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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

**SHARING THE NEWS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NEWS DIFFUSION
AND AUDIENCE BUILDING IN MEDIA HOUSES IN KENYA**

By

Isaac Swila
553312

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 ISAAC
SWILA-553312 find it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.

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11/02/2022

DECLARATION

SHARING THE NEWS: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN NEWS DIFFUSION AND AUDIENCE BUILDING IN MEDIA HOUSES IN KENYA

I, **ISAAC SWILA-553312**, 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 Family; dear mother Mary, dear spouse Anne, sons Alphonse and Djibril and late father Alphonse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to assess how media houses in Kenya are using social media to diffuse their news content and build loyal audiences in a competitive media environment. It uses two media houses, the Nation Media Group and Royal Media Services as case studies. The study aimed at attaining four specific objectives: to examine how social media platforms, facilitate diffusion of news content in media houses in Kenya; to examine whether sharing of news on social media lead to growth of digital audiences; to examine the strategies legacy media stations in Kenya, use to disseminate news content and grow audiences on social media and to explore the challenges associated with relying on social media for news diffusion and audience building. The study used a mixed research design, relying on both qualitative and quantitative data from both secondary and primary sources. Interview and survey were the basic methods of data collection with interview guide and structured questionnaire as the main instruments of collecting data from purposively sampled respondents drawn from staff working in the digital departments of the two media houses. The study was anchored on the Media News Theory and Audience Theory. The two theories complemented each other and were useful in bringing on board the comparative advantage of each. The study found out that the two media houses have embraced social media platforms to facilitate diffusion of news. Based on the data analysis, the study established that the primary use of social media is anchored on the broader process of information sourcing and getting feedback from the audience. The data analysis led to the key finding that social media plays a key role in news diffusion and audience building.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT	II
APPROVAL PAGE	III
DECLARATION	IV
DEDICATION	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
ABSTRACT	VII
LIST OF TABLES	XI
LIST OF FIGURES	XII
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	XIII
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the Study	3
1.3 Statement of the Problem	7
1.4 Objectives of the Study	8
1.4.1 Specific Objectives	8
1.4.2 Research Questions	9
1.5 Justification of the Study	9
1.6 Significance of the Study	11
1.7 Scope of the Study	11
1.8 Limitations of the Study	13
1.9 Operational Definition of Terms	14
1.10 Summary	14
CHAPTER TWO	16
LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Theoretical Framework	16
2.2.1 New Media Theory	16
2.2.2 Audience Theory	18
2.3 General and Empirical Literature Review	20
2.3.1 The Media Landscape in Kenya	20
2.3.2 Social Media/Digital Landscape in Kenya	23
2.3.3 Social Media and News Sharing	26
2.3.4 Media Stations and Audience Building Strategies	27
2.3.5 News Consumption on Social Media	29
2.3.6 Digital Audiences	31
2.3.7 Challenges of News Diffusion through Social Media and Opportunities	33
2.3.8 Concept of News Sharing and Social Media	36
2.3.9 News Sharing Social Media Tools	38
2.4 Summary	42
CHAPTER THREE	44
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	44

3.1 Introduction.....	44
3.2 Research Approach and Research Design	44
3.2.1 Research Approach	44
3.2.2 Research Design.....	44
3.3 Population	45
3.4 Target Population.....	46
3.5 Study Site.....	46
3.6 Sample Size.....	46
3.7 Sampling Procedures	47
3.8 Research Method	48
3.9 Data Generation/Collection Tools	48
3.10 Data Collection Procedures.....	48
3.11 Pre-testing of Data Generation/Collection Tools.....	49
3.12 Validity and Reliability of Research Tools.....	49
3.13 Data Analysis and Presentation Plan	50
3.14 Ethical Considerations	51
3.15 Summary.....	52
CHAPTER FOUR.....	53
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	53
4.1 Introduction.....	53
4.2 Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation	53
4.2.1 Response Rate	54
4.2.2 Findings.....	54
4.2.2.1 Research Objective One.	54
4.2.2.2 Research Objective Two.....	64
4.2.2.3 Research Objective Three.....	75
4.2.2.4 Research Objective Four.	83
4.3 Summary of Key Findings	91
4.4 Summary	93
CHAPTER FIVE	94
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	94
5.1 Introduction.....	94
5.2 Discussion of Key findings.....	94
5.2.1 How Social Media Platforms, Facilitate Diffusion of News Content in Media Stations in Kenya?.....	94
5.2.2 Does Sharing of News on Social Media Lead to Growth of Digital Audience?s	97
5.2.3 What Strategies do Legacy Media Stations in Kenya, use to Disseminate News Content and Grow Audiences on Social Media?	99
5.2.4 Challenges associated with relying on social media for news diffusion and audience building	101
5.3 Conclusion and Implications for Practice.....	103
5.4 Recommendations.....	106
5.5 Areas for Further Research	108
5.6 Summary of Chapter Five.....	108
REFERENCES	109
APPENDICES	113

Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	113
Appendix B: AKU Ethics Review Committee Approval Letter.....	115
Appendix C: Introductory Letter from AKU	116
Appendix D: NACOSTI Research Licence	117

LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1: Sample size distribution</i>	47
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Social Media Followers at RMS Source (Author, 2021) 55

Figure 2: Social Media Followers at NMG..... 56

Figure 3: Media houses are also sharing news content on YouTube..... 58

Figure 4: The availability of a large pool of users on social media..... 61

*Figure 5: Media Stations constantly share what goes on in their studios on social media
..... 64*

Figure 6: Media Houses Leveraging Social Media to Grow Their Digital..... 67

Figure 7: Users interactivity on social media and direct correlation..... 69

Figure 8: RMS Audience interactivity strategy through the App 70

Figure 9: The introduction of Paywall has had impact on Digital 71

*Figure 10: Sharing of news alerts/updates on social media and link to digital subscribers
..... 75*

*Figure 11: Journalists sharing the media house content on their individual social media
pages 76*

Figure 12: Media Stations have made their content shareable 78

Figure 13: Media houses Use of hashtags and tags to drive audience 80

Figure 14: Use of Anchors/Hosts to encourage audience engagement..... 81

Figure 15: Use of Cards by Media Stations is common 82

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SNSs:	Social Networking Sites
IPS:	Internet Protocol Suite
KTN:	Kenya Television Network
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
NACOSTI:	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NMG:	Nation Media Group
RMS:	Royal Media Services
SMG:	Standard Media Group
SNSs:	Social Networking Sites
TV:	Television
WWW:	World Wide Web
3G:	Third Generation