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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Media and Communications

**THE ADOPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN NEWSROOMS IN
KENYA: A MULTI-CASE STUDY**

By

Peter Mwangangi Kioko
553278

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

Nairobi, Kenya

11/02/2022
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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
PETER MWANGANGI KIOKO-553278, find it satisfactory and recommended that it
be accepted.

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11/02/2022

DECLARATION

THE ADOPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN NEWSROOMS IN KENYA: A MULTI – CASE STUDY

I, **PETER MWANGANGI KIOKO-553278**, declare that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university and that to the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. The editorial assistance provided to me has in no way added to the substance of my thesis, which is the product of my research endeavours.

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Caroline for her support and encouragement, and our daughter Kemi whose inspiration kept me going throughout this project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere appreciation to my supervisors Prof. Nancy Booker and Dr. Njoki Chege for their exemplary guidance and support in this research project. I'm grateful to Hesbon Owilla for the help and advice at different stages of this study. Further, I salute the entire Aga Khan University – Graduate School of Media and Communications fraternity for their immense support, including classmates, lecturers, Henry Kibira, and the library team led by Augustine Gitonga. I'm grateful to Kimweli Wambua for proofreading my work. My sincerest gratitude also goes to my employer, the BBC, for granting me permission to conduct this research at the organization. I thank the Radio Africa Group for giving me access into their offices to do this study. I acknowledge my family – Dad and Mum for not just taking me to school but ensuring I keep drawing from the fountains of knowledge. My sisters Jennifer and Evelyne, I've always aimed higher so that you can have someone to refer to as you scale the academic heights. Bro Charles Muema, thank you for transcribing all the interviews accurately and Kiteki Mbezezi for your help despite your busy schedule. My wife Caroline and our daughter Kemi, thank you for the invaluable support and understanding, especially for the long hours I needed to be away just to concentrate and deliver this project. And to God, who has blessed me immensely throughout my academic and professional journey.

ABSTRACT

Deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in newsrooms is gaining prominence across the world, with the technology being used to enhance the processes of news gathering, packaging, and distribution. The objectives of this study were to: explore the extent of use of AI in newsrooms in Kenya, determine the factors driving the adoption of AI or lack of it, and identify the challenges and opportunities presented by the adoption of AI in newsrooms in Kenya. The study was guided by the theory of disruptive innovation, the technology acceptance model, and the domestication of technology theory. Qualitative research approach and the exploratory research design were employed to investigate the adoption of AI in newsrooms in Kenya. The target population for this study was British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Radio Africa Group (RAG) media organizations. A multi-case study method was used as a strategy for inquiry. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with participants drawn from the newsrooms and experts in Kenya's AI eco-system. Purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for the research. Collected data was analyzed thematically. The study established that AI has been employed in three main areas: audience engagement on social media, data visualization, and newsgathering. The research identified six factors driving adoption of AI or lack of it: management buy-in, cost, technical skills, clarity of user-case, perception, and company structure. Further, the study identified three challenges presented by adoption of AI: lack of quality data, ethical concerns, and unpredictability of the technology's impact. The study concludes that AI offers great opportunities for newsrooms in Kenya to explore, but there are obstacles that need to be addressed before they can benefit fully from the technology. The study projects that human and automated journalism will become closely integrated in the future and recommends that newsrooms in Kenya should prepare to embrace AI by laying the foundation for its adoption. Media schools should update their curricula to adequately prepare journalists to work with emerging technologies such as AI. Further research is needed to identify the specific skill sets required for Kenyan digital journalists to fully embrace AI. Scholars should investigate how AI can shape new business models in view of shrinking revenues in the media.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AKU-GSMC:	The Aga Khan University - Graduate School of Media and Communications
AU:	African Union
UK:	United Kingdom
BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN:	Cable News Network
NMG:	Nation Media Group
RAG:	Radio Africa Group
ICFJ:	International Centre for Journalists
KEG:	Kenya Editors' Guild
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
PwC:	PricewaterhouseCoopers
AI:	Artificial Intelligence
AR:	Augmented Reality
3D:	Three-dimensional imagery
AP:	Associated Press