who earn a substantial amount in salary and lean more towards traditional form of journalism, and filling those jobs with younger –at times fresh graduates- who will accept lower pay but are more willing and ready to embrace new technology. Lee-Wright et al., (2012) say journalists have found themselves in “perfect storm, under pressure from all sides” where there is “acute competition in the job market and, at the same time, editors are under pressure to keep circulations as high as possible and to cut cost” (p. 149).

2.4 Kenyan Newsrooms

Kenya has a robust media landscape. As of March 2019, Kenya had 356 radio stations, 467 TV stations (66 of them local), 44 newspapers and 314 online sites (KARF, 2019). But local media is largely dominated by a few media houses such as NMG, SG, RMS, RAL, Mediamax Ltd, Capital Group and the state-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). For instance, in March 2019, the TV stations owned by five of these companies controlled 50.2% of the TV viewership nationally (KARF, 2019). As of 2016, Kenya had 15,000 journalists even though only 3,219 of them were registered with the MCK (Nyabuga, 2016).

Kenya has in the past been ranked as one of the freest countries in the region for journalists to work (Mutambo, 2012) even though some gains have been reversed in the recent past (Ombuor, 2019). Cheeseman (2014) holds that Kenya has one of the most engaged, well-produced, and widely consumed media on the continent, “a media that

has tried hard to put issues like corruption and government incompetence on the front pages” (<https://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/Journalists-try-to-deliver/-/440808/2348866/-/9bg8p3/-/index.html>).

But Kenyan journalists have been criticised by the audience for going for sensational news at the expense of more serious news. In 2013, the local media earned the pejorative moniker “*Githeri media*” after widely covering Martin Kamotho, a voter who was photographed eating Githeri (a Kenyan staple that is prepared with beans and maize) from a polythene bag while queuing to vote in that year’s general election (Chege, 2017). It has been hard to shake off that badge of dishonour (Ogola, 2017); today, each time a media house publishes or airs a story that some people do not agree with, they revert to using this term.

Local media face challenges in dropping revenue that is attributed to a combination of factors such as digital disruption (MCK, 2016) and “government advertising, state intimidation and a partisan corps of journalists strongly wedded to ethnic loyalties” (Ogola, 2017, <http://theconversation.com/kenyas-2017-elections-how-new-media-stole-the-mainstreams-thunder-88613>). Cheeseman (2014) is kinder in his analysis of the local press:

Given that government adverts can comprise up to 50 per cent of a newspaper’s revenue, this is a stick that can be used to beat the press back into line. Even newspapers that sell tens of thousands of copies, such as the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, can ill-afford to go without government advertising for too long (Cheeseman, 2014, <https://www.nation.co.ke/oped/opinion/Journalists-try-to-deliver/440808-2348866-qtd7lk/index.html>).

Kenyan media houses are as a result attempting to diversify their income sources by stepping up their digital publishing. NMG digital department, called Nation Digital, for instance, has come a long way. According to D. Wanderi (personal communication,

October 5, 2019) the website www.nation.co.ke as is known today, first went live in 1998 as www.nationaudio.com. Back then, NMG did not have the technical know-how to run the website. News stories would be edited, packaged and sent to the Internet Service Provider (ISP) for uploading. It took the company two years to take up the online publishing role from the ISP in 2000. In 2004, the website transitioned to www.nationmedia.com. The modern www.nation.co.ke was established in 2008 when digital was set up as a division. Today, the division has 15 digital brands spread across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that bring in 11.3 million monthly page views and have 28 million followers on social media (NMG, 2019). The division's revenue grew 42% and 13% in 2017 and 2018 respectively (NMG, 2019). NMG has adopted a digital-centric approach requiring that all its journalists embrace a digital-first attitude.

2.5 Existing Research on Kenya

The study by Wamunyu and Wahutu (2019) has illuminated on the skills in Kenyan newsrooms. They listed social media, web mastering and camera work as the three emergent roles in the radio station they studied. The MCK (2016) report also outlines the response by media houses to the digital disruption. However, scholars agree that there is a scarcity of studies on the impact of new technology on African journalism. Mabweazara (2014) contends that “very little is known about the influence of digitisation, the internet, mobile communications and social media on the daily routines and practices of journalists in the newsroom”, a gap that has “often resulted in scholarly conjectures” about the continent.

And while studying the deploying of Twitter as a tool for journalistic purposes at the *Daily Nation* newspaper in Kenya, Muindi (2018) concludes that:

As a new innovation, the use of Twitter by journalists has been studied in different parts of the world such as Australia, England, Spain, and the United States, but there is a paucity of empirical research conducted on the subject in Africa, and Kenya in particular (Muindi, 2018, p. 112).

In Kenya, many journalists are embracing new technology and formats of storytelling. Some of the journalists have acquired new skills through formal training on multimedia storytelling skills. Others are self-taught while others are learning on the job. Newsrooms are also hiring people with new job descriptions that did not exist 10 years ago. There is, however, little or general research on this trend. This study will, therefore, add to the much-needed body of knowledge on how newsroom roles have changed in the digital age and the skills that today's journalists require to survive. This study holds that more targeted studies need to be done on African newsroom set-ups to avoid conjectures in the future.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the theory of disruptive innovation as well as the lens of de-professionalisation.

2.6.1 Disruptive Innovation Theory

This theory was first advanced in 1995 by Joseph L. Bower and Clayton M. Christensen to explain the “failure of leading companies to stay at the top of their industries when technologies or markets change” (Bower & Christensen, 1995, p. 43). In the years that followed, the theory was nearly watered down forcing Christensen to publish a clarification in the *Harvard Business Review* in 2015.

As a way of summary, the scholars hold that disruption refers to when a “smaller company” (Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2015, p. 4) with fewer resources successfully challenges an existing company in a particular sector. The authors argued

that the aim of the new entrant is not primarily to wrest customers from the incumbent but to fill in an existing gap, a set of customers that have been either “overlooked or ignored by mainstream competitors” (Gobble, 2016, p. 66). The new entrant then moves up the social scale having exceeded the expectations of its target. It is then slowly embraced by the main segment that was served by the dominant incumbent. If the incumbent reacts in time, the scholars say, they can avert disruption. If not, disruption is deemed to have occurred meaning there is a new player. Disruption, therefore, going by the definition above, is a specific type of change that operates through a specific mechanism, and has specific consequences (Danneels, 2004).

2.6.2 How Other Scholars Have Applied Disruptive Innovation Theory

Rad (2017) used disruptive innovation theory to study the impacts of media polymediation and media digitisation as disruptive innovations have on public service media in Iran. To deliver on this, he studied the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). The study also sought answers on the strategic changes that are needed in media organisation due to the effects of disruptive innovation as well as the role of managerial cognitive capabilities play as the micro foundations of organisational dynamic capabilities in recognition of disruptive innovation and introducing strategic changes. The study found out that for IRIB managers, it was vital for them to understand the effect of this disruptive innovation on incumbents of industry ecosystem including IRIB itself: “Understanding effects and consequences of disruption in ecosystem could lead to reconfiguration of organisational capabilities and strategic changes” (p.17).

In 2016, Ville Seuri also used disruptive innovation theory to study newsroom leadership and innovation. In the report titled *How to Lead Innovation and Still Keep the Newsroom Working*, Seuri explored the role that newsroom managers play in

ensuring the newsrooms they lead embrace new innovations. He looked at disruptive innovation through Christensen's arguments of them being either sustaining or disruptive:

Sustaining innovation improves on existing ideas, products, or processes and thus helps giants retain their position on the market. Disruptive innovation, on the other hand, introduces new categories of these, thus rendering old products useless (Seuri, 2016, p. 9).

The study concludes that the bulk of innovation in media was the sustaining kind. Seuri attributes the failure of media companies at innovation to "their incumbent status and their nearly monopolistic dominance of the publishing market before the advent of the Internet" (p. 13).

Further, his study found out that media houses should find their strong points and exploit them. The study also found out that autonomy of journalists to implement innovative ideas in a structured manner was paramount. It further established that keeping other staff of media houses such as technology specialists as well as sales and commercial independent has hurt newsrooms:

Creativity is enhanced when different kinds of people are able to meet and exchange ideas. Furthermore, to be able to roll out new products quickly, an organisation needs to be able to efficiently muster the necessary capabilities, and this can only happen if there is enough communication between the different departments of the said organisation (p. 14).

2.6.3 Application of Disruptive Innovation Theory in this Study

This study is primarily anchored on the tenet of how incumbents respond to innovations to avoid being disrupted. In Kenya, media houses have set up robust digital operations to react to the digitisation (MCK, 2016). This study, therefore, seeks to establish if the response has been enough to avoid disruption.

Offering a critique of the systematic definition of disruption by Christensen and his co-authors, Danneels (2004) portends that individuals -especially mid and top-level managers- working in incumbent firms facing disruption are not innocent bystanders who are “competent” and leading “great firms” and are “captive of current powerful customers, at the mercy of investors, powerless peons in the process of resource allocation” (p. 254). The staff have a role to play in defending the organisations against external attacks from the nascent firms. This is where competence comes in. Journalists have had to acquire new skills to remain competent in the digital age as well as perform the new roles that are coming up in the newsrooms. There are instances where people from outside have taken up these new roles in the newsrooms. Media houses such as NYT are more focused on hiring the right people as opposed to merely downsizing to save on costs (NYT, 2017). This obviously means that some journalists have had to leave their jobs to create room for these “right people”. There are few local studies to show to what extent journalists are embracing the new realities and on whether or not local newsroom managers are more focused on hiring the right people (Mabweazara, 2014; Muindi, 2018), hence this study.

Gobble (2016) opines that disruption applies to every sector from healthcare to education, and higher education, warning that “we are all, always, either disruptors or on the verge of being disrupted” (p. 67). The warning “disrupt or get disrupted” has gained popularity within Kenyan media. This paper, therefore, holds that what is happening in the newsrooms today is disruption. For instance, although platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Telegram were not primarily launched as content distributors but as social networking and instant messaging sites, over the years, these platforms have morphed into key content distribution channels for all media houses in Kenya and beyond (Muindi, 2018), disrupting the existing content models.

Rad (2017) agrees that digital technologies have transformed the rules dominating many industries including the media industry: “Digital technologies in the media industry are disruptive. These technologies are the origin of many disruptive innovations in the media industry. The media industry has already been transformed by several waves of digitalization” (p. 11). This study, therefore, looks at the newsroom demands occasioned by digitisation and how individual staff, media houses and journalism schools are responding to avert disruption.

2.6.4 Critique of Disruptive Innovation Theory

Christensen and his co-authors have restricted the theory to a narrow definition where any innovation has to be analysed through their rigid checklist before it can be classified as either disruptive or not. In fact, the scholars used Uber as an example that they ruled out from the categories of disruptors even though this has often been cited as an example of disruptive innovation.

Danneels (2004) interrogates assertion by Christensen (2000, p. 192) that disruptive technologies are “typically simpler, cheaper, and more reliable and convenient than established technologies”. The scholar wonders: “Do mainstream customers never initially value disruptive technology? Does disruptive technology always mature in a low-end segment? Does disruptive technology always start with lower performance? (p. 249)” The scholar concludes that while these laid down characteristics may be typical, they are not necessary, characteristics of disruptive technology.

Gobble (2016, p. 67) advises people to distinguish between against the “industry-specific concept” as outlined in Christensen’s theory and the “broader meaning of the words ‘disrupt’ and ‘disruptive’ in the English language.” The author

aply argues that “to disrupt something is to cause disorder or turmoil, often to the point of destruction. You can, in fact, disrupt a market, a value chain, an entire industry in the absence of a disruptive innovation in Christensen’s sense.”

In their 2015 clarification article, Christensen and his co-authors also took note of this saying that many “researchers, writers, and consultants use ‘disruptive innovation’ to describe any situation in which an industry is shaken up and previously successful incumbents stumble (Christensen et al., 2015).”

2.6.5 De-professionalisation Lens

This lens assesses whether digital disruption and the attendant change in newsroom roles are affecting the professionalisation of journalism. Professionalisation refers to the process by which a gainful activity moves from the status of occupation to the status of a profession, which is the highest level of occupational functioning (Emener & Cottone, 1989). The two scholars define de-professionalisation as the process whereby an emerging profession is stifled in its development or where an existing profession begins to lose status in the hierarchy of professions. An occupation could also undergo re-professionalization, which refers to the process by which an emerging profession regains momentum in its professional development (Emener & Cottone, 1989). For an occupation to be said to have been de-professionalised or re-professionalised, Emener and Cottone (1989) say there must be evidence that it once met or began to meet criteria for the status of a profession.

Various authors have attempted to outline the criteria that would qualify an occupation as a profession. Witschge and Nygren (2009) opine that occupation cannot qualify to be a profession if the members do not have control of their own work. The two authors say that “knowledge-monopoly” is paramount. This means that one needs

some specialised training to be able to discharge the duties of that profession. Medicine is a good example of a profession where one requires formal training to practise. Only those with such professional medical training have a monopoly to diagnose illnesses and prescribe conventional treatment. Anybody else caught performing this role is deemed to be a quack and is dealt with according to the laws. Witschge and Nygren (2009) also cite a clear division of labour, strong professional education and research, strong professional organisations with ethical rules and standards and an ideology that asserts greater commitment to doing good work than to economic gain.

Emener and Cottone (1989), on their part, hold that an occupation that qualifies to be a profession must have the following characteristics: a theoretically based body of knowledge, long specialised training for members to master the body of knowledge, a service or altruism ethic, authority over clients, professional autonomy, community sanction and existence of a professional culture.

Kritzer (2001) agrees with this checklist saying “professional status is conferred on those occupations which maintain a monopoly over a theoretical base of knowledge, have expectation of autonomy in regulation and day to day work, and have among their clientele a belief in the professional having a service ethos” (p. 11029). Therefore, when an occupation loses these qualities, it is deemed to have been de-professionalised (Kritzer, 2001). In Kenya, a vast body of theoretically based body on knowledge exists from studies done every so often by journalists and media experts. There are countless media theories that been developed since time immemorial. However, journalists hold no monopoly over this because journalism is talent-based and therefore, any person with good writing skills could excel in the trade without having any theoretical understanding. MCK also has an elaborate code of ethics that all media workers must, ideally, adhere to and most journalists believe that the profession is a calling that should

provide service to humanity (Ireru, 2017). All these are attempts geared towards professionalising journalism in Kenya.

2.6.6 Journalism: A Craft or Profession?

Scholars and media analysts have for long disagreed on whether or not journalism is a profession. Authors like Josephi (2016), provided a history of how journalists attempted to ensure a near professional-monopoly but failed. Josephi (2016) notes that journalism colleges were established across the world in the 20th century as a way of professionalising the occupation and “keep away outsiders”. Back then, it was a requirement in a country like Brazil for journalists to enrol in tertiary colleges for them to acquire a license to operate. Josephi (2016) notes that this requirement was abolished in Southern America in the new millennium because media houses opposed the “restrictive employment situation”.

Today, Josephi (2016) says that journalists are using professional journalism as a tool of differentiating journalists from other participants in the digital information provision. In Kenya, professional journalists’ bodies are on the rise, some with paid memberships. Some of the known bodies are the Kenya Union of Journalists, Editors Guild, Kenya Correspondents Association, Kenya Parliamentary Journalists Association, Kenya Entertainment and Arts Journalists Association and the Court Reporters Association of Kenya, among others. This growing number has prompted a review of the bodies by the state-sponsored MCK, which argues that some of them are briefcase outfits (Namuswa, 2019). For long, journalists have said that these quacks have been “giving the profession a bad name” by flouting journalism code of conduct (Otieno, 2018). The council set up a seven-member committee to review the associations. It established that there are 27 associations and recommended that they

should be 26 (MCK, 2019). The council hopes to use the findings to streamline and restore order in the forming of associations, which might have been infiltrated by individuals who are not journalists. The reality is that as digital space continues to open up media around the world, newsrooms are becoming more diversified, forcing professional profiles and skills related to journalism to adapt to the new paradigm (Hayasaki et al., 2016).

2.6.7 How other scholars have used de-professionalisation lens

Anderson (2004) used the de-professionalisation lens to analyse the job of pharmacists. His analysis came at a time when the American pharmacy was on the verge of losing its professional status, “that forces both external and internal, deliberate and unknowing, are intent upon reducing pharmacy to a technical vocation” (p. 2372). Anderson noted a reference to the pharmacy by then Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court who had dismissed the pharmacist, when dispensing a prescription, is no more professional than the “clerk who sells law books.” The pharmacists had been reduced to simply dispensing medicines adding no value to what the physicians had told the patients.

Anderson pointed out that pharmacy failed to meet the criteria established for the ideal type profession and was therefore classified as “marginal profession,” a “limited profession,” a “semiprofession,” a “quasiprofession,” a “peripheral profession,” and an “incomplete profession.” He warned that public confidence in pharmacists had waned with a majority of people more comfortable dealing with physicians and the media as sources of information on matters medication. To cure the problem, he rooted for specialization in various segments of medicines. He coined the

following speech that he hoped directors of 50 largest US hospital pharmacies would give to their staff:

Beginning today we are making the following assignments: You, Smith, are to become the antibiotic pharmacist. Jones you will be the cardiovascular pharmacist; Perry's field will be in fluid and electrolyte therapy. Antineoplastic pharmacy will become your specialty, Owens. Brown will establish himself as the expert in central nervous system drugs, while Cohen will devote himself to gastrointestinal drugs. We may not be able to answer every question that arises with masterful skill, but in these fields we are going to have the most expert pharmacists in the country, and you can count on it.

2.6.8 Application of De-Professionalisation in this Study

This study holds that journalism is a semi-profession which is simultaneously undergoing de-professionalisation and re-professionalisation. It is a semi-profession because there are many individuals who are not professionally trained as journalists, but who are able to practise journalism. Yet, there are career journalists with the requisite formal training who have a deep understanding of theoretically based body of knowledge and pass all the criteria of a professional journalist. The only issue is that the occupation is largely talent-based meaning anyone with a passion and talent can be trained to acquire journalistic skills. Today, there are many people producing quality stories that are published or broadcast in local newspapers and stations yet they do not have formal media training.

Also, even though accreditation could be seen as one of the ways an occupation can qualify to be a profession, for years, MCK has been accrediting non-journalists in media houses including comedians who host radio shows as well as the support staff in the digital space. While this has been de-professionalising journalism, there have been attempts in Kenya to regain momentum and re-professionalise (Namlola, 2019). In 2019, MCK issued draft guidelines that from the year 2020, a journalist will only be

accredited only through editors and will be required to surrender the accreditation card when they leave work (MCK, 2019). Another clear attempt is the condition that anybody applying for a press card from MCK must have a diploma or degree in journalism or media studies. Media workers without this formal journalism training must undergo mandatory training on ethics and media laws before they are allowed to practise in newsrooms (Namlola, 2019). In addition, only journalists will be accredited as media trainers. These guidelines provide an avenue for the newsroom workers performing non-traditional journalism roles to fully integrate into the profession.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has discussed what other scholars have written on digital disruptions. It has also discussed the theories relevant to the study. The next chapter outlines the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research methodology that was used in the study. It outlines the research design, approach as well as the sampling methods for the study. The chapter, further, deals with the data collection and analysis methods to be employed.

3.2 Research Approach and Research Design

3.2.1 Research Approach

Research approach refers to a plan and procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed method of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Chetty, 2016). The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research refers to a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data (Babbie, 2013). However, although qualitative research focuses on words rather than numbers, occasionally numbers are used to indicate the frequency that a theme is found in transcripts or the extent to which a form of action occurs (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). Lune and Berg (2016) note that this approach studies the “what, how, when, where, and why of a thing—its essence and ambience” (p.12). Qualitative research, thus, “refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things” (Lune & Berg, 2016, p. 12).

The study selected qualitative research approach because it “allows researchers to get up close to the people they are studying and get involved with them” (Daymon & Holloway, 2010, p. 5). The scholars note that the main research ‘instrument’ in

qualitative research is the researcher her- or himself who closely engages with the people being studied.

This is unlike quantitative research where researchers are usually removed from their informants (Daymon & Holloway, 2010, p. 5). This study employed in-depth interviews which were administered by the researcher. It also used observation in one of the cases. This allowed the researcher to get close to the respondents to understand the “what, how, when, where, and why” of modern newsrooms.

3.2.2 Research Design

This study used a multiple-case study research design to deliver on the objectives. A case study refers to “one of many examples of a thing” (Newsome, 2015). Stake (as quoted in Lune and Berg, 2016) says that case studies can be usefully classified into three different types namely: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective, which is also known as multiple-case studies. Lune and Berg (2016) say researchers use intrinsic case studies when they want to better understand a particular case. It is not undertaken primarily because it represents other cases or because it illustrates some particular trait, characteristic, or problem.

For their part, instrumental case studies provide insights into an issue or refine a theoretical explanation, making it more generalizable. Collective case studies, also known as multiple-case studies, “involve extensive study of several instrumental cases, intended to allow better understanding, insight, or perhaps improved ability to theorize about a broader context” (Lune & Berg 2016, p.175). Yin (2003) opines that one of the advantages of doing a multiple case study is that a researcher is able to analyse the data within each situation and also across different situations, unlike when a single case study is chosen. This study relied on instrumental case studies because the research used

individual journalists to better understand issues beyond their personal careers, which is different from the intrinsic case study which focuses on the particular participant in the study (Flick, 2015).

Case study designs are useful when studying areas where little is known or when a researcher needs a holistic insight into an area. In this case, while a lot has been said on the changing faces of newsrooms in other parts of the world, little is known on the problem, at least from the Kenyan perspective (Mabweazara, 2014; Muindi, 2018).

3.3 Site Selection and Description

Face-to-face interviews were conducted inside the newsrooms of the four media houses: BBC, NMG, Standard Group and RMS. All are based in Nairobi, Kenya. The KIIs were conducted in the offices of the participants. This study appreciates the fact that journalists are usually busy people with deadlines constantly approaching (Ibrahim, 2018). It was, therefore, more practical to go to them as opposed to have them move elsewhere. Most modern newsrooms have several rooms that served as interview rooms for the study. Also, it helped the researcher make some observations within the newsrooms that enriched the study.

3.4 Techniques of Data Collection

3.4.1 Target Population

A population refers to the entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), further define a target population as that population a study studies, and whose findings are used to generalize to the entire population. The target population for this study was the total number of Nairobi-based journalists working in the four

media houses that were studied. The total number of journalists working for the four media houses who were accredited by MCK stood at 888 (see *table 1*). MCK is the entity with the legal mandate to keep a register of all journalists in Kenya.

Table 1: Number of accredited journalists in four newsrooms in Kenya in 2019

Media House	Population Size
Standard Group Ltd (SG)	317
Nation Media Group (NMG)	269
Royal Media Services (RMS)	166
BBC	136
Totals	888

Source: Media Council of Kenya (2019)

3.4.2 Procedure for Respondent Selection

The study interviewed 10 participants. This comprised of eight newsroom workers and two key informants. This study interviewed two participants from each of the four newsrooms – NMG, BBC, RMS and SG- to help answer the research questions. One was an experienced journalist who has been in the newsroom for at least five years – before 2014- but has had to acquire new skills while the other was a worker new on the job performing non-traditional newsroom roles. The other respondent from each of the media houses were those performing new roles; staff hired to perform a non-traditional role in the newsroom.

Here, the study settled on newsroom staff who had not been employed to perform the roles of reporter, editor, sub-editor or photographer –what this study considers to be the traditional newsroom roles. The study settled on 2014 as the cut off for the current wave of disruption. This is when newsrooms such as Gannetts and NYT,

both American newspaper media houses, released their elaborate blueprints fully putting digital at the centre (Lin, 2014; NYT, 2017). The two key informants were veteran journalists who have knowledge on past waves of disruption. The study settled on two veteran editors: one who previously served as the editorial director at two major media houses and another who served as a news editor and managing editor at two different newspapers. Both held information that was critical in answering particularly the four research questions.

All the participants were purposively selected. The study was alive to the fact that with purposive sampling, there is always a problem on how to decide whether an individual case is a typical case or not. This was cured by the fact that the researcher had enough knowledge about the population which made it possible to decide whether a case was typical or not. Researchers doing purposive sampling are advised that useful informants could be people who have undergone or are undergoing experiences about which you wish to gain information (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). The respondents were journalists who have experienced the change in their newsroom. This study applied screening questionnaires to ensure that those selected possessed the required information (See *Appendices A and C*).

In deciding on the sample size, the study factored data saturation. Ness and Fusch (2015) define data saturation as “when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible” (p. 1408). The authors further warn that there is a danger when a researcher fails to reach data saturation because it affects the research quality, especially its validity. Benaquisto and Given (2008) say saturation is attained when a researcher is not obtaining any “new or relevant” information that enriches the theory. This is the point where a “researcher looks at this as the point at which no more

data need to be collected” (Benaquisto & Given, 2008). Data saturation was achieved during this study.

Table 2: Number of respondents from the four newsrooms

Media House	Sample size
Standard Group Ltd (SG)	2
Nation Media Group (NMG)	2
Royal Media Services (RMS)	2
BBC	2
Total	12

Table 3: Number of key informants

Description	Number of respondents
Veteran editor	1
Veteran editor	1
Total	2

3.4.3 Data Collection/Generation Techniques

This study relied on both primary and secondary data. The data was obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the participants, participant observation and document review. Semi-structured interviews, according to Kumar (2019), are “flexible in structure, in-depth in their search, free from rigid boundaries, and at liberty to deviate from their predetermined course if need be”. This helped the researcher obtain as much information as possible and also keep probing if the information is not enough or there is a possibility for more insights. On observation, the

researcher observed the NMG newsroom using a participant observation tool (See *Appendix F*).

The document reviews were one of the secondary sources of information. Here, the study examined some advertisements, annual company reports and other relevant documents to assess which new –or modified- roles have been advertised by the various media houses to understand the scope.

Observation and documents review helped in triangulation which enabled the researcher to verify the information that was given by the respondents. Through observation, the researcher was to be as authoritative as the respondents and easily verify the information being offered.

There was a danger of getting information overload from the semi-structured interviews where a researcher only has little valuable material from lengthy interviews. Unlike structured interviews that have a clear end, a researcher may also spend too much time on one interviewee than required. There is the danger of the researcher using the liberty of unstructured interviews to ask leading questions. This study used interview guides to cure that problem (See *Appendices B and D*). The interview guides were pre-tested on participants who did not form part of the study sample to ensure validity and reliability. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the respondents between December 12 and 20, 2019.

3.5 Techniques of Data Processing and Analysis

3.5.1 Data Processing Procedures

The study used thematic analysis of the qualitative responses from the in-depth interviews. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The researcher

indexed the key words while reading through the transcripts. The researcher looked out for terms that were repeated by two more participants, surprising statements, those which participants explicitly said were important and statements that the researcher might have come across during the literature review. The key words were then classified together based on similarity or connection. The researcher then crafted themes from the indexes based on the research questions. The study interrogated the emerging themes through latent analysis which refers to discovering underlying meanings of the words and semantic analysis –the literal meaning of the words used.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered fully to the set ethical principles of research. The researcher obtained all the requisite approvals and statutory permits before embarking on data collection. The researcher sought the internal ethics clearance from the Aga Khan University which was granted (See *Appendix K*). The researcher then applied for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation which was also granted (See *Appendix L*). The researcher personally reached out to the participants with full disclosure on why they are being sought for an interview. This was done through a courtesy email introducing the research topic and thereafter a phone call to agree on a date for the interview.

All the interviews were strictly confidential. Names of all the respondents were coded to conceal their identities. There was apprehension that the researcher, who works with a digital news platform, may be tempted to use some of the information obtained from some of the respondents at the workplace. This was openly discussed with the respondents and an assurance made that the information was only used strictly for this study.

3.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the methodology that the researcher used to conduct the study. It has also discussed data processing methods and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to find out how digital disruption had affected Kenyan newsrooms by creating new roles that demand new skills. This study sought to find out what these new roles are, what skills journalists need to survive in the modern newsroom, how journalists acquire new skills and how other waves of disruption have affected the newsrooms in the part. This chapter presents the findings of the study after interviewing 10 participants, observation of one case and analysis of several documents. Only two of the 10 participants who had been purposively selected declined to be part of the study. The researcher replaced them with other participants, who met the criteria that were set out in the screening questionnaires (See *Appendix A and C*). The researcher analysed the responses and this chapter presented the findings and the interpretations of these findings in relation to the four research questions.

4.2 Respondents Overview

The researcher interviewed eight participants from four newsrooms and two key informants. Two participants were selected from each of the four newsrooms namely: BBC, NMG, SG and RMS. Five of the participants were male while the other three were female. The respondents were in various stages of their careers. The key informants comprised of one female and one male veteran editors with experience of more than 20 years managing newsrooms. The participants were contacted through a courtesy email which was followed up with a phone call. All the interviews were conducted in the

offices of the participants. All the interviews were recorded with permission from the respondents.

4.3 Data Analysis

Once all the interviews were transcribed, the researcher indexed the key words while reading through the transcripts. The researcher looked out for terms that were repeated by two more participants, surprising statements, those which participants explicitly said were important and statements that the researcher might have come across during the literature review. The key words were then classified together based on similarity or connection. The researcher then crafted themes from the indexes based on the research questions. The findings were written under the themes.

4.4 Findings

4.4.1 New Roles

Research question one sought to find some of the emergent newsroom roles in the digital age. The study established that seven roles have emerged in the Kenyan newsrooms as a result of the digital disruptions. Participants who are all working in a newsroom said they had performed at least one non-traditional role in the past five years. Some of the new roles recorded during the interviews included web data analysis, data-based reporting, social media editing, video production, web publishing/production, coding/web mastering, and people in charge of partnerships.

The study found that web data analysis was an integral part of the newsroom. This is where media houses draw insights from data available on the behaviour of the readers who come to their websites. The study found out that digital disruption has necessitated the role of web data analysis within newsrooms. A key informant, who has

served as a reporter and manager in both a traditional and digital newsroom and whose work now entails helping media houses come up with non-traditional revenue-generating models, opined that media houses should “start bringing into the newsroom people we've never thought we would have.” The participant, for instance, noted that for a long time, data analysts were only hired to assist advertising and commercial departments, not newsrooms. The media houses sampled had data scientists dedicated to reading and digesting audience data. These were employees without professional journalism training. Their work was to analyse audience patterns and provide insights to the journalists on metrics such as page views, bounce rate, engagement, growth of platforms among others. In the media house under observation, the data scientists attended planning meetings with editors, video producers, web producers and reporters and presented digested data on how articles performed. This helped the journalists in decision-making on what stories to pursue or keep probing as well as how to arrange stories on the websites.

The second emerging role as a result of digital disruption was social media editing. Media houses have employed social media editors who were tasked with managing the various platforms. They are all staff hired from outside and brought into the newsroom who also watch platforms owned by rival media houses to see which posts are performing well, after which they pass on that information to journalists and editors. At the media house under observation, the researcher found out that whenever that information was passed on, editors would then assign reporters the stories to join the fight for the eyeballs.

This study established that at first when social media emerged in the late 2000s, local newsrooms did not embrace them as they saw them as wasting precious time that could have been utilized in doing core journalistic duties. Currently, the rise of social

media platforms in the ongoing digitisation has fundamentally altered how media houses distribute their content. As a result, media houses have fully embraced them. A respondent who has transitioned from the traditional to digital media said:

I remember even (at a certain media house he worked for) they had to come up with that thing where they banned all social media sites. I think unless for one hour during lunchtime and then until like 9pm because they said a lot of bandwidth was going to Facebook and YouTube. And right now I don't even think you can even, there literally kids who are employed to sit and tweet, upload content to YouTube.

At the media house under observation, journalists were also able to post stories on social media even though this is done without the military precision of dedicated social media editors who relied on analytics to guide them on what type of stories to share on which platform and at what time.

The study established that coding as a new role in the newsroom is a consequence of the digital disruption and the participants noted that traditional journalists in the newsrooms did not have coding skills. Therefore, staff with technical skills to develop and maintain websites had to be hired and they are now part of the newsroom staff. The need for coders in the newsrooms grew as a result of the shifting changes in audience tastes and behaviour. Online editors are not just concerned about the placing of stories on the website, they are also keen on giving the audiences with the best user experience. This is where the design of the website is altered in real-time depending on the story of the day. A key informant said a media house he headed at some point sought coders to expand the publishing role. These individuals were sought from outside the newsroom, he said, adding:

This is someone who could translate design on to the digital platform. There was one they were actually looking for a second person to do that because there was a need for digital versions of all the print

products and it was a lot of work. So they were expanding that as well.

The study found that video production was a role created in modern newsrooms as a result of digital disruption. The traditional newsrooms did not have video producers. Media houses that had TV arms would simply upload the videos from bulletins onto their websites. Today, video has continued to grow in popularity and importance, a growth that has gone hand in hand with the rise of social media (Carter, 2019). All social media platforms now have video capacity; at least YouTube and Facebook have monetization options. People now spend long hours watching videos on these platforms. Preferences also vary from one person to another. While some like to watch short clips, others prefer long videos. There are also those who prefer to watch videos on mute while others go for videos with sound (Lister, 2019). As a result of this shifting audience behaviour, which has been caused by digital disruption, and the need to innovate on revenue generation, newsrooms now have video producers who are tasked with producing web-exclusive content or repurposing video content for online. A respondent, who is a digital video producer, explained why her role is important in the newsroom:

I reversion the content they (journalists) produce for TV. So before they go for the filming, they come to us, as the digital producers, they talk to us about their stories they want to work on. So we tell them how they are supposed to film their stories, how they're supposed to carry out their interviews. Then after filming, when they come back after they package their stories, they normally do stories of eight minutes onwards; so we take the stories they have produced and reversion it to a two-minute story, exclusively for digital. I also pitch original stories, I film and edit and publish.

At the media house under observation, the researcher observed that video producers attended planning meetings and were required to outline their docket of the day. The video producers also trawl the TV's pool for videos to accompany certain stories. The video producers also went out to shoot original videos which they edited and published online. Where a reporter was on the ground, they were required to send videos and

photos for publishing with credits to them. The video editors sat a few meters from the news hub where the editors sit. This proximity made it easier for the editors to liaise with the producers on which videos to accompany certain stories.

The study also found out that web publishing was a role that has emerged in the newsroom as a result of digital disruption. Publishing stories on the websites is now done by staff with journalism training. They not only edit stories but also copy paste to determine the news value of articles and decide on priority in publishing and placement on the website. This is a departure from the past where stories were uploaded by staff in the technical/IT department. A key informant explained that before the uploading of stories done by staff in the IT department which compromised on the quality:

The original subs were techies but they could not give you a clean copy. There was a lot of misspelling on headlines and captions. So now when I left, we were phasing them out because it was found out that they the reason for the site being very messy. They did not understand the quality side of journalism. Many of them could not spell properly, could not construct sentences, but they knew how to play around. So they used to do the basics. So it was felt now we need sub-editors who are as competent on the technical side as these guys, but primarily journalists.

Another emergent role is that of creating partnerships. The media house under observation had a partnerships unit which, however, had one person. The media house used partnerships to generate revenues beyond traditional advertising. These include sponsorships and native advertising. A key informant, who helps media houses come up with innovative ways of revenue generation, said bigger newsrooms should consider partnering with smaller entities such as community radio stations to localize coverage. Media houses could also work with creatives to turn news items into artwork in order to reach audiences that, because of the availability of many options, may not consume news in the traditional sense. A key informant said:

It's actually partnering with Joy of Godown Arts. You've done the River (story), get them to work with you to do a skit about the River, the toxic river and present it to your audiences in a different way.

4.4.2 Retooling and Reskilling

The second research question sought to find out the kind of retooling and reskilling that media workers need to survive in the digital age. The study found out that being tech-savvy was a key skill that modern journalists need. A respondent whose work is to generate visual content for a video on demand platform said this was the most important skill he needed to develop after good storytelling skill:

I think that the biggest thing about my job is just to know what events are happening, where and keep in touch with the events. Also, you need to be tech-savvy.

This was affirmed by a respondent, who transitioned from print to a digital reporting:

You have to equip yourself with the knowledge of how the different online spaces operate and what goes on where, who is on what space and how do we reach out to them. So be there and figure out who is that and what do I do to catch their attention. What do they want?

The study found out that modern journalists need to develop multimedia skills. Traditionally, journalists would identify themselves as either a print journalist, radio journalist or TV journalist. Participants, however, said modern journalists should be comfortable working for broadcast, print and web, which combine into multimedia. For instance, a participant said all journalists who previously worked for radio and TV at her media house are now required to brief the digital team on the stories they are pursuing to enable them plan on how to package them on the website. This was confirmed by another participant from the same media house who said:

Online is non-negotiable, whether it's (a) big or small (story). They (TV and radio reporters) also have to file the same content for online. So this has, this means the reporter has to acquire skills to file for

different platforms, do one story and tailor-make it for the different audiences.

Participants said reporters should be able to shoot a video, take a picture, and edit them for various platforms. A participant, who works as a newspaper sub-editor, also said he has had to develop “online skills” where he can headline for both print and online. A key informant agreed that multiskilling is the way to go for journalists:

If I went back to a newsroom today, I don't think I would have the same type of mind-set as when I started out in the 80s. It's totally changed. I know we used to go (for assignments) with a photographer and a driver and maybe a TV cameraman. Right now I can do most of it on my own.

However, a document review shows that in one of the job advertisements run by one of the media houses for a reporter, possessing multimedia skills was not listed as one of the requirements. Another job advertisement placed by one of the media houses seeking a digital sub-editor also surprisingly did not have multimedia skills as one of the requirements. Both adverts emphasised on “strong writing and editing skills” as well as “a good command of English and Kiswahili”. At least one job advertisement placed by the international media house included in the study required the applicants to have “experience within a digital media environment”. This serves to confirm the fact that most journalists and the newcomers in local newsrooms are all self-taught. However, there was a possibility that digital skills could crop up informally during the face to face interviews as one of the participants, who had worked in print for more than 10 years before switching to digital, said he had failed an interview for lack of these skills:

Even applying for a job you go for an interview and a 23-year-old kid gets the job and then when you ask, they're like, ‘yeah, but he has online experience’. I'm like, ‘what does that even mean?’

The study found out that data analysis skills were critical in the modern newsroom. This is where journalists can draw insights from data on audience behaviour

even without the help of dedicated analytics experts. A key informant said journalists should not wait to be spoon-fed by the data scientists:

Even though you need an analytics person (data scientist), you need to train your people to be able to read the analytics because they're the ones who apply it in the editorial decision making.

Indeed, at the newsroom under observation, the news hub where editors sit is sandwiched between two sets of screens: one set displaying various web analytics including Chartbeat and CrowdTangle as seen on the next picture:

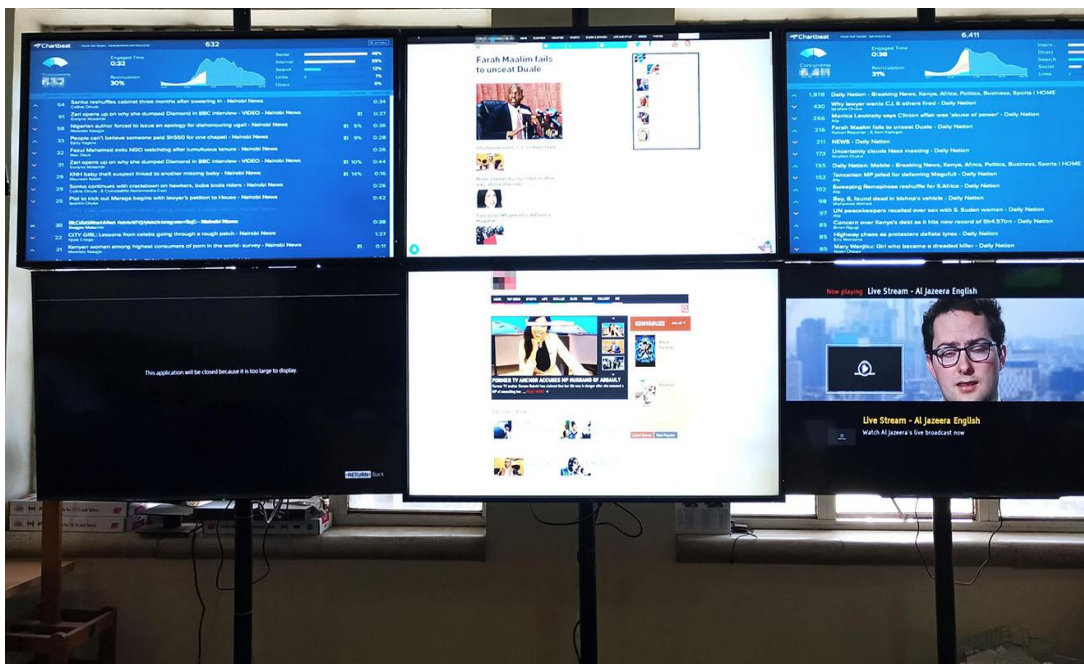


Figure 1: Screens with analytics at the media house under observation.

Editors and reporters regularly kept an eye on web analytics displayed on big screens inside the newsroom and seemed to understand the metrics even though not at the very technical level, as is evidenced in the picture below:

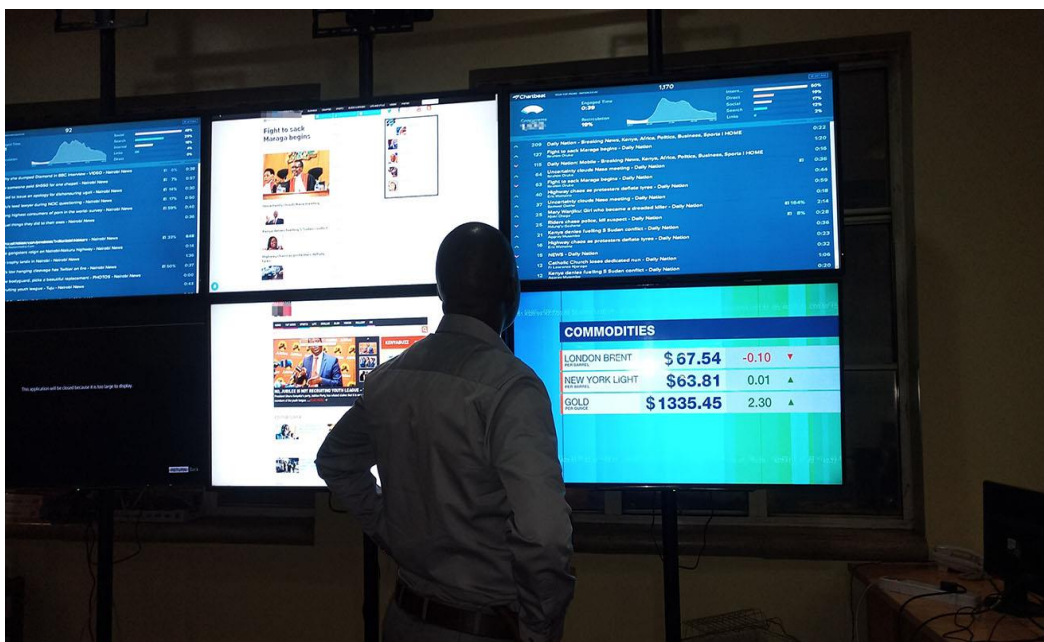


Figure 2: An editor checks web analytics at the media house under observation.

Web producers were guided by the metrics to rearrange stories on the homepage for optics while editors and reporters got tips from watching which stories were performing well on rival websites.

Data analysis skills also mean that journalists can comfortably package stories that are driven by correct data. The data can be obtained from various sources or created by journalists. Participants said data-driven stories also served as a way of fact-checking and verification, which is another skill-set required by modern journalists. A participant, who is a data journalist, said during the 2017 general election, he was part of a unit that used data to debunk several falsehoods stated in various campaign rallies which were hard to challenge. The participant, however, warned that those in this field must be well grounded in numbers to avoid offering misleading data.

Participants noted that digital disruption has heightened fake news phenomena as people with different agendas are able to communicate to masses almost at no cost. This sits well with the ICFJ (2019) report that says the digital revolution has given rise

to fake news phenomenon where users are sharing unverified information online. The audience in the digital age has more power in their consumption and they can easily fact check and access data and call out media houses and therefore media houses have to be at the top. Thus journalists must have the skills to be ahead of the consumers. This finding agrees with Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr (2018) who opines that audiences are no longer passive; they are active participants in the news production.

The study found out that journalists also need skills to perform functions that are not editorial-centric. For instance, a participant who heads a digital unit in one of the newsrooms said he was required to attend sales and strategy meetings. Today, the editorial space is often taken up by advertisements in what is known as native advertising. This is where clients pay for their content to run as ordinary news. To avoid watering down the editorial space, journalists are therefore required to step in to push back. The participant said he was required to attend meetings with staff from commercial in order to offer some sort of buffer in order to protect the integrity of editorial functions. Indeed, Lin (2014) advises that journalists need to be conversant with the business of media where they “can help a news organisation generate revenues without compromising their ethics.” A key informant, who headed two of the newsrooms in this study at various times, said digital managers needed business skills to avoid transferring print notions to digital. The key informant said:

Digital is a business. And the same way that you have a commercial manager in-charge of supplements, you need somebody who understands not the technology of digital, but the commercial side of digital. You need someone who knows the business side. How do you sell advertising on digital? How do you, what is the relationship between content and advertising in digital? You cannot transfer the print thinking to digital.

A respondent who transitioned from print to head a digital unit in one of the newsrooms that were studied affirmed this, saying he was now required to attend sales meetings:

Sometimes I have to go to meetings and try to tell the client this is how we will push your content. Things like native advertising right now. So trying to tell them if you put it on Twitter, you know somebody who pays and say, I want it to appear on your Twitter page 15 times a day and you have to sit and tell them that doesn't work like that. It's three times. And so you're telling them to drop the other 12 which in their head they thought by pushing everything, you now have to show them how that is spam.

4.4.3 How Newsroom Staff Acquire New Skills

Research question three queried how journalists acquire the new skills. The study found out that journalists have acquired their new skills on the job. The pattern that emerged was that acquiring new skills was largely a personal initiative by individual journalists. A participant who works a newspaper sub-editor said:

I was not taught, not even through workshops. You just learn on the job. Like you have somebody who is so good passing on these skills and it becomes a norm.

Another participant, who transitioned from print reporting to web publishing, agreed with this:

I had an interest and I acquired them (skills) through just looking at other reporters' stories and trying to see how I can improve them and package them in a better way.

The study found out that staff who are joining to perform new roles are also coming on board without the requisite skills and therefore learning on the job. A respondent, who is employed to perform non-traditional roles in one of the newsrooms said:

The technical skill is largely, I acquired them from school because I did a Bachelor of Science in Informatics. But then the data visualization side of it, I acquired it from just the day to day work. So when I have to compare what I learned in academia versus the industry, I'd say I've learned more in the industry like 70 percent. The academia was just the basic Excel, basic IT but in the industry, it's a whole new game.

This was confirmed by a respondent who works as a social media editor in one of the newsrooms:

All these (skills) are self-taught and on the online platforms. Basically, I learned on the job. I didn't learn these things in school very little.

The study also established that media houses are playing some peripheral role in retooling their journalists. The three local media houses included in the study did not have a structured way of imparting their staff with new knowledge. BBC, though, was an exception as its journalists said they had benefited from targeted, regular training sessions organised by the company. However, the participants said media houses have generally kept abreast of new technology by acquiring the same for use by the staff.

The study found out that journalists acquired little or no modern journalistic skills from the colleges and universities they attended. Even participants who had joined the media houses fresh from universities to perform new roles also said that they had to learn on the job. A participant who is a video producer said:

There were no practicals (at the university), it was just theory. And then you go to the newsroom you find that everything is totally different from what was happening in the classroom.

Another participant, who is a social media and engage editor, agreed with this saying the best digital skill she left the university with was publishing a blog:

I didn't learn these things in school very little. I think by the time was finishing school that's when digital was starting to pick up. So the only digital skills I had when I was leaving was how to have a blog, how to post on social media, just post, not engagement, just post on social media, have a blog and submit assignments online. That was the only thing I knew.

This was buttressed by a third participant who felt that most undergraduate syllabuses were outdated:

The problem I have with my undergraduate course, for example, it was called media science. A lot of what I learned was good, was relevant but was a little out of touch. You join the newsroom and you have to learn on the job again.

4.4.4 Newsroom Reorganisation

The fourth and final research question interrogated the role that digital disruption played in the reorganisation of newsrooms in Kenya. The study found out that disruption has elevated the stature of digital units in media houses. A key informant noted that staff working for online platforms today command more respect than before where they were simply seen as support staff:

All the heads of digital have become managing editors. That was difficult to sell sometimes back. They've been elevated to a point where they're recognised as having as much authority as the heads of print. In other words, they can make decisions on content, they can make decisions on policy and they don't have to work under the head of print.

The study found out that the number of newsroom staff was on the decline as media houses aimed to optimize their dwindling resources occasioned by the shifting in audience and advertiser behaviour. This translates into more tasks for the remaining staff. In the case of newspapers, all stories today must carry the day two elements as opposed to a few years when only the front page and top stories needed to. Therefore, some roles that were performed exclusively by the newspaper managing editors and news editors have been devolved to sub-editors who have had to acquire new skills.

The study found out that local newsrooms are still yet to fully converge even though the physical walls may have been brought down and staff are sitting close to each other. In the case under observation, the first point of call as you enter one side of the newsroom is a “news hub” where various editors sit. It is what was previously called the news desk. The news hub hosts a news editor and two deputies (one for online and

the other for print). Others who sit inside the news hub the syndication and visuals editor, a weekend papers and an online newspaper, news editors, agriculture and political editors as well as a social media editor, who sits next to the online editor. The news hub is sandwiched between two sets of screens: one set displaying various web analytics including Chartbeat and CrowdTangle. The other set has TV sets airing local channels. The news hub is next to a makeshift video hub (videographers and editors) on one side and a pool of reporters on the other. The latter include data specialists, investigative reporters, beat reporters and interns. The newspaper and online production teams sit on the other side of the newsroom. The sitting arrangement can be seen in the next picture:

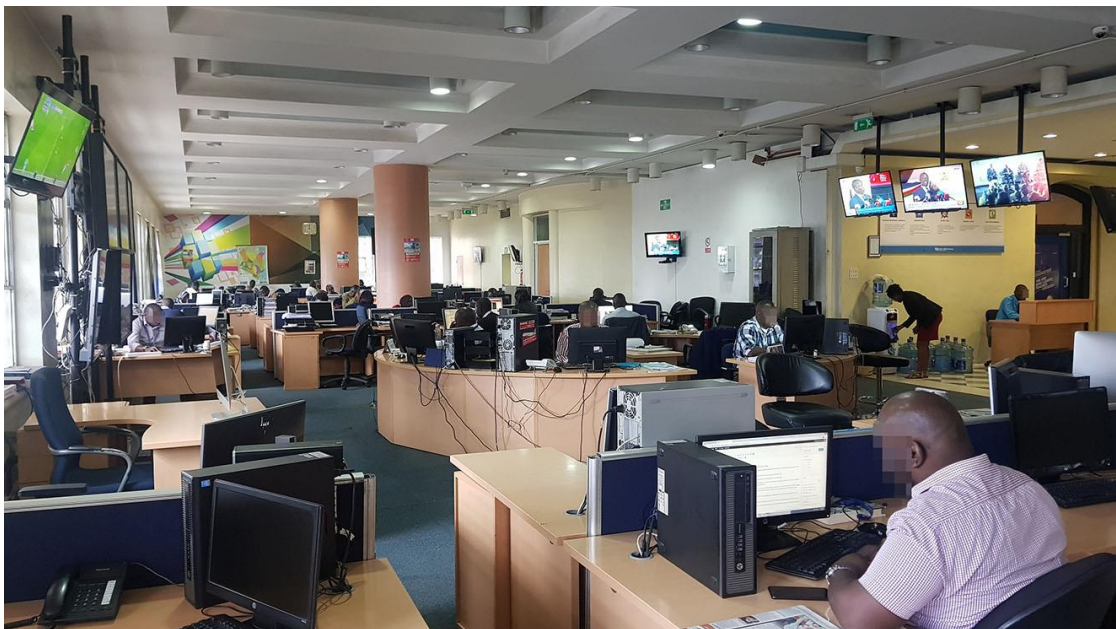


Figure 3: Sitting arrangement at the media house under observation.

The study established that journalists were aware that with multiple skills, they are more likely to be spared during layoffs compared to their straight-jacketed colleagues who file for a single platform. A participant who switched from print digital

said during his seven-year stint in the newsroom, he had seen print journalists laid off while their digital colleagues were spared:

There have been a lot of layoffs and most of the people we see being laid off are from the print side. I don't have the numbers, but I don't think there are many people from the digital side who have been laid off over the years at least in this newsroom.

Another participant who headed a newspaper magazine for 10 years and is now head of digital in one of the newsrooms that were studied, said he had to retool because he felt his time was up: “It had gotten to a point where I was like, I'm quitting newspaper. It's not like there was any problem it's just in my head. I just knew if this (digital) train leaves me as a journalist, I'm done.”

The study found out that journalists should be able to comfortably work with various platforms available today. Having taken over the role of uploading stories technical staff, sub-editors are now required to edit stories for all platforms, even though this is in nascent stages. A participant, who works as a print sub-editor, said he has had to learn how to headline for online:

I think we are getting to the level where what's basically good for online should good for the paper and vice versa. And those are skills we learn as the newsroom walls (are) demolished.

The research also established that disruption has happened before in Kenyan newsrooms but nothing like we are witnessing. A key informant notes that the earlier introduction of new technology in Kenyan journalism such as the switch from hot metal to photo-typesetting for newspapers was exciting and made work easier. It was not disruptive. In Kenya, NMG was the first media house to install a rotary printing press in the 1970s that made it possible to print full-colour advertisements (Nation Media Group, n.d.).

The next wave of disruption was embracing of broadcast –TV and radio- which was touted as a death-knell for newspapers. A key informant, however, notes that while TV and radio disrupted newspapers in Europe and America, the effect was delayed locally because Kenya for a long time had only State-owned TV and radio stations “whose journalism was limited”. The space was democratised post-2002 when the new Narc administration gave privately owned radio and TV stations space to thrive. A key informant notes that this is when newspapers started feeling the pinch from live coverage of news events:

And in fact, it was one of the reasons why newspapers moved hurriedly to colour. The logic was that TV was taking away audiences because the images were colourful.” The newspapers responded to this by “using full double spreads of pictures so that you have an equally impactful visual.

However, in Kenya, TV stations did not perceive newspapers as rivals. Newspapers too.

A key informant said:

It happened without being intended to. By its very nature, TV emerged as different. Its journalism was different and print journalism was different. So without intending it, print continued doing what they used to do. TV did what they had to do to suit their media.

As this happened, newspaper revenues and circulation continued to surge alongside those of broadcast channels. This is unlike now when audiences and advertisers have shifted from print and broadcast to online platforms.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of the study. That digital disruption has created new roles in the newsroom and also occasioned a need for retooling and reskilling by journalists. The study also established that most journalists are self-taught with media houses and journalism schools playing a peripheral role. The next chapter

discusses the findings in relation to framework. It also draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed five major findings of the study offering interpretation in relation to the general objectives as well as the research questions. The findings discussed are that digital disruption has created new roles in the Kenyan newsrooms; that the disruption has necessitated reskilling and retooling of journalists; that most journalists are learning new skills on their own; that the role of ensuring journalists acquire new skills rests with individual journalists, media houses and Journalism Schools and finally, the finding that disruption has happened before in Kenyan media and why digital disruption is different. This chapter will offer conclusions and give recommendations arising from the findings as well as areas of further research.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

5.2.1 Emergent Newsroom Roles in the Digital Age

Research question one sought to find out some of the emergent newsroom roles in the digital age. The findings indicate that some of the emergent roles include web data analysis, social media editing, data-based reporting, video production, web publishing, coding/web mastering, and people in charge of partnership. This finding agrees with recent research by Wamunyu and Wahutu (2019) who studied a newsroom of a Kenyan radio station. The two researchers found out that “new actors entered the process of news production” to complement the work of editors and reporters. At the station, the researchers found out the emerging roles of “camera people, a webmaster

and the specially created role of a digital media administrator” (p. 8). These are discussed in detail below.

Job titles, however, vary from one newsroom to another. For instance, in one of the media houses, the growth editor is the person in charge of checking web analytics and digesting audience behaviours to the journalists. In another media house that was studied, that person is simply a data scientist while in another, this role is assumed by the online editor or sub-editor. This finding is in agreement with what other scholars like Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr (2018) who opine that the relationship between journalism and the audience has become quantified while the presence of the audience in editorial decision-making processes is on the rise. Editors are keen to publish targeted articles for their audiences. There existing tools that simplify web analytics such as Chartbeat, Google Analytics and Content Insights. However, Kenyan newsrooms still employ data scientists to perform this role. This need to have web analytics skills seeks to maximize eyeballs and audience attention and the speed with which decisions have to be made given the instantaneous nature of the 21st-century media. Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr (2018) note that today feedback reaches journalists quickly, often in real-time. Compared with traditional forms of feedback, these new tools to track audience feedback are faster, more automatic, more inclusive, and more comprehensive (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr, 2018).

Another emergent role is that of social media editing. They are also called engagement editors. These are individuals tasked with sharing articles on social media platforms, while relying on analytics to understand audience behaviour in order to know what to post where, at what time and in what format. For instance, the study established that a video that will perform well on Instagram may not be ideal for Twitter or Facebook. Social media/engagement editors also share paid advertisements on the

platforms and fish out analytics which are then shared with advertisers. In the latter, they look out for how audiences are engaging with the posts, hence the title engagement editor. These individuals are key to the newsrooms as they help in the instantaneous distribution of news, which is crucial in the current setting where news distribution has been disrupted. This finding is in agreement with another study by Moyo et al., (2019) that found out that news organisations are utilizing analytics for various purposes, including attracting advertising, informing structural changes as well as comparing their performance against that of their competitors.

Video producers were the other emergent roles in the newsroom. Video production is also no longer an exclusive function of television. All the newsrooms in the study had video units. Reporters were required to file videos that ended up online. The BBC has a newly established unit that repurposes videos from its TV section and those taken by radio journalists for online. At RMS, radio shows are now produced on video and these are either streamed live on social media or uploaded on YouTube. A participant said he has had to learn how to produce radio shows with visuals. This is in response to the realisation that with the shift in audience behaviour, there are individuals who no longer consume radio via FM frequencies. Radio has been disrupted as Gobble (2016) points out that “to disrupt something is to cause disorder or turmoil, often to the point of destruction. You can, in fact, disrupt a market, a value chain, an entire industry in the absence of a disruptive innovation in Christensen’s sense.” This finding is also in agreement with Witschge and Nygren (2009) who said journalists have acquired multimedia skills like taking pictures and videos as well as editing, what is otherwise referred to as multi-skilling.

The other emergent role is that of web producers. At the start of digital journalism, stories were published by techies, essentially people with knowledge on

Information Technology. They had no journalism skills. This was found to dumb down the quality of stories as a key informant, a part-time journalism lecturer who previously headed two key media houses, explained:

The original subs were techies but they could not give you a clean copy. There was a lot of misspelling on headlines and captions. So now when I left, we were phasing them out because it was found out that they the reason for the site being very messy. They did not understand the quality side of journalism. Many of them could not spell properly, could not construct sentences, but they knew how to play around. So they used to do the basics. So it was felt now we need sub-editors who are as competent on the technical side as these guys, but primarily journalists.

This is in agreement with D. Wanderi (personal communication, October 2019) who said that when the Daily Nation website (www.nation.co.ke) first went live in 1998 as www.nationaudio.com, NMG did not have the technical know-how to run the website. Therefore, stories would be packaged and sent to the Internet Service Provider (ISP) for uploading. It took the company two years to take up the online publishing role from the ISP in 2000. And even then, the uploading of stories was done by techies. This had two effects: first, when a media house is prone to publishing stories with mistakes, it loses credibility among its readers which is the backbone of journalism. Second, even internally, staff in other sections of the newsroom lose trust in those in the digital department due to the many mistakes. As a result, journalists had to acquire knowledge on how to use CMSs such as WordPress, Blogspot and Core Media Service. Today, all the media houses in the study have journalists performing that role of web production.

This finding is in agreement with that of a similar study by Witschge and Nygren (2009), who studied Swedish newsrooms. The study found out that journalists “have taken over work that was previously done by technical staff, and in Swedish newsrooms of today journalists and technicians are working side by side” (p. 47). The survey found that Swedish journalists interact with different software packages per day including

CMS, web browsers, e-mail, software for pictures, layout, editing sound and video, and spreadsheet software.

The other emergent role in the study was coding/web-mastering. The study established that media houses were keen to give their readers the best user experience on their websites. Therefore, placing stories on the websites mattered a lot. However, local newsrooms still hire staff with technical coding skills who are not trained journalists. They offer support to journalists when the need arose. This finding is in conflict with a study by Weber and Kosterich (2018) who found that, in media houses in New York City, the new roles were filled from within the industry where journalists were trained to perform non-traditional roles such as coding and data analytics. Journalists acquiring coding skills is a trend that has caught on in the Western media with Kenyan media houses lagging behind. NYT also says it has the highest number of journalists with coding skills. This is part of their “sound business strategy” that seeks to “to provide journalism so strong that several million people around the world are willing to pay for it” (NYT, 2017). As of November 2019, NYT’s number of total subscribers, including print and digital, stood at 4.9 million (Lee, 2019). This demonstrates that there was a need for journalists to have coding skills which would cut down on response time when it comes to altering the look and feel of the websites, especially during big news moments. This is in agreement with advice from Lin (2014) who says journalists need to learn the basics of programming and be able to “create compelling pages that attract web audiences”. But compared to other new skills such as social media and web publishing, coding is a bit more complex and would require more effort. And with the acquisition of the new skills left to individual journalists, that is a venture most would be unwilling to undertake.

Partnerships was another role that came up in the course of the study which has been brought about by digital disruption. These are staff who seek ways of supplementing income from advertising. Disruption has led to shrinking revenues for media houses (MCK, 2016). One of the ways was to look for entities to sponsor editorial projects. This worked out well in the media house under observation. In another, a participant who heads a digital unit was required to attend strategy meetings on revenue generation. These were journalists who had acquired business acumen over time and were added extra roles by virtue of their positions in companies. A participant said during strategy meetings, they would push back on irrational clients'. This finding is in agreement with Lin (2014) who advises journalists to be conversant with the business of media where they "can help a news organisation generate revenues without compromising their ethics. There is an opportunity for media houses to reach more audiences by partnering with entities to repurpose content into various formats. For instance, a key informant proposed partnering with performing artists to convert an investigative story into a skit, something that has yet to happen locally. This would be consumed by individuals who may like arts but are not into reading news stories. In doing this, media houses would be reacting to digital disruption that has offered audiences more options. It is, therefore, the role of media houses to be innovative on how to reach audiences where they are.

5.2.2 Retooling and Reskilling Needed for Survival in the Digital Age

Research question two sought to find out what retooling and reskilling media workers need to survive in the digital age. The study established that newsroom staff were aware that they no longer have the luxury to remain straight-jacketed filing for a single platform. They are aware that those who acquire extra skills linger on much longer in the newsroom, while those who fail to adapt are declared redundant. They

have a wide range of skills to pick from which include being tech-savvy, multi-media skills, step up their storytelling skills, have the fact-checking ability, data-reporting and web metrics analysis as well as have business acumen.

The study established that journalists need to be tech-savvy to survive in the newsroom in the digital age. Tech-savviness entails having knowledge on how online journalism works. Journalists should be able to keep up with the rapidly changing digital environment. For instance, a digital-savvy journalist would know which story would work well as a video or in plain text. Also, it entails being able to tell the audience needs and tailor content for them. Journalists who are tech-savvy would make more sense from web analytics compared to those who have to be spoon-fed by their data scientists. This is a skill that is easy to acquire over time working in the digital space.

Realities of the last few years have required journalists to acquire extra skills. This study established that reporters were required to shoot videos and take photos while photographers were also required to write stories and take videos, which are known as multimedia skills. Martins (as cited in Hayasaki et al., 2016) says “multimedia skills, consist of mastering different media and modalities such as written text, video or photographs, and being able to easily switch between journalistic genres and media, formats or technologies”. Most journalists have acquired this skill over time. Stories are therefore richer as they have various elements that make articles more appealing. With digital disruption providing more alternatives to audiences, Dimitrov (2014) sees media houses dealing with a growing attention economy where publishers are fighting for an audience that could easily get the same information from other platforms. Dimitrov (2014) says people with skills and strategies that could attract and keep public attention are increasingly rare, which should be good news for the profession. This is because there is a growing demand for individuals with such skills. This study, however,

established that multimedia skills was not included as a need in most job advertisements put out by local media houses. This is because, over time, journalists have demonstrated the ability to adapt and acquire new skills on the job.

Data analysis as an emergent role is a skill that exists in the newsrooms on two levels: (1) Understanding web analytics and (2) doing data-driven stories. While newsrooms have used data in stories for years, today they have desks dedicated to this function. In 2016, NMG started Newsplex with a team of four employees whose work is to churn data-driven stories. The rest of the journalists also rely on this desk when faced with complex data. The desk also serves as the primary fact-checking unit for the media house in the advent of fake news. Whenever government officials make certain claims especially those involving numbers, staff on this desk will seek to verify the claims and mark them as either false or true. A participant who works with the desk said on a number of occasions, those fact-checked have attempted to dismiss their stories as false but have not succeeded because they (stories) were based on solid data. The section often produces long reads, which are non-docket stories that are now on demand in newspapers due to a shift in changing audience behaviours, which is as a result of digital disruption. There is a growing need for “quality journalism” by media houses that are keen to retain their audiences since the breaking news role has been taken away from them by the digital tide (Dimitrov, 2014; NYT, 2017). A participant said fact-checking has become more critical in the line of her work as digital disruption has led to a fake news phenomenon. In 2019, more than half of journalists interviewed in a global study said they regularly use digital tools to fact-check information (ICFJ, 2019). The study found out that among the 16 technical skills surveyed, digital fact-checking was the most common.

Another aspect of data analysis is web analytics. Ferrer-Conill and Tandoc Jr (2018) argue that the relationship between journalism and the audience has become quantified while the presence of the audience in editorial decision-making processes continues to grow. It is as a result of this that “news organisations have started to introduce new job titles in the newsroom that speak to what appears to be an emerging editorial role focused on navigating audience data and making sense of audience behaviour” (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc Jr, 2018, p. 436).

The surprise finding of this study is the requirement for journalists to understand the business in order to help the commercial side in driving sales. For long, there existed a firewall between advertising and editorial departments in a media house. The idea that “editorial decisions would be made independent of the wishes of advertisers has long been considered to be one of journalism’s most fundamental principles” (Basen, 2012, <https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/2012/12/19/breaking-down-the-wall/>). Today, editors attend meetings where advertisement pitches are made. Because advertisers now have more options on where to place their products, media houses are forced to bend backwards to please them. This new reality has brought about a new way of advertising where paid pieces occupy editorial pages. This research found out that heads of digital products must not only understand the technical aspects but also the business side. The involvement of journalists in commercial rhymes with the new reality of shrinking revenues. This finding is in agreement with Lin (2014) who says the involvement of journalists in advertising would be to ensure that they guard editorial ethics in order to retain credibility with the audiences.

5.2.3 Training

Research question three sought to find out how journalists acquire the new skills. The findings indicate that journalists had learnt their new skills on their own by either

practising on the job or watching others do the job. The three local media houses included in the study do not have deliberate training for their staff. In the instances where they did, it was either irregular, uncoordinated or involved fringe skills. BBC was, however, an exception with its staff saying that they have benefitted from well-coordinated, regular training. They have also seen their staff taken for training for various skills. It is, however, imperative to point out that the business models vary. While RMS, NMG and SG are profit-driven media houses, BBC, which is funded by the British taxpayers, is not set up to bring in profits. Its primary role is public service. As a result, media executives who are keen on posting a profit amid changing advertiser behaviour would be more inclined to cut back on training costs as opposed to those who have a steady income despite the disruption.

New staff joining to perform non-traditional roles also did not join with full skills of what they were required to do. A participant who works as a social media and engage editor only had blogging skills at the time of joining. Another participant who is a data journalist said he learnt data visualization on the job despite holding a Bachelor of Science degree in Informatics. This means that the range of skills required in the modern newsrooms are so diverse that no single college or university can, at the moment, impart them all under one roof. Indeed, participants said that journalism schools were still relying on outdated syllabuses that teach students to be either a broadcast or print journalist –and in some remote instances a digital journalist. As a result, local media houses are going for workers who have some technical skills such as data analysis who are then taught how to write stories. This trend is also seen globally where NYT has said it is “more focused on hiring the right people” as opposed to saving costs through downsizing (NYT, 2017).

The findings of this study agree with those of Nikunen (2014) who studied Finnish newsrooms in 2010 when a number of journalists were laid off. The study established that media houses preferred younger journalists who could easily adapt to the new technology that Finnish newsrooms were implementing. It further confirms the sentiments of a Kenyan mid-career journalist (personal communication, August 2019) who says local newsrooms are “juniorising” the newsrooms. The journalist explained this as a trend where media executives are bringing in younger staff who are more adaptable to technology but earn lesser salaries to take jobs of more experienced newsroom staff who earn a substantial amount in salary but lean more towards traditional form of journalism.

Indeed, this study found out that even these individuals do not bring wholesome package as much of what they do is also learnt on the job. A participant who works as a data journalist said:

When I have to compare what I learned in academia versus the industry, I'd say I've learnt like 70 percent in the industry. The academia was just the basic (Microsoft) Excel, basic IT (Information Technology) but in the industry, it's a whole new game.

This presents both an opportunity and a challenge for journalists. First, since those joining the newsrooms do not have full skills, it means journalists, with just a little more effort in retooling, can get those jobs. But increasingly, the jobs are being filled by people with no formal journalism training a trend that has slowly de-professionalised the industry. This finding confirms that journalism is, therefore, de-professionalised since there is no “knowledge monopoly” which is one of the key dictates of a profession (Witschge & Nygren, 2009, p. 39). A review of some of the job adverts placed by media houses showed that multimedia skills was often not a requirement for roles such as reporter and editor. What this means is that media houses end up with staff that they

will need to retrain in order to adapt to the changing times. Individuals who fill those vacancies are often straight-jacketed journalists who at times resist digital-first strategy.

5.2.4 Newsroom Shake-Up

The fourth research question sought to find out the role digital disruption has played in the reorganisation of newsrooms. The findings show that disruption of income and shifting audience behaviours have left the media in turmoil. Media houses' carefully crafted business models have been destroyed (Basen, 2012).

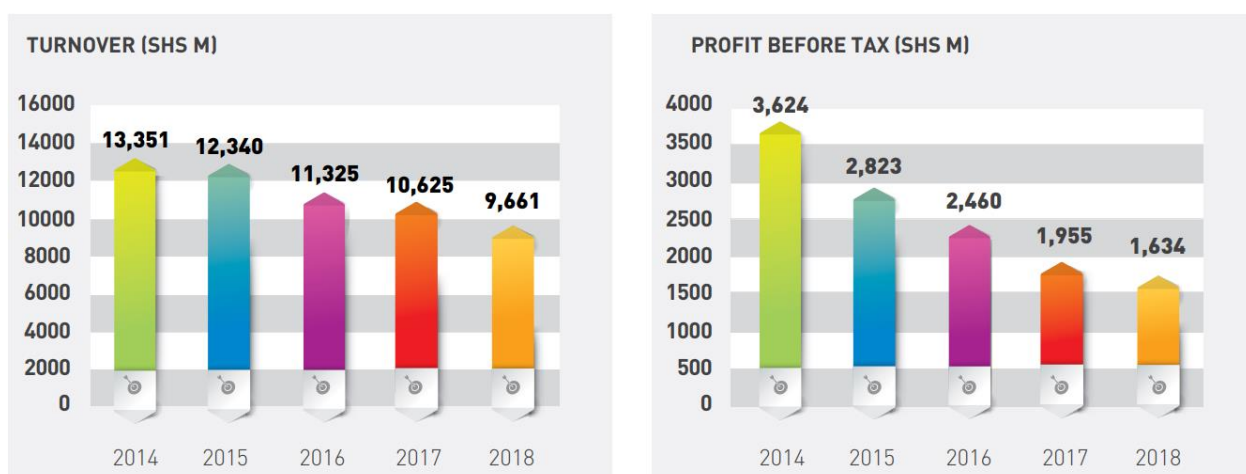
This study established that disruption has happened before in Kenyan newsrooms. The switch from hot metal to phototypesetting was a big technology shift in newspapers, according to a key informant. Then there was the advent of radio and television –and eventually coloured TV, live TV coverage and eventually switch to digital TV- which did not have a major impact on the newspaper. In all these disruptions, newspapers adapted well and circulation and profits kept rising. They all learnt how to co-exist.

Digital disruption has, however, affected both print and broadcast arms of journalism. TV viewership, radio listenership and newspaper readership are all on a steady decline (MCK, 2016). And while media houses have robust websites attracting many eyeballs, technology companies such as Facebook and Google, which have more audiences, are offering cheaper and more targeted advertising options (Shepard, 2012). This means that the websites run by mainstream media are not attractive enough to advertisers. Sterling (2019) notes that combined, Facebook, Google and Amazon raked in nearly 70 percent of all digital advertising spend in the United States in 2018, according to eMarketer. As a result, income for mainstream media is shrinking. Locally, both SG and NMG, the two public-listed media companies included in the study have

recorded declining revenues year on year since 2014. NMG posted a Sh3.6 billion profit before tax in 2014; this dropped to Sh1.6 billion profit before tax in 2018 (see *table 4*).

But while NMG has recorded a steady decline year on year, for SG, it has been a bag of mixed fortunes. The company posted a Sh326 million profit before tax in 2014, growing to Sh397 million in 2018. But the company posted losses in between; Sh396 million in 2015 and Sh282 million in 2017. The 2019 full-year results for both companies had not been released at the time of completing this study. However, SG had issued a profit warning for the year (SG Board of Directors, 2019). Both RMS and BBC are not listed companies and are therefore not obliged to publish their books.

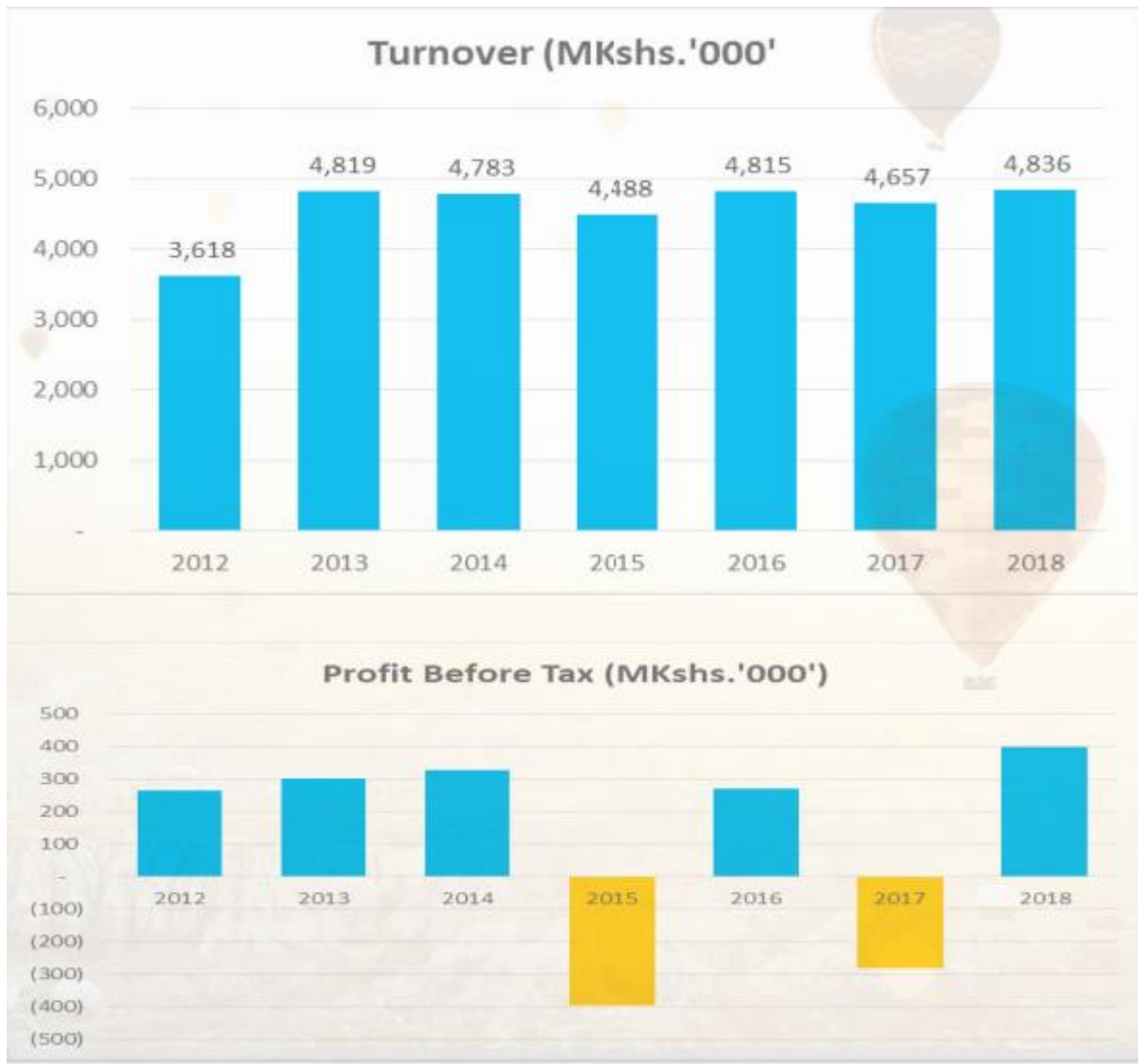
What this means is that media houses are forced to lay off staff every so often with those surviving having to do more. One of the most popular reactions to this is convergence where editors are keen on getting more from fewer employees. Locally, convergence is still work in progress. Physically, various newsroom units now sit closer together. At the media house that was observed, for instance, it is possible for the news editor to crane his neck and see a video editor or data journalist for assignment.



Source: Adapted from NMG 2018 annual report and financial statements

Figure 4: NMG turnover and profit before tax between 2014 - 2018

Meetings are also more inclusive with the digital teams also brought on board. Decision-making has also been devolved where today, a newspaper sub-editor has the final say in what headline and photographs to use with a particular story.



Source: Adapted from SG 2018 annual report and financial statements

Figure 5: SG turnover and profit before tax between 2014 - 2018

This is because audiences have become more demanding since they have more options to choose from and will only go for the best.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings of this thesis confirm that disruption is underway in newsrooms in Kenya. Disruption has been brought about by shrinking revenues and consumer behaviours, occasioned by digital technologies. Media houses have attempted various

models in reaction to the disruption, top among them being convergence. Newsroom staff are required to possess more than one skill set and in effect perform more roles than before. But it is not just possessing multimedia skills. For instance, the role of head of digital was previously held by employees who only needed journalism skills. Today, this thesis established that this role is performed by an employee who also understands the business side of the media besides the technical aspects.

This study has also established that even though journalists are required to acquire new skills, they largely do it on their own. Save for the BBC which organised regular training sessions for its staff, for local media houses, it is largely a personal initiative. Many newsroom staff are learning these new skills on the job.

The reality is also that journalists who fail to adapt and acquire new skills are retrenched, something that journalists are aware of. These jobs are then filled by employees with technical skills, who then teach themselves how to do what's at the core of journalism: storytelling.

The study also establishes that colleges and universities do not offer up-to-date training to enable their fresh graduates to transition seamlessly into the newsrooms. It is for this reason media houses such as NMG and SG have started media training programmes known as media labs to impart the required skills on fresh graduates before they absorb them into the newsrooms.

5.4 Recommendations

This study has identified a number of gaps and missed opportunities in the media ecosystem. First, local media houses need to deliberately organise training sessions for the journalists in the newsrooms. When people are self-taught, they take more time than

when taken through formal training. The media firms also need to carry out a regular audit of their staff to identify the training gaps and plug them early.

Secondly, colleges and universities ought to regularly appraise their training manuals and update them with the existing realities. This study established that even those joining newsrooms from schools still need to retool in some way before working efficiently. There needs to be a constant conversation between Journalism Schools and the industry on the skills needed. For instance, journalism schools should now be offering skills along the lines of fact-checking, data analysis, social media editing and web analytics. These should be alongside imparting knowledge on good storytelling.

Third, since most journalists are self-taught and because most new staff do not come with all the required skills, media houses ought to audit the available skill set –or those willing to learn the required skills- before sourcing from outside. This will offer a sense of stability in an industry rocked by anxiety and uncertainty among the workers.

Fourth, media houses ought to hire journalists with multimedia skills since this is now a requirement for everyone in the newsroom. Human resources departments in firms should update the requirements section for all newsroom jobs advertised. This will end the trend where newsrooms have to retrain new staff. A sample of the profile of a modern journalist is provided (see *Appendix H*).

5.5 Areas of Further Research

Future research can delve into why local media houses do not organise regular training for their journalists. There is also room for finding out from both the industry players and media school administrators why there is an apparent disconnect between the skills employees acquire from universities and the skills that employers need. Future

research can also delve into the impact of digitisation on journalists working in rural areas, which was not captured by this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Screening Questionnaire for Journalists

Name (optional):	Age:	Gender Male ...Proceed to Q1 Female...Proceed to Q1
---------------------	------	---

Q1. Which of the following titles best describes your role?	
News editor/editor	01 Proceed to Q2
Chief sub-editor/sub-editor	02 Proceed to Q2
Reporter/correspondent	03 Proceed to Q2
Web producer	04 Proceed to Q2
Video producer	05 Proceed to Q2
None of the above	06 Terminate interview

Q2. How long have you worked in the newsroom?	
Less than 5 years	01 Terminate interview
Over 5 years	02 Proceed to question 3

Q3. Have you acquired any new skills in the past five years?	
Yes	01 Proceed to Q4
No	02 Terminate interview

Q4. Are you required to perform any role that you were not required to five years ago?	
Yes	01 Proceed to interview
No	02 Terminate interview

Appendix B Interview Guide for Journalists

Name of Interviewer_____

Date_____

Name of Interviewee_____

Staff Position_____

Good morning/afternoon, I am Kenfrey Kiberenge. I'm carrying out a survey on the newsroom roles and skills in the digital age. This is part of the requirements to complete my Master of Arts degree in Digital Journalism course at the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications.

The interview will take roughly 30 to 45 minutes. If it is okay with you, I will record our conversation to ensure that I get all the details while carrying on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. The final report will be compiled without any reference to individuals.

Please provide honest answers.

RQ1: What role has disruption played in the reorganisation of newsrooms?

1. What does your job entail?
2. In the last five years, what factors have contributed to the change in what your tasks entail?
3. How has convergence affected your workflow in the newsroom?

RQ2: What are the new journalism roles in the newsroom today?

1. For how long have you worked in the newsroom?
2. What role(s) do you perform today that you did not perform five years ago?
3. How has this changed how you do your journalism now, compared to when you joined?

4. Are there non-journalistic roles that you had to undertake/perform in the last five years and what would these be?
5. How have these non-journalistic roles impacted the core news activities?

RQ3: What retooling and reskilling do media workers need to survive in the digital age?

1. What new professional skills have you acquired in the past five years that you did not possess when you were joining the newsroom?
2. What skills do you feel you or journalists need today to remain valuable in the newsroom?

RQ4: How do journalists acquire the new skills?

1. How did you acquire these skills?
2. What role does your media house play in the retooling and reskilling of newsroom staff?

End of interview

Appendix C Screening Questionnaire for Staff Performing Non-Traditional Roles

Name (optional):	Age:	Gender Male ...Proceed to Q1 Female...Proceed to Q1
------------------	------	---

Q1. Which of the following titles best describes your role?	
Online data analyst	01 Proceed to Q2
Engagement/Growth editor	02 Proceed to Q2
Social Media Editor	03 Proceed to Q2
Fact-checker	04 Proceed to Q2
Web reporter	05 Proceed to Q2
Web producer	06 Proceed to Q2
Online video producer	07 Proceed to Q2
Other	08 Specify role and judiciously proceed to Q3 or terminate interview

Q2. How long have you worked in the newsroom?	
More than 5 years	01 Terminate interview
Less 5 years	03 Proceed to question 3

Q3. Do you perform a role that did not exist in your newsroom before 2014?	
Yes	01 Proceed to Q4
No	02 Terminate interview

Q4. Do you consider your work part of journalism in your newsroom?	
Yes	01 Proceed to interview
No	02 Terminate interview

Appendix D Interview Guide for Workers Performing Non-Traditional Roles

Name of Interviewer _____

Date _____

Name of Interviewee _____

Staff Position _____

Good morning/afternoon, I am Kenfrey Kiberenge. I'm carrying out a survey on the newsroom roles and skills in the digital age. This is part of the requirements to complete my Master of Arts degree in Digital Journalism course at the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications.

The interview will take roughly 30 to 45 minutes. If it is okay with you, I will record our conversation to ensure that I get all the details while carrying on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. The final report will be compiled without any reference to individuals. Please provide honest answers.

RQ1: What role has disruption played in the reorganisation of newsrooms?

1. What does your job entail?
2. How does your role advance quality journalism in your media organisation?
3. Some media analysts argue that embracing new technological innovations leads to better journalism. What is your opinion?

RQ3: What retooling and reskilling do media workers need to survive in the digital age?

1. What is the most important skill you are bringing to journalism and how does it improve newsroom operations?

End of interview

Appendix E Interview Guide for KIIs

Name of Interviewer _____

Date _____

Name of Interviewee _____

Staff Position _____

Good morning/afternoon, I am Kenfrey Kiberenge. I'm carrying out a survey on the newsroom roles and skills in the digital age. This is part of the requirements to complete my Master of Arts degree in Digital Journalism course at the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications.

The interview will take roughly 30 to 45 minutes. If it is okay with you, I will record our conversation to ensure that I get all the details while carrying on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential. The final report will be compiled without any reference to individuals.

Please provide honest answers.

RQ1: What role has disruption played in the reorganisation of newsrooms?

1. You have been in the industry for long, what would you say are the highlights of various disruption waves in journalism in Kenya?
2. What would you say are some of the most significant disruptions outcomes and each reorganised newsrooms?

RQ2: What are some of the emergent journalistic roles in the newsroom today?

1. What are some of the new journalism roles in the newsroom today and to what extent are they a consequence of disruption?

RQ3: What retooling and reskilling do media workers need to survive in the digital age?

1. Looking at the role of the media/journalist in the society, what would you say are the skills and tools the newsroom staff must have?

RQ4: How do journalists acquire the new skills?

1. Is the acquisition of new skills and tools a function of media houses, journalists and journalism schools and other stakeholders? Please expound.

End of interview

Appendix F Observation Tool for NMG Case

(Source: Wamunyu, 2017)

Date:

Time the observation began:

Description of setting and people present:

Narrative explaining the events as they happened, including some direct quotes:

Time the observation ended:

PROCESS	OBSERVATION	UNDERSTANDING
PHYSICAL ORGANISATION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the newsroom organised today (who sits where)? 		
WORK FLOW		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does a story move from the writer to various publishing options? 		
STAFFING		
Did you observe the following:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff performing non-traditional roles? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff performing non-traditional roles interacting with reporters/editors in the newsroom? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journalists performing multiple roles? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporters taking photos and videos? 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photographers writing stories? 		
TOOLS		

Did you observe the following:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Web data analysis tools?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Editors and reporters watching web analytics?		

Appendix G Document Review Guide for Job Advertisements

Source: (author, 2019)

Media house	Job title	Required old skills	Required new skills	Reflection

Appendix H Profile of a Modern Journalist

Skills required of a modern journalist	
Skill	Meaning
Tech-savvy	Possess knowledge on how online journalism works and keep up with the rapidly changing digital environment.
Multimedia skills	Mastering different media and modalities such as written text, video or photographs, and being able to easily switch between journalistic genres and media, formats or technologies.
Web data analysis	Have a deep understanding of web analytics with the ability to draw insights from Google Analytics, Chartbeat and Content Insight.
Data journalism	Ability to produce stories from huge chunks of data within a short time.
Fact-checking	Demonstrate ability to use verification tools for all information one may come across.
Business acumen	Understand the business in order to help the drive sales.

Appendix I Informed Consent Form (ICF)

AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS (GSMC)

Quantitative and qualitative study on A Changing Profession: Examining Newsroom
Roles and Skills in the Digital Age

My name is Kenfrey Kiberenge a student at the Aga Khan University in Nairobi. I am carrying out a survey on the newsroom roles and skills in the digital age. This is part of the requirements to complete my Master of Arts degree in Digital Journalism course at the Aga Khan University Graduate School of Media and Communications.

The interview will take roughly 30 to 45 minutes. I will record our conversation to ensure that I get all the details while carrying on an attentive conversation with you. I assure you that all your comments will remain confidential.

The findings of this study will offer new knowledge to media houses on the kind of training their journalists need. It will also help media managers learn how to reorganise their newsrooms and take advantage of skills that already exist.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. The research does not foresee any possible risks or discomfort during or after the interview to you or other participants.

If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail: kenfrey.kiberenge@gmail.com

AUTHORISATION

I have read and understood this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this project. I understand I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, and I understand my consent does not take away legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this project.

Participant signature: _____

Participant name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____

Date : _____

Signature of person obtaining consent: _____

Date: _____

Appendix J Introductory Letter from AKU



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P. O. Box 30623 – 00100
Nairobi

November 19, 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

KENFREY KIBERENGE (STUDENT NO. 535175)

Kenfrey Kiberenge is a registered student at the Aga Khan University, Graduate School of Media and Communications. He is enrolled in the Master of Arts in Digital Journalism Programme and has completed his course work. He is now working on his Master's thesis. Mr. Kiberenge's topic is "A Changing Profession: Examining Newsroom Roles and Skills in the Digital Age".

The purpose of my writing is to request you to assist Mr. Kiberenge complete this important academic exercise. Any information collected will be used solely for academic purposes. Upon completion of the research, Mr. Kiberenge's thesis will be available at our library. He will also submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of his completed work to your department.

We appreciate your support to our student towards his successful completion of his thesis research.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nancy Booker
Director – Academic Affairs

Appendix K AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

REF: AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/006

Date: November 19, 2019.

Dear Kenfrey Kiberenge (Student No. 535175)

**RE: A CHANGING PROFESSION: EXAMINING NEWSROOM ROLES AND SKILLS
IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

This is to inform you that Aga Khan University - Graduate School of Media and Communications Ethics Review Committee has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your approval period is November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020 and your application's approval number is AKU-GSMC/ERC/2019/006.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following, under the supervision of your two supervisors:

1. Only the approved documents including the informed consent form and the data collection instruments will be used.
2. Any changes, made on the approved documents that may increase the risks or affect the welfare or safety of the participants or compromise the integrity of the study must be reported to GSMC within the shortest time possible. The amended documents will be taken through a fresh review and the due process of approval.
3. In the event that the research cannot be completed within the one year approved period, the researcher will request for renewal of approval 30 days prior to the end of the approved period.
4. The researcher will be required to submit a comprehensive progress report when applying for renewal of approval.
5. Submission of an executive summary report to the GSMC's Ethics Review Committee within 90 days of completion of the study.
6. Produce all the data collected using the approved tools as and when required by the Ethics Review Committee within the 90 days of completion of your study.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be required to obtain a research permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). You can access the application portal from the website on <https://www.nacosti.go.ke/>.


Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.


Yours sincerely

Dr Nancy Booker
Director- Academic Affairs

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS


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REPUBLIC OF KENYA


**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: **469451** Date of Issue: **12/December/2019**


RESEARCH LICENSE




This is to Certify that Mr.. Kenfrey Kiberenge of Aga Khan University, has been licensed to conduct research in Nairobi on the topic: A CHANGING PROFESSION: EXAMINING NEWSROOM ROLES AND SKILLS IN THE DIGITAL AGE for the period ending : 12/December/2020.

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