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THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Media and Communications

**NEWS PROCESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN CONVERGED
KENYAN NEWSROOMS: A CASE STUDY OF STANDARD GROUP PLC**

By

Agnes Aineah
553240

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 AGNES
AINEAH-553240, find it satisfactory and recommended that it be accepted.

Nancy Booker, PhD.,
Interim Dean
Chair, Thesis Evaluation Committee

Nancy Booker, PhD., 1st Supervisor

Sam Kamau, PhD., 2nd Supervisor

Member,
Thesis Evaluation Committee

11/02/2022

DECLARATION

NEWS PROCESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN CONVERGED KENYAN NEWSROOMS: A CASE STUDY OF STANDARD GROUP PLC

I, **AGNES AINEAH-553240**, 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 endeavors.

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

To my mother Lydia, the subtle force behind my small wins.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the enduring guidance of my supervisors, Prof. Nancy Booker and Dr. Sam Kamau. Journeying with the two academic giants saw my humble research idea shape up into a product am proudest of in my academic journey. Heartfelt gratitude to faculty at Aga Khan University-Graduate School of Media and Communications for holding my hand throughout the two-year program. My classmates were a support group where, together, we weathered the COVID-19 storm to achieve our academic goals. I also thank my family and friends for their emotional support with which I soldiered on when I was overwhelmed from juggling studies and work.

ABSTRACT

Convergence is not a new concept in Kenya's media industry. Legacy media organizations in Kenya have relaunched several times in an attempt to integrate their newsroom operations and to create digitally fronted newsrooms. This study explores the news processes that converged newsrooms have put in place to support the integration of previously distinct media operations and the opportunities and challenges inherent in converged newsrooms in Kenya. It is a case study of Standard Group PLC which fully converged its newsroom operations in April 2021 after having undergone several convergence attempts "with little success" (Vaseling, 2021). This study was guided by two theories: Media Convergence Theory and the Disruptive Innovation Theory. The study adopted a Qualitative Study Approach and Descriptive Case Study Design to examine SG as a single unit. The researcher observed intake and output meetings at SG's converged newsroom, the process of converging story ideas, the media house's implementation of the Digital First Approach and how stories are identified, assigned, and edited at the SG converged newsroom. In-depth interviews were also conducted with 14 reporters and editors who were selected purposively from SG's newly created thematic desks in the converged newsroom. The following came out of observation of SG's converged newsroom processes: the merging of SG's traditional platforms into a close-knit unit; the inverted news process that starts at the bottom; converging story ideas at SG and the newsroom's prioritization of digital content. Opportunities of convergence that were identified in this study include: better told stories for the audiences, an opportunity to explore other talents, a better appreciation of the role of the Digital Desk and proper utilization of resources and maximized profits. The study also identified challenges such as too much work, reluctance among journalists to work across multiple platforms owing to personality differences and age, varied platform demands, lack of clarity in roles, gaps in the implementation of the strategy and inadequate facilitation of journalists. The study recommends proper coordination of field reporters and reporters on the digital Radar Desk whose roles sometimes collide. The study also recommends that structures should be put in place to guide the ownership of by-lines where field reporters are collaborating on stories with their digital counterparts. SG should reinforce structures that have been put in place to measure performance of journalists across multiple platforms. The media group should also find a way to align convergence to the Human Resource issues such as facilitation, compensation and managing workloads of the journalists who are now required to generate and submit content across platforms of the converged newsroom.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
CMS:	Central Management System
FT:	Financial Times
INM:	Independent News Media
KTN:	Kenya Television Network
MCK:	Media Council of Kenya
MIT:	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NMG:	Nation Media Group
NYT:	New York Times
RAG:	Radio Africa Group
RMS:	Royal Media Services
SG:	Standard Group
TV:	Television